

# THE INITIATES OF GREECE AND ROME

THE ADEPTS IN THE ESOTERIC  
CLASSICAL TRADITION, PART ONE



# THE INITIATES OF GREECE AND ROME



**T**HIS ILLUSTRATED WORK ON CLASSICAL paganism explores the “lost” period of mystical tradition, between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance, in the search for a better understanding of man’s place in the Divine Plan.

As Mr. Hall states in the preface, “One of the teachings of the initiate tradition in Greece related to the mystery of time. The temple did not divide duration into past, present, and future. Divine and universal laws manifest themselves in an eternal now. Enlightenment belongs to no generation, nor does it increase or diminish.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** | Manly P. Hall (1901-1990) founded the Philosophical Research Society, Inc. as a non-profit organization in 1935, dedicated to the dissemination of useful knowledge in the fields of philosophy, comparative religion, and psychology. In his long career, spanning more than 70 years of dynamic public activity, Mr. Hall delivered over 8000 lectures in the United States and abroad, authored over 150 books and essays, and wrote countless magazine articles.



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# THE ADEPTS

In the Esoteric Classical Tradition

By MANLY P. HALL

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**THE INITIATES OF GREECE AND ROME**

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ILLUSTRATED



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# THE INITIATES OF GREECE AND ROME

## PREFACE

Early authorities on the Greek and Roman Mysteries are not always in agreement, and later interpretations are largely influenced by personal convictions. In the time lapse between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance, there was little interest in classical paganism. In recent years, however, mystical traditions are being explored by advanced thinkers in a number of fields who are seeking a better understanding of man's place in the Divine Plan.

In the Greek esoteric tradition, those who received the higher grades in the sanctuaries of the Mysteries were called *initiates*, a term equivalent to *adepts* in the mystical terminology of post-Christian Europe. A discussion of the Mystery System and its initiates must begin with a definition of those sacred institutions which were the foundations of classical learning. All the enlightened nations of antiquity maintained sacerdotal institutions which were equally important to the security of the state and the well-being of the citizenry. From the beginning these Mystery Schools were dedicated to the deities of various regions and those accepted into the secret rites were bound with the strongest possible obligations to defend the spiritual and ethical codes which had been bestowed upon humanity in antediluvian times. All seeking instruction must proclaim their obedience to the divine institutes, live uprightly, and use the knowledge that had been bestowed upon them for the greater glory of Deity and the lasting benefit of mankind.

The three labors of the Mysteries were the redemption of all sentient beings, the restoration of the universal religion, and the reformation of human society.

Efforts to explore the secret teachings which constituted the spiritual arcana have never been completely successful. The principal esoteric cults were the Eleusinian, Dionysian, Orphic, and Samothracean. Except for minor variations, all taught the same doctrine derived from the *Theogony* of Hesiod which in turn made use of symbolism from sages whose identities were concealed by the dark curtain of pre-history.\* All the systems were permeated with the sublime concept of salvation through regeneration. As the most famous of the Mysteries was the Eleusinian, we shall restrict ourselves principally to these rites which involve elements of the other systems—including the Egyptian Mysteries of Isis and Osiris.

Unfortunately for posterity the actual ceremonies performed at Eleusis were never communicated to the profane, but elements of this sublime pageantry are referred to by many classical authors. Extensive research has revealed fragments of the ancient system in philosophical writings, dramas, and poetry; and selections from these authors will be quoted in our text. Surviving fragments of the Pythagorean School, the Orphic hymns, and the scenes from the initiatory dramas preserved in the decorations on Etruscan vases are among the most valuable of the surviving records. Many of the early Church Fathers refer to the Greek Mysteries and some of them were probably initiates of the ancient rites.

H. P. Blavatsky points out that St. Paul had been initiated in the Mysteries, and he testifies to this fact by his statement that his head was shorn at Cenchrea where later Lucius Apuleius was initiated.\* Blavatsky also quotes the following lines from the Epistles of Paul: "We speak wisdom among the perfect or initiated, not the wisdom of this

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\* *Isis Unveiled* by H. P. Blavatsky.

world, nor of the archons of this world, but divine wisdom in a mystery, secret—which *none of the Archons of this world knew.*”

The identification of initiates presents an even greater difficulty. Every free person of good character was entitled to receive the Lesser Mysteries. As none but the initiated could participate in the secret rites, it was necessary that both men and women be accepted and bound by the same obligations. In the course of the ceremonies, the twelve Olympian deities were personified by members of the sacred orders—the gods by men and the goddesses by women. The Eleusinian sanctuary was sustained by the state, and the altars were attended by priests and priestesses serving the deity to be propitiated.

On several of the Etruscan vases, Hercules is introduced as the embodiment of courage and moral strength. He was definitely referred to as an initiate, and in honor of his coronation he was lifted up to the heavenly abodes to abide forever among the constellations. Ulysses, having successfully survived the enmity of Neptune, also was raised to the heroic estate but was not equal to Hercules. From the facts available, we are forced to conclude that nearly all worthy Grecians must be numbered among the initiates. Some however advanced further than others, and their names have survived to us from the testimonies of their contemporaries. We are assured that the Eleusinian adepts did not practice magical arts, considering all such exhibitions as unworthy of true sages. We use the word *wisdom* to signify a high degree of learning or greatness of knowledge. In the Mysteries the word was reserved for the initiates of the greater rites who alone were worthy to be called “the wise.” Even Pythagoras, probably the most initiated man in history, felt himself unworthy to be a sophist and coined for his own use the term *philosophist* (philosopher) meaning a friend or lover of wisdom.

After the Mysteries were brought to Rome, a few Romans were ennobled by participation in the esoteric in-

struction; but the rites themselves were gradually debased. Even among the Romans however, the Mysteries were never exposed. The last stronghold of the classical esoteric religion was in Alexandria during the period of the Greek pharaohs. The Neoplatonists did everything in their power to restore and exalt the essential meaning of the rites of redemption. The times however were not favorable. Material ambitions were strong and not many approached the gates of the holy life. The Eleusinian adepts found few who were qualified to carry on the secret teaching and many of the masters died without a successor.

In his little book on *The Temple*, Hugh H. L. Bellot examines in considerable detail the history of the Inner Temple, the earliest and most important of the London Inns of Court. This complex of buildings was for some time the headquarters of the Knights Templars in England. Bellot notes that the Chapel of St. Anne was originally used by the Templars as a place of initiation into their order. "The initiatory Freemasonry of Eleusis was conducted by means of two floors, one over the other, communicating with seven steps, but at Denderah and elsewhere the steps are fourteen. Here, then, the novice was initiated into the Order of the Knights Templars. This novitiate bore a strong resemblance to the exterior initiation practiced in the Isisian and Eleusinian mysteries."\*

It would appear from this description that the Knights Templars perpetuated certain of the rituals established in classical antiquity. It may well be therefore that these rites reached England in the twelfth or thirteenth century, and have survived in modern Freemasonry. There was also a brief revival in Florence under the patronage of Lorenzo de' Medici.

One of the teachings of the initiate tradition in Greece related to the mystery of time. The temple did not divide duration into past, present, and future. Divine and uni-

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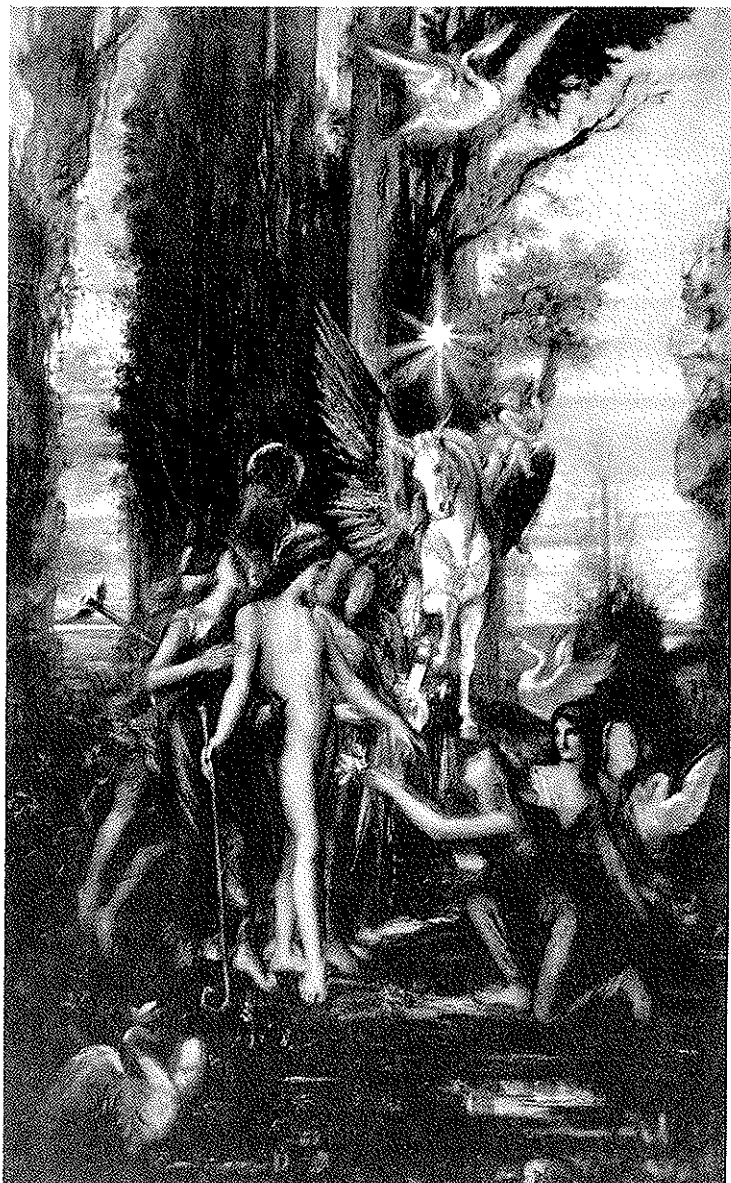
\* *The Temple* by Hugh H. L. Bellot, M.A., D.C.L.



versal laws manifest themselves in an eternal now. Enlightenment belongs to no generation, nor does it increase or diminish. It is always and everywhere. Those who deserve it receive it and, if institutions fade away, the individual remains leader of his own destiny. The illumined ones by walking along the path of merit attain that sublime estate which is without beginning or end. In any land, in any generation, those who ascend to the sovereign truths of existence are the true initiates of the great Mystery System.

MANLY P. HALL

Los Angeles, California  
1981



Hesiod and the Muses. Surrounded by the symbols of heroic verse, the young shepherd boy is inspired by nature to claim his poetic destiny. From the painting by Gustave Moreau.

# THE ADEPTS

## THE INITIATES OF GREECE AND ROME

### *Myths of the Mysteries*

In discussing the various deities involved in the mystical tradition, it seems best to follow the generally approved procedure of using their Greek and Latin names interchangeably. In most cases the Latin forms are the more familiar to the average reader.

Zeus, or Jupiter, presides over the physical world. His body includes the innermost atom and the furthestmost star. He appears under three aspects. As father deity he is lord of the air; as ruler of the oceans he is Poseidon, or Neptune; and as regent of the underworld he is Hades, or Pluto. Dionysus, or Bacchus, is the beloved offspring of Zeus and a mortal woman, Semele.

While Bacchus was an infant, he played in heaven with celestial toys. As he was amusing himself, the Titans—the twelve primordial forces of chaos—caused a mirror to be set before him. Bacchus, looking into the mirror, sees himself reflected and mistakes his image for another child. As Bacchus approaches the mirror, the Titans draw it back and the little godling follows them until he is outside of his father's kingdom. When he is no longer protected, he is slain by the Titans as his cries for help cannot be heard by his father. To conceal their crime, these primordial giants cook the body of Bacchus over a fire and begin to eat it.

The smoke from the effluvia of this terrible repast rises to heaven and Zeus, discovering the truth, sends a thunderbolt which destroys the Titans.

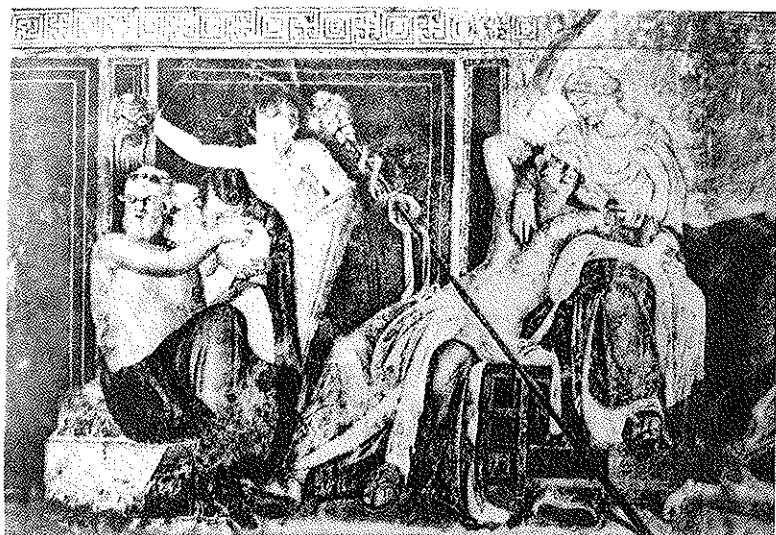
Unfortunately Zeus cannot restore Bacchus to life for part of his body had already been devoured by the giants. Zeus then sends Pallas Athena, or Minerva, down to rescue what she can of the divine child. She saves the head which she elevates to heaven. It being impossible to restore the body of Bacchus, Athena takes the ashes containing the blood of the godling together with the remains of the Titans and molds them into a human figure. Zeus ensouls this figure and it becomes a living being. As a result the bodies of men contain the twelve irrational energies of the giants and also the saving blood of the dying god. After this great tragedy, Zeus dispatches the mind of himself to rescue mankind by the establishment of the Mysteries. The Bacchic rites dramatize this tradition. The ritual consists of two degrees. In the first the godling is torn to pieces and eaten by the Titans; and in the second by the mystery of the blood of Bacchus within himself, man is released from the material body, restored to life, and returns to his father.

In connection with the Bacchic cult, it will be useful to consider the Villa of the Mysteries of Dionysus located in Pompeii outside of the Herculaneum Gate. Of this P. Beccarini writes, "Within it a truly marvellous symbolical representation of the Dionysian Cult is to be seen; some thirty figures are there, painted full size on the rosy background of the walls of a vast triclinium, and the artist shews them on the plinths of a plan brought well to the foreground, so as to make the illusion complete."\*

This is probably the most elaborate representation of the Dionysian rites which has survived to the present time. While it does not describe any of the symbolism involved, it presents in recognizable forms the deities pictured in the ceremony. The scene represents the initiation of a Pom-

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\* *New Excavations at Pompeii* by P. Beccarini.



Dionysus in the arms of Felicity; from the paintings on the wall of the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii. From *New Excavations at Pompeii* described by P. Beccarini.

peian lady, and one of the groups of figures depicts the god Dionysus reposing in the arms of Felicity personified as the goddess Kore.

P. B. Carini describing this section of the mural writes: "Dionysius, having already attained perfection, that is, having attained happiness through the power of initiation and the rites which accompany it, attains also the divinity because of his divine origin and the transformation from mortal to immortal takes place, and he becomes then a God, Bacchus. The earthly ties are undone (the sandal is stripped from his foot, the mantle from his body) and Happiness folds him in her arms, raising him to Olympus."\* That Dionysius in a state of illumination has one foot bare will be of interest to Freemasons.

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\* *The Villa of the Mysteries of Dionysius* illustrated and described by P. B. Carini.

The Villa of the Mysteries was probably the meeting place for initiates of the rite. Lacking the facilities in Pompeii to present the ritual in its more complete form, the rites were communicated orally with appropriate references to the wall murals. The imagery clearly shows the blending of the Dionysian rites with those of Eleusis. A detail from this series of paintings which is of high artistic quality is reproduced herewith.

### *The Sacred Theater of Dionysus*

It is well known that the sacred myths and legends associated with the Mysteries were often presented as theatrical productions. To render the spectacles as dramatically as possible, a number of theatrical devices were employed. The inventions of Archimedes indicate clearly the skills available in the dramatizing of sacred plays. Eusebe Salverte who was born in Paris in 1771 wrote a most curious book of which an English edition appeared in 1846. He devotes some space to this subject under the general heading of mechanical agencies used in the rites and ceremonies of initiation. He notes that English travelers who visited the remains of the Temple of Ceres at Eleusis noted a number of structural peculiarities which would permit the raising and lowering of the stage, the use of trap doors, etc.\* Those initiated may well have been impressed with the priestly stagecraft, but it is doubtful if any could have been deceived by such devices. In fact it is unlikely that there was any intention to convince the audience that miraculous occurrences were taking place. The solemnity of the spectacles and the tremendous veneration in which they were held were certainly impressive but the staging, though admirable, could scarcely have been considered as supernatural. In one scene from the Eleusinian rites, Hades (god of the underworld)

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\* *The Philosophy of Magic, Prodigies and Apparent Miracles* by Eusebe Salverte.

rises through the earth in a chariot drawn by prancing black horses. Such an example of stagecraft was no more than good theater. There is little or no justification for the belief that the intention was to exploit the gullibility of the uninitiated. At approximately the same time, many kinds of stage effects were used in the Circus Maximus and the Colosseum in Rome.

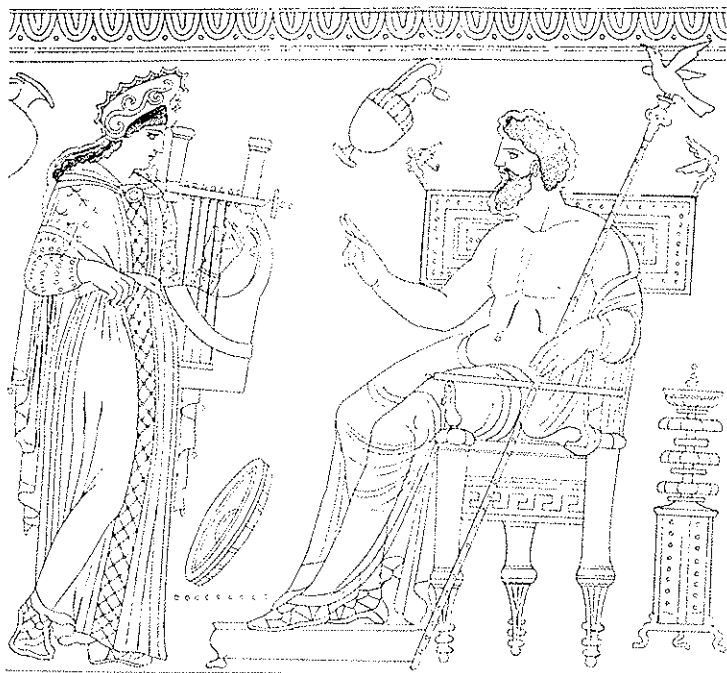
### *The Orphic Assembly*

The Orphic literature is almost exclusively poetic and takes the form of hymns to various divinities and lesser celestial beings. The best books attempting to interpret these rites are *Orpheus* by G. R. S. Mead and *The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus* translated by Thomas Taylor which contains important commentary material based on early writings. In his introduction Thomas Taylor enumerates five bards, or poets, who bore the name of Orpheus. The first was a Thracian bard who lived between the fourteenth and twelfth centuries B.C. The others were of a later date, but Taylor believed that the lives of these five celebrated persons were finally united to form one person. This may explain the conflicting accounts of the life and death of Orpheus.

There were rites sacred to Ceres, Persephone, Sabazius, Dionysus, Attis, Adonis, Mylitta, and Orpheus. Egypt contributed largely to the religious background of the whole Mesopotamian region and Greek religion in particular. The civilized areas of North Africa evolved many of their religious doctrines as interpretations of their agricultural pursuits. The supreme mystery was the multiplication of life from the seed. All the great gods were connected with seed worship. The grain-seed is buried in the earth, rises therefrom in due time, bestowing an abundant harvest. The tithing system originated in the ancient agrarian cults. Primitive nature worship was associated with the mystery

of the Great Mother Gaea (the Earth); into her the seed must be planted and from her it will rise again. In some regions human beings were buried in the embryo posture because death was believed to be a second birth into the world beyond the grave. In this way the sanctuary of initiation came to symbolize the womb of the Great Mother.

The story of Orpheus and Eurydice is one example of the death and resurrection of the seed which has been cast into the earth, and this is set forth in the sacred ritual drama of the Orphic Mysteries. Eurydice had been wandering about in a pleasant meadow when an amorous shepherd tried to approach her. While running away from the impetuous youth, she was bitten in the foot by a venomous serpent and died. Orpheus was resolved to rescue her from the realms of



Orpheus in the Underworld charming Pluto with the beauty of his music. From an Etruscan vase painting illustrated in *Griechische Mythenbilder Zum Erstenmale Bekannt Gemacht* by Eduard Gerhard.



Pluto and was successful in charming all the spirits of Hades with the beauty of his music. Pluto consented to allow Eurydice to return to the world of the living upon the condition that Orpheus would not look back until the journey was completed. Unfortunately, he turned his head to see if she was following and Eurydice was borne away to the realms of death, never to return.

After this tragedy Orpheus wandered the earth disconsolate, and his music filled the air with sadness and despair. According to one account, he wandered to Thrace where he was torn to pieces by frenzied women who belonged to the cult of the Corybantes. As a result of this, Orpheus vowed that he would never again be born of woman and would return to earth in the body of a swan. The head of Orpheus was rescued and placed in a temple together with his lute. The head represents the secret doctrine which did not die, although its sanctuaries were violated by fanatics. The head of Orpheus was supposedly made to speak by Pythagoras, intimating that the Orphic School was perpetuated in the secret teachings of the Pythagoreans.

The whole system of Greek religious philosophy is suspended from the Orphic rhapsodies and secret revelations which produced them. Through the Orphics, a magnificent system of cosmogony and theology was bestowed upon humanity. After the first impact of this love-wisdom religion upon the Grecian mind, the Greeks eagerly sought knowledge in all parts of the world. Their philosophers and sages traveled into many nations and brought back priceless records of the spiritual and cultural achievements of Asia and North Africa.

### *Homer and Hesiod*

The place of Homer in the descent of the adept tradition is obscure. It is believed that he was an Ionian by birth and lived in the ninth century B.C. There is a tradition that he

was blind and burdened by poverty. Charles Mills Gayley describes Homer as "a wandering minstrel, blind and old, who traveled from place to place singing his lays to the music of his harp, in the courts of princes or the cottages of peasants,—a dependent upon the voluntary offerings of his hearers. Byron calls him 'the blind old man of Scio's rocky isle.'" Gayley points out that the poems of Homer were not reduced to writing until the sixth century B.C. Prior to that time, the stories were circulated by professional bards and recited from memory.\*

Homer is regarded as the greatest poet of the ancient world; and his two epic works, *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, have survived as testimonies to his extraordinary genius. There is some question as to whether he was the sole author of the immortal poems that bear his name, but it is unlikely that this uncertainty will ever be resolved. Ouvaroff in attempting to date the origin of the Eleusinian Mysteries is of the opinion that these rites were established posterior to the time of Homer because the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* make no mention of these Mysteries nor does Homer involve their myths or symbols in his writings. While these institutions were not involved in the events which Homer chronicled, it has been assumed that they would have received some mention in his theology had they existed during his lifetime.

The Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry, 234-305 A.D., has long been honored for his careful scholarship. He studied under Plotinus in Rome and became an important interpreter of the works of Pythagoras and Plato. His treatise *On the Homeric Cave of the Nymphs* is dedicated to the proposition that Homer was fully aware of the esoteric tradition. This treatise was translated by Thomas Taylor and is included in the *Select Works of Porphyry* published in London in 1823. The description of the Cave of the Nymphs appears in the thirteenth book of the *Odyssey*. Porphyry examines the story with great care and comes to the conclu-

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\* *The Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art* by Charles Mills Gayley, Litt.D., LL.D.

sion that it represents a place of initiation into the Mysteries. The cavern is the mundane sphere to which souls descend and come to physical embodiment by entering through the Gate of Cancer. Having passed through the trials of physical incarnation, they ascend again to their former estate through the Gate of Capricorn.

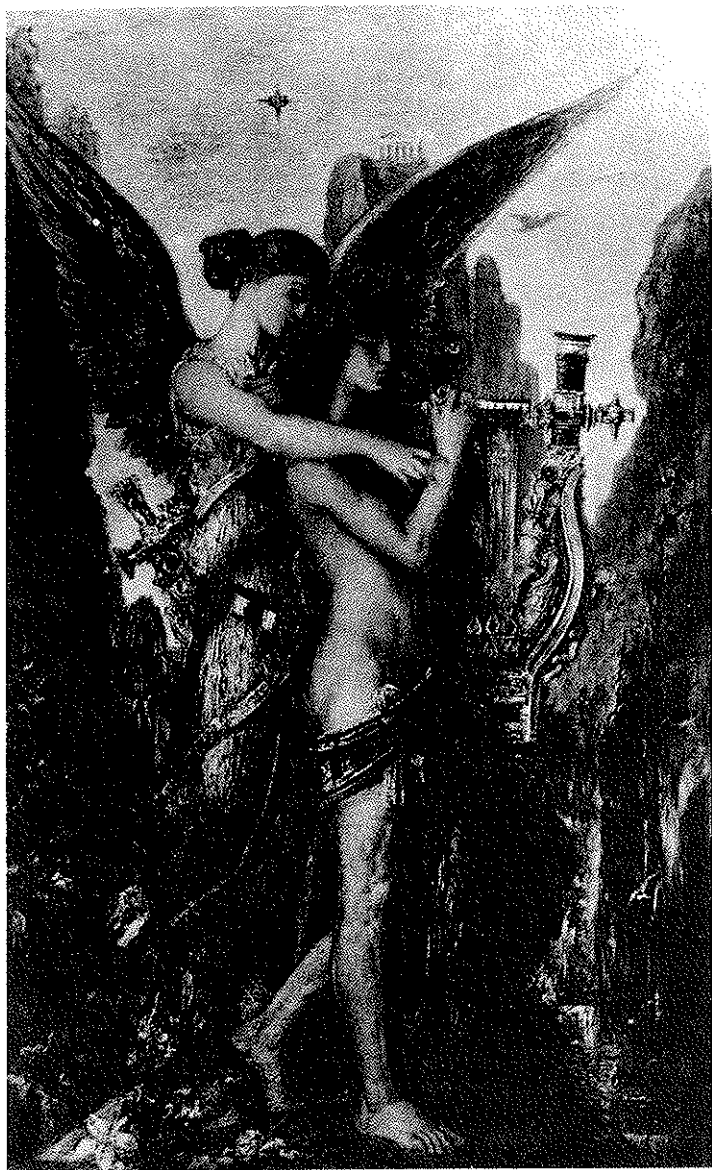
Porphyry also associates the Cave of the Nymphs with the secret rites of Mithras. These were introduced into Europe from Persia and spread over Italy, France, and Germany—and even reached Britain. The Mithraic sanctuaries were always subterranean and in each was placed a ladder with seven steps. The trials through which candidates passed were exceedingly severe. When the Emperor Commodus was initiated, priests disguised as wild animals assailed him and in the confusion Commodus accidentally slew one of the priests.\*

Included in his translations of Porphyry, Taylor appends an interpretation on the wanderings of Ulysses. The import of this appendix is that Ulysses, returning from the Trojan war, enters into the cycle of initiation and enacts the part of the sun in its annual passage through the twelve signs of the zodiac. At that time the vernal equinox occurred in Taurus and the twelve adventures of the Greek hero of the Trojan war correspond with the zodiacal signs in their proper order ending with Aries. It is the mature opinion of Porphyry that Homer arcanelly concealed the substance of the Mystery teachings in the *Odyssey* and therefore must have been initiated into the mystical tradition. One also gains the clear impression that Porphyry himself had received sacred rites, possibly those of Mithras.

Very little is known of the life of Hesiod who is supposed to have lived as a contemporary of Homer or possibly a few years later. He was born in Ascra in Boeotia, and during his youth herded sheep on Mt. Helicon. Hesiod was the author of two important works of which the *Theogeny* or geneal-

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\* *The Secret Societies of All Ages and Countries* by Charles William Heckethorn.



Hesiod and the Muse. From the *Works of Gustave Moreau*, Paris: 1890.

ogy of the gods had the wider influence on the religious doctrines of the Greeks. Hesiod's style is less refined than that of Homer, but it established for the first time a formal concept of Hellenistic theology. Based on his work and amplified by later philosophers heavily indebted to him, a kind of sacred classification of knowledge came into existence. This knowledge was divided into five headings which were regarded as the grand scheme of philosophical enlightenment—

*Theogenesis*, the substance and nature of divinity and the hierarchies which emanate therefrom (*Theogeny* of Hesiod);

*Cosmogenesis*, the creation of the universe including esoteric astronomy and astrology (Stanley's *History of Philosophy*, "Pythagoras");

*Anthropogenesis*, the generation of human beings including anatomy and physiology (Works of Aristotle);

*Psychogenesis*, the soul, its origin and destiny and the disciplines by which it is liberated from bondage to the mind, emotions, and the physical body (Proclus, *On the Theology of Plato*);

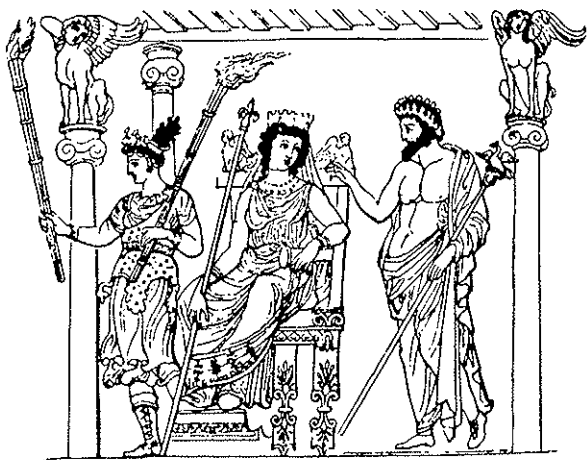
*Theurgy*, the disciplines and dedications which lead to personal and collective experience of absolute unity with the Divine (Works of Plotinus).

### *The Eleusinian Mysteries*

The rites celebrated at Eleusis were beyond question the most splendid pageantries of the ancient world. Persephone, the daughter of Ceres, was playing with her companions gathering flowers when Hades appeared through the earth riding in a chariot. In spite of the screams and pleadings of Persephone, Pluto abducted her and sped away to the banks of the river Cyane. Here he struck the earth with his trident; the ground opened and gave him passage to Tartarus (Hades). This part of the myth was pre-

sented in the lesser rites. In the greater rites, Ceres, searching everywhere for her lost child, finally seated herself on a stone where she remained sorrowing for nine days and nights. The stone stood in the field of an old man named Celeus, and afterwards the city of Eleusis was built upon that place. After several adventures in the house of Celeus, the goddess Ceres wrapped a cloud about herself and, mounting her chariot, refreshed and encouraged continued her search. Finally she met a nymph by the river Cyane who told her the circumstances of her daughter's abduction. Later through the assistance of the goddess Diana, she learned that Persephone had become queen of Erebus and was ruling with Pluto over the realms of the dead.

When Ceres learned these things she hastened to the throne of Zeus imploring him to restore her daughter. Zeus agreed on the condition that Persephone had not touched food during her stay in the infernal abode. Mercury was dispatched to accomplish her release but, sad to say, Persephone had eaten part of a pomegranate. The situation was finally arbitrated and Persephone was permitted to pass half of her time with her mother in the upper world and the other half in the dark regions of Pluto. Ceres, now



Persephone enthroned in Hades. From Alexander Wilder's edition of *The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries* by Thomas Taylor.

placated, remembered the kindness she had received in the house of Celeus and bestowed her favors upon this family. The descendants of this good man built a magnificent temple to Ceres at Eleusis and established the worship of the goddess. These Mysteries, says Bulfinch, "surpassed all other religious celebrations among the Greeks."

The Lesser Mysteries were known as the *Telete*, a word which means consummation or the finishing of a journey. This implied that the novice, entering upon the path of self-improvement, had completed his pilgrimage through the veil of mortality and was ready to tread on the threshold of the inner life. These candidates received certain instructions principally concerned with the purification of the body, the emotions, and the mind. Cleanliness included the purging away of all mortal appetites and the release of the mind from the domination of worldly ambitions, self-centeredness, and all activities which could contaminate the inner life by external pressures. Those who successfully passed the lesser rites were called the *mystae*, or those who saw through a veil or mist. When we remember that as many as twenty-five thousand persons attended a single performance of the rituals in the temple at Eleusis, it becomes obvious that such a number could not be regarded as sharing in a common illumination. The initiates of the lower grades were therefore spectators—not participators—in the body of mystical doctrine.

The accompanying photograph shows the present state of the Eleusinian remains. Although eminent archaeologists have diligently examined the architectural ruins of the Eleusinian sanctuaries, they have found no material evidence of the sublime light that once bestowed itself upon this sacred place. These researchers are much like autopsy surgeons who dissect the human body from which the life has departed and declare that the soul is a figment of the imagination. Even in its modern condition, Eleusis bears witness to the veneration of the noblest of the Greeks and wise men and women from many foreign lands.



The ruins of Eleusis from a recent photograph. Courtesy of Ernest Wulfke.

The Lesser Mysteries introduced the mind to fundamental concepts of philosophy, ethics, and morality. They were held in Athens at the site of Agra, or Agrai, near the base of the Acropolis. In the lesser rites five degrees are mentioned by some of the earlier writers. Only those who reached the fifth degree were eligible to receive the Greater Mysteries. The lesser rites were conferred at the time of the vernal equinox and the greater rites at the autumnal equinox. There are differences of opinion as to whether the Greater Mysteries were given annually or every five years. Plutarch is the authority for the annual celebration and Scaliger states that they were given every five years.

The majority of the mystae progressed no further but returned to their various pursuits inspired by a solemn ceremonialism. It did not follow that such persons would be impelled to make philosophy their journey in life. On an esoteric level the Lesser Mysteries revealed the descent of the human soul into mortal embodiment. After drinking the



waters of Lethe, the soul forgot its divine origin and the celestial regions from which it had descended. Imprisoned in flesh the spiritual part of the human being dwelt in darkness beset with a variety of miseries. This material existence to which most cling is actually the realm of the dead. As Plato affirmed we do not go to Hades when we die but when we are born into the physical condition of earthly existence. Purification consisted of the ennobling of both conviction and conduct, and the mystae were taught that no amount of prayer or sacrifice could bring an end to suffering unless the devotees obeyed the divine code communicated in the Mysteries.

The Greater Mysteries were celebrated with impressive rites and public spectacles. It is obvious that those seeking admission had properly received and profited by the Lesser Mysteries. Preparation included fasting and at least temporary vegetarianism. This aspect of Greek metaphysics is considered in detail by Porphyry in his treatise *On Abstinence from Animal Food*. The Greek historian Pausanias in his work *The Description of Greece* devotes a few lines to the Eleusinian Mysteries. Sir James Frazer, the distinguished anthropologist, praises this work as a uniquely useful production. Pausanias traveled extensively throughout Southern Europe and the Near East and may have penetrated Central Asia. He was alive in 174 A.D. and mentions that the Emperor Hadrian was reigning at his time.

Salverte describes his visit to the oracle of Trophonius, and Anthony Todd Thomson who edited Salverte adds a footnote from Pausanias, book 9, chapter 39, "Pausanias was initiated into these mysteries. The priests first made him drink from the well of *Oblivion*, to banish his past thoughts; and then from the well of *Recollection*, that he might remember the vision he was about to behold. He was then shewn a mysterious representation of Trophonius, and forced to worship it. He was next dressed in linen vestments, with girdles around his body, and led into the sanc-

tuary, where was the cave into which he descended by a ladder: at its bottom, in the side of the cave, there was an opening, and having placed his foot in it internally, his whole body was drawn into it by some invisible power. He returned through the same opening at which he had entered; and being placed on the throne of Mnemosyne, the priests inquired what he had seen, and finally led him back to the sanctuary of the Good Spirit. As soon as he recovered his self-command, he was obliged to write the vision he had seen on a little tablet, which was hung up in the temple." Pausanias tells us that it was his intention to describe in every detail the temple of the Eleusinian Mysteries but was restrained from the execution of this design by a vision that came to him in the form of a dream.

That the priesthood of the Greek Mysteries had an elaborate philosophy of dream interpretation is evident from the labors of Artemidorus Daldianus who flourished at Ephesus in the second century A.D. He wrote a book, *Oneirocritica*, devoted to the interpretation of dreams. Artemidorus was an initiate of the Mysteries of Apollo Daldaios. The book for which he is justly famous is divided into four sections—the first three being compilations of ancient writings and early authors, with the last principally concerned with replies to probable critics; there is also an appendix. Artemidorus tells us that he lived during the reign of Antoninus Pius and that he spent many years traveling about the country to collect accounts of dreams and the opinions of learned persons concerning the meanings thereof. There is a Greek version of the work on dreams which was published in Venice in 1518, and a Latin translation in 1539. It is stated that Artemidorus published a treatise on augury and also one on chiromancy, but apparently these have not survived. Throughout his rather uncertain career, Artemidorus was sustained by the inspiration he received during his initiation and believed that he was protected and inspired by the god Apollo.

William Martin Leake, Esq. F.R.S., M.R.S.L. provides some interesting information on the Eleusinian sanctuary.\* He tells us that under the Roman Empire it was fashionable among the higher order of Romans to pass time at Athens in the study of philosophy and to be initiated in the Eleusinian Mysteries. Hence Eleusis became at that time the most frequented place of pilgrimage in Greece, and the rites celebrated there were the great bond of national union among the Grecians. It was still a place of importance until it was overthrown in the year 396 by the Goths of Alaric. Those journeying from Athens to Eleusis passed along what was known as the Sacred Way. This road "presented a succession of magnificent objects, well calculated to heighten the solemn grandeur of the ceremonies, and the awe and reverence of the Mystae in their initiation." Mr. Leake includes in his description a map or ground plan showing the location of the magnificent sanctuary of Ceres in which the Greater Mysteries were enacted.

The sublime ceremonies extended for eight or nine days beginning on the fifteenth of September. The principal official of the rites was the *hierophant*. He was elected for life and bound by a vow of celibacy. According to most accounts, he never left the sacred precincts; but worthy persons could have appointments with him in the sanctuary. The hierophant was the narrator of the rituals. He explained the meanings of the symbols and ceremonies and sanctified those who attained the highest grade. While performing his ritualistic responsibilities, he impersonated the god Jupiter and was mystically identified with this deity. The hierophant was assisted by three officials—the *torch bearer*, the *herald*, and the *servant of the altar*. In the astronomical theology, the Sun was the torch bearer, Mercury (Hermes) was the mystic herald, and the Moon the keeper of the altar.

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\* "On the Demi of Attica" by William Martin Leake, Esq. F.R.S., M.R.S.L. (See *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, Vol. I, Part II).

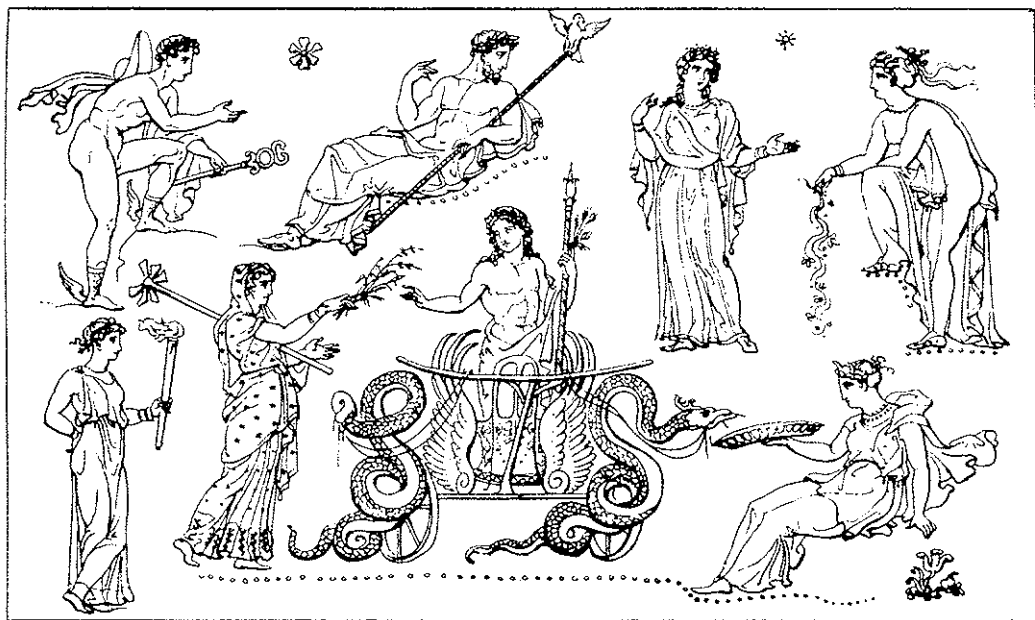


Tableau of Eleusinian divinities. Zeus is represented in upper center. Persephone and Spring are on the right of the great god, and Hermes is approaching him from the left. Below is Trip- toleμος in his winged chariot with Demeter handing him ears of corn. The scene is completed by two attendants. From *The Mythology of Ancient Greece and Italy* by Thomas Keightley, London: 1854.

Candidates entered the temple crowned with myrtle and with veils over their faces. They washed their hands as a symbol of purity. The full presentation of the Mysteries, so far as public participation was concerned, required eight days and one night. On the first day, those to be initiated convened on the sanctified ground. On the second day, there were special purifications in the nearby ocean. On the third day, sacrifices of mullet and barley honored the goddess Ceres. On the fourth day, there was a solemn procession in which both men and women participated; and on the evening of the fifth day, a procession of torches. On the sixth day, a special celebration was held in honor of Iacchus, the son of Zeus and Demeter. On the seventh day, various athletic games took place. The eighth day honored Asclepius, the divine physician; and the formal initiation ritual was performed late that evening and into the night.

An alternate description of this rite can be found in *The Faiths of the World* by Rev. James Gardner, M.D., A.M. At the proper hour the candidates were led in a procession into the presence of the hierophant. He read to them from a book of stone tablets and admonished listeners they must not communicate in any way what they had heard on pain of death.

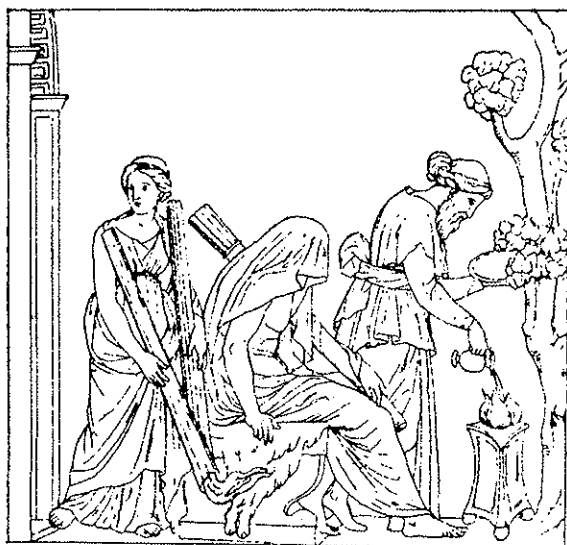
Gardner is of the opinion that the Greater Mysteries extended over a period of nine days but that the most important ceremony took place at midnight of the sixth day. In his account it was performed in the vestibule of the Temple of Demeter, all the uninitiated being commanded to withdraw. The ceremony began with a repetition of the oaths taken in the Lesser Mysteries. The candidates then put on new garments. After this ritual was completed all the lights were extinguished, thunder rolled, lightning flashed, unearthly noises resounded, and monstrous forms appeared calculated to terrify the neophytes. The mystae were then led by the hierophant into the adytum of the sanctuary of Demeter. The apartment was brilliantly lighted; and in it stood a statue of the goddess, splendidly adorned. The air

was filled with music, the new initiate had a myrtle crown placed upon his head, and came under a magical influence which was called a state of autopsia. In the midst of this blissful exhibition, a commanding voice spoke: "Conx Om Pax." The same author notes that those who were initiated continued to wear the garments they had worn at the blessed ceremony as long as even fragments of the cloth were held together; and when the shreds alone remained, they were dedicated in some temple as a memorial to the Mysteries of Demeter.

In his introduction to Taylor's *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, Dr. Alexander Wilder summarizes the climax of the initiation rite as follows: ". . . Demeter seals, by her own peculiar utterance and signals, by vivid coruscations of light, and cloud piled upon cloud, all that we have seen and heard from her sacred priest; and then, finally, the light of a serene wonder fills the temple, and we see the pure fields of Elysium, and hear the chorus of the Blessed;—then, not merely by external seeming or philosophic interpretation, but in real fact, does the Hierophant become the Creator (*demiourgos*) and revealer of all things; the Sun is but his torch-bearer, the Moon his attendant at the altar, and Hermes his mystic herald." This summation is partly derived from Porphyry.

By this Mystery the veils are taken from the faces of the mystae and they become *epoptae*. This entire concept is identical with the words of St. Paul—for the mystae are those who see as through a glass darkly; and the epoptae, those who see face to face. It is almost certain that it was from among the epoptae were selected those of superior capacities to become members of the temple hierarchy. These received further instruction which could not possibly be bestowed by ceremonials.

Salverte tried desperately to prove that the Mysteries did not teach any authentic body of esoteric lore. He advanced the hypothesis that the priests of the ancient temples were not magicians but ordinary mortals with a highly advanced



Initiation into the Mysteries; from a relief in Naples. The mystae has his head veiled. From *Atlas of Classical Antiquities* by Th. Schreiber, London: 1895.

knowledge of the natural sciences. Salverte assumed that their knowledge was so great that, in many areas at least, it equalled the achievements of recent times. According to him the old sacerdotalists created robots that could walk and speak, manufactured artificial lightning on request, could cause persons to appear and disappear at will, and were aware of the mystery of electricity.\* These early savants were masters of herbs and simples, had drugs which produced hallucinations, and antidotes which restored the reason. In mathematics they accomplished the quadrature of the circle and the trisection of the right angle. Through mathematics they advanced to astronomy and were aware of the true constitution of the solar system. By such insights they could produce a perpetual calendar, predict eclipses, and chart the orbits of comets. Their skills in medicine were

\* *The Philosophy of Magic, Prodigies and Apparent Miracles* by Eusebe Salverte.

phenomenal, and they formulated enduring legal codes. Among other accomplishments were their researches in animal magnetism, hypnosis, mesmerism, telepathy, and a variety of extrasensory phenomena.

Most modern writers are inclined to take the attitude held by Salverte, but there is a fallacy in this viewpoint. The scientific accomplishments associated with the priestly colleges are essentially exoteric and pertain to the advancement of the material sciences or their psychological overtones. The cultivation of knowledge to expand the temporal dominion of man over nature is foreign to the Mystery System. As Ouvaroff points out, all the sacred rites were concerned with the fall of man as reported in most of the scriptural writings of the world. The great collections, like the Alexandrian library, preserved the records of worldly knowledge and were themselves associated with the sacerdotal schools—especially the Mysteries of Serapis, the weeping god, sorrowing over the tragedy of mortal existence. Historians also reveal the inevitable decline of cultures, tragic reminders that civilizations are born of poets and are buried by philosophers.

A careful consideration of the existing accounts of the Mystery System seems to justify a concept which has been generally ignored. Historical evidence proves beyond reasonable doubt that the arcana of these institutions were never exposed, but there is much to imply that the essential doctrines were revealed. It is believed, for example, that the philosophy of Plato was built entirely upon the rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries. It is also known that the Neoplatonists theologized the teachings of Plato, but it has been taken for granted by most scholars that this was a departure from the original Platonic tradition. It may be necessary to revise this popular belief.

The illustrious persons upon whom the Greater Mysteries were conferred were already outstanding thinkers in their own right. Some were theologians or philosophers, others scientists, and still others prominent in statescraft and the



arts. In most cases, it was the learned who came to receive further enlightenment. It is not reasonable to assume that the rituals in which they participated for a few hours could have imparted to them all of the accumulated knowledge of mankind which had already reached ponderous proportions. Plutarch in his *Laconic Apothegms*, "Of Lysander," records that when he went to be initiated in the Samothracian Mysteries he was required by the hierophant to confess every wicked act that he had committed during his whole life.

This procedure may have contributed to the introduction of the confessional in the early Christian church. Those judged as unworthy to participate in the Sacred Mysteries had defects of conduct or character which denied them or disqualified them for acceptance. It is said that the Emperor Nero, after the murder of his mother, took a journey to Greece wishing to be present at the celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries. At the last minute the consciousness of his matricide deterred him from making the attempt. Because it was generally known that no one could be admitted into these Mysteries who was guilty of any serious offence, those under suspicion who were vindicated by the priestly examiners were assumed to be above moral reproach. The Emperor Marcus Antoninus, to free himself from reports affecting his character, applied for initiation and was accepted, thus clearing his name. The Emperor Constantine was rejected, indicating that temporal power alone could not avail against the judgment of the temple examiners.\*

Of an exception to the obligations of secrecy which in most cases were inviolate, Diodorus Siculus writes that the Cretans provided by an ancient law that their Mysteries should be shown openly to all and that those things which in other places were delivered in secret should be hidden from none who were desirous of knowing them. Incidentally, Pythagoras was among those who received initiation in

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\* *The Mysteries of Freemasonry* by John Fellows.

Crete. The testimony of Diodorus Siculus is more remarkable when it is realized that less is known about the Cretan rituals than those of Eleusis or the Egyptian Mysteries. It is possible that the Cretans held the opinion that the ceremonies protected themselves. They could be seen by many but understood only by the worthy. The Cretan culture was far older than that which arose in Attica, and some authorities feel that many of their beliefs were perpetuated in the Mysteries of Dionysus.

Had the Mysteries taught only that which was generally known, there could have been no justification for the heavy penalties imposed upon those guilty of revealing the hidden parts of the rites to the profane. Warburton declared that "the betrayers of the Mysteries were punished capitally and with merciless severity." Even the loss of life and the confiscation of property did not satisfy the law. A column exposed to every eye perpetuated the memory of their crime and punishment. Opinion more strong than law repressed the guilty as shown in the following quotation of Warburton: "Diagoras the Melian had revealed the Orphic and Eleusinian Mysteries, on which account he passed with the people as an atheist, and the city of Athens proscribed him and set a price on his head. The poet Aeschylus had like to have been torn in pieces by the people, on the mere suspicion that in one of his scenes he had given a hint of something in the Mysteries."\*

According to Aelian, the poet Aeschylus was in the greatest physical danger. The populace was so incensed that they were about to stone him to death. In this emergency Ameinias, the brother of Aeschylus, stepped forward and pleaded with the mob. To support his appeal he threw off his cloak, showing the stump of the arm which he had lost in the service of the Grecians at the battle of Salamis. This changed the temper of the crowd and, in honor of Ameinias, the poet was pardoned. Plutarch tells of what

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\* *Stellar Theology and Masonic Astronomy* by Robert Hewitt Brown, 32°.

befell Alcibiades as a consequence of his having imitated the ceremonies of the Mysteries. This brings up a rather difficult question. How could the popular mind become so inflamed over the indiscretion of poets and scholars? If the people were not themselves initiated, how did they recognize a line or two from a secret temple ritual?

Aristotle was accused of impiety by the hierophant of Eleusis on the grounds that he had profaned the Mysteries of Ceres in sacrificing, according to the rites of Eleusis, to Pythias, adoptive daughter of the eunuch Hermias who governed Lydia which was then under Persian domination. It is known that Aristotle was an initiate for it is specifically stated that he celebrated the rites of Eleusis. Had he remained in Athens he might have been convicted and executed, so he retired to Chalcis in Euboea where he died at the age of sixty-three years.\*

In the Egyptian rites the hierophant carried as the symbol of his office the *crux ansata*, the key to the inner sanctuary. This was a symbol of life, redemption, and salvation; and is pictured on old monuments as coming out of the mouth of a pharaoh when he forgave or spared the life of his adversary. It was therefore the insignia of redemption or resurrection and the key to the mystery of the human soul. As the human soul was embodied in man as the instrument of his salvation, the Mysteries embodied the World Soul which had the power to bestow life and release its redeeming power in the realms of mortality. The recognition of this truth accounts for the universal veneration in which these esoteric cults were held. They guarded the threshold which divided divine concerns from the secular structure of learning. The cryer of the mysteries proclaimed the ensoul-ing of all arts and sciences.

The dramatic presentation which climaxed the Eleusinian rites was an apocalyptic revelation of the Divine Plan. As in the case of a High Mass, the beholders were lifted up by a

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\* *Essay on the Mysteries of Eleusis* by M. Ouvaroff.

mystical experience into the realms of the World Soul. They experienced within themselves the eternal drama of unfolding life. They beheld the gods as personifications of the eternal principles which govern existence. Those who accepted the inner meaning became the true epoptae. The communication of knowledge in the various fields of human activity was a labor of the mind, but the sacred dramas involved all the sensory perceptions and bestowed the immediate apperception of primary causation. This larger vision did not destroy any constructive activity of the intellect but bound all knowledge to the duties of the soul. Like Homer's Golden Chain, it united the earth with the lofty peak of the spiritual Olympus. It accomplished the resurrection of the divinity buried in the sepulcher of mortality. Those who passed through this ceremony were said to have been reborn. Alexander the Great once declared that he had two fathers—Philip of Macedon who gave him being and Aristotle of Athens who gave him well-being. It was this well-being that the Mysteries bestowed upon their initiates. The lesser rite inspired the ennobling of human relationships and the greater rite conferred citizenship in the universal democracy.

The epoptae returned to their usual labors. Marcus Aurelius continued his service to the Roman Empire; Augustus carried on the burdens of the purple. Those of all professions had a new vision of their responsibilities. Over three hundred of the Greek and Roman initiates have been remembered as pioneers of learning and generous contributors to the continuing improvement of humanity. They worked from a master plan to which their intellects had been converted. They did not reject their former insights but ensouled them with the vision of the restoration of the Golden Age. Obviously the inner transformation stimulated by the witnessing of the sacred rituals could not be exposed, but it was revealed for all time through the experience of an apotheosis even though it lasted for only a few moments.

*The Temple of Diana at Ephesus*

Ephesus was an important crossroad of early commerce and cultures. Here famous philosophers and mystics built their schools and taught disciples who gathered from the most distant parts of the East. Here also three witches—personifications of the pagan schools of Europe, Asia, and Africa—brewed their strange doctrines as in a magic caldron. The Gnostics, the Neoplatonists, and the sons of Manes survived in Ephesus because they could find no refuge in less-tolerant communities. This is the reason why as late as the third century A.D. the Emperor Julian found them there.

Ephesus and the Temple of Diana were also closely associated with early Christianity. One of the Seven Churches of Asia dedicated to St. John is said to have stood near the temple. At Ephesus also were the tombs of St. John the Beloved, Timothy, Mary Magdalene, and the Seven Sleepers with their faithful dog. The mingling of Oriental and Occidental religious sects finally caused the early Church Fathers to declare the city of Diana the mother of heresies, and St. Paul preached against heresy at Ephesus. Following a precedent which prevailed throughout the Near East, the city eventually became a great religious center of Islam after it was taken over by the followers of the prophet Muhammad.

Diana was a goddess and protectress of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Exoterically, she was associated with the moon and the lunar cycle of generation. She was the nourisher of the whole basic frame of Nature, sustaining all things from her ever-flowing fountains of nutrition. Esoterically, Diana Ephesia was one of the most splendid examples of the cult of the Great Mother. As mother of generation she preserved all creatures; and as mother of wisdom she sustained both the World Soul and the human soul. Known under many names, worshiped under strange forms, invoked by curious rites and prayers, she was the ever-living nourisher



The Roman monument of Cybele represented as the Mother of the Gods and sovereign genius of the natural world. From Montfaucon's *Antiquity Explained*, London: 1721.

who can never know death. She was therefore celebrated as the Mater Deorum.

As mother of the gods, Diana was associated not only with fecundity but the magical arts, for like Isis she was a lady of enchantment. Isis, it may be recalled, was also proficient in magic and even conjured the great god Ra to reveal his secret name and word. Both Diana and Isis were said to be the protectresses of motherhood and the home. The figures of Diana Ephesia are usually represented with arms and hands outstretched as though to embrace. She has become, either by intent or circumstance, associated with the eternal patience and forgiveness of the Great Mother. Diana always waits for the return of her own; and whatever *they* have done, even against her, she transmutes with her boundless affection and regard.

Everywhere there were proofs of the generation and regeneration of living creatures. The flowing fountains, the placid lakes, the great oceans were full of living things depending utterly upon an infinite supply of necessities. It never occurred to the elder races that the earth was without a soul. The harvest came because Mother Earth loved her children, caring for them and sustaining them with inexhaustible tenderness. The earth always receives her creatures in the end, and they go to sleep in her embrace. Likewise heaven ultimately claims all its creatures. The spirit, after its long and difficult journey, returns home to the heart of the Great Mother of Mysteries.

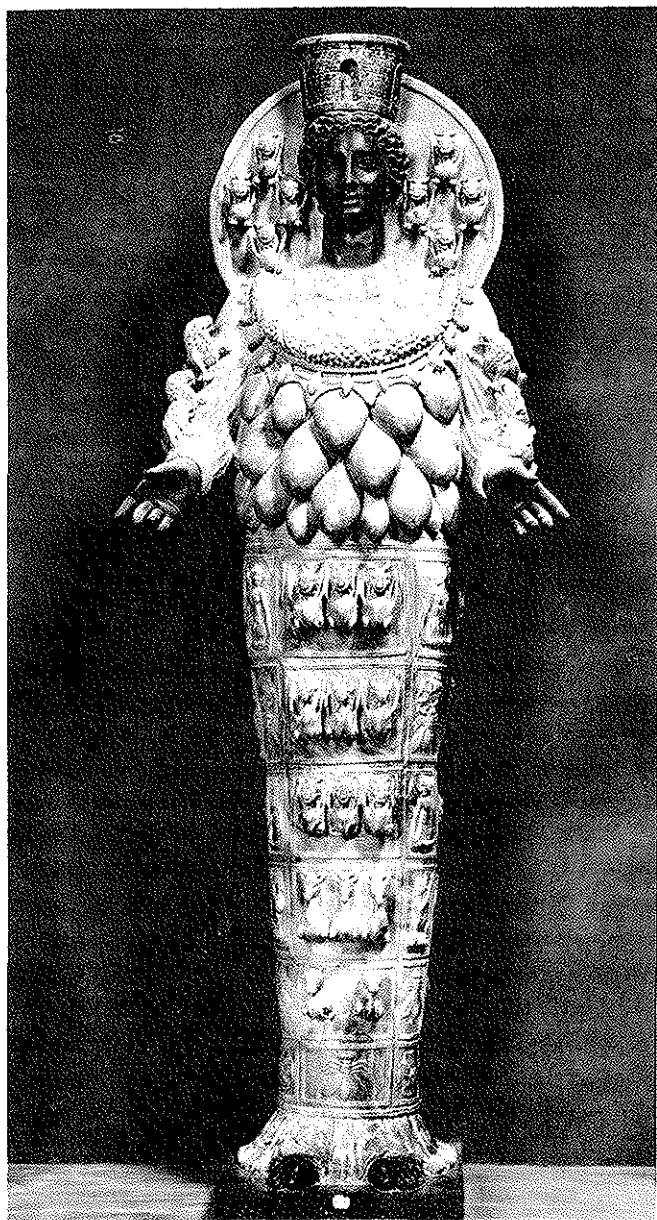
Living close to earth and nature, ancient peoples were keenly mindful of the reproductive processes operating everywhere in their environment. They venerated the principle of fertility with a sincerity, dignity, and purity beyond the comprehension of their more sophisticated descendants. All life was bestowed by the Divine, and the works of God were forever holy and beautiful. Ritualism was a representation of natural processes, and fecundity was proof of eternal benevolence. The altars of the goddess Diana were adorned with the first fruits of the season, and she became the lady of abundance. The cult of the Great Mother was first associated with the rites of Gaea, the physical earth itself, as the mother of all generation. We must not feel that this implied materialism or lack of insight.

As the symbols of Diana were collected from numerous sources, traces of other goddesses are to be found among her attributes. To understand the various titles, names, and forms under which the great goddess of the Ephesians was venerated, we must realize that the Mediterranean civilizations were bound together by their religious institutions far more intimately than prosaic historians would imagine. Numerous sanctuaries honored the aspects of a single deity, and each of the shrines was attended by those particularly concerned with a certain phase of the inclusive symbolism. Thus Pallas Athenā was wisdom of the mind and Kore was

the nourisher of the young. This divinity, Kore, played two distinct parts; she strengthened the instinct which binds together parents and children and as lady of the harvest sustained physical creatures—all regarded together as the children of the gods. As Opis, Diana was the beautiful of countenance; and as Artemis the goddess was the divine physician, nursing the sick and becoming the sustainer of health. When she was adorned with the symbol of the moon or the crab, she was the protectress of the lunar cycle and nourisher of the unborn. In the coinage of Ephesus, Diana appears as *Diana Venatrix*—the huntress, and as *Diana Lucifera*—the torchbearer, she was the bringer of light, especially the light of the soul. She took on the attributes of Persephone and became the nourisher of those in the darkness of the underworld. Diademed with turrets, she was the protectress of cities, but her crown also meant that she was queen of the world as represented by social institutions, states, and nations. Some of Diana's images were ornamented with stags, graceful and fleet-footed creatures; and her vestments included the spotted skins of mules. These hybrids were associated with the worship of Bacchus and Apollo.

Images of Diana, especially the Ephesian type, have been discovered in various parts of Europe where they were carried either by missionary priests or foreign legions. There was a temple to this goddess in France near Marseilles, and another in Spain. Her influence was extended by the Roman armies, merchants, traders, and travelers. Many of her attributes have been bestowed upon the Christian Madonna, and in old cathedrals the figures of the Black Virgin closely resemble the black Diana. It is not known in what form Diana was first worshiped at Ephesus; but she became the patron goddess of the city, assuming some of the qualities of Athena, the presiding deity of Athens. Historians infer that her earliest images were of wood, resembling ebony. The wood itself may not have originally been black; but the image was frequently anointed with oils,





Diana of the Ephesians. From the statue in the Museo Nazionale in Naples.

gums, and various liquids to prevent its deterioration. Thus time and veneration may have darkened the figure until even the discoloration became a vital element in the symbolism.

According to Pliny all writers describing the sacred image of Diana, with the exception of Mucianus who was one of the last to see it, declared the figure to be of ebony. This material was supposed to have been chosen by Endaeus, the pupil of Daedalus. Endaeus was the artist believed to have carved the statue which, incidentally, was of no great size. The original relic of the goddess which is supposed to have fallen to earth from the god Jupiter was an untrimmed block of beech or elm.

Darkness was the ancient symbol of the unknown, the invisible, or that which could not be traced or explored by the mind. Pythagoras paid homage to that eternal darkness which was the mother of light, and the Chaldeans affirmed the nature of Deity to be a thrice-deep darkness. In any event, the Ephesian image must have been frequently replaced; and the more classical forms with which we are now familiar have come to be accepted as the proper likenesses of Diana. The numerous renovations of the image itself and the sanctuary in which it stood probably account for the conflicting descriptions to be found in ancient texts. Like the Serapis of Alexandria, Diana is reported to have been composed of materials derived from all the species, kinds, and types of living things. When the substances themselves were too impermanent or unsuitable, they were reproduced in replica and included in the ornamentation of the image.

The most familiar form of the statue—and undoubtedly ancient—is known to us by several examples, the finest of which is in the Museo Nazionale at Naples. Here the goddess is represented standing with feet together and body swaddled and bound. The hands are spread and supported by fulcra. She is represented with many breasts and a broad collar ornamented with the signs of the zodiac. She also wears a necklace of acorns, supposedly the first food of

human beings. The head of the goddess is surrounded by a nimbus denoting glory, within which are eight griffins—symbols of power. Like the Greek divinity Rhea (of which she is a type), Diana wears a turreted crown signifying dominion over all terrestrial objects. Her upper arms support lions and the hair about her brow is arranged in the form of flames.

Sometimes Diana is accompanied by three ears of corn, a pomegranate, or a poppy. Her swaddled body is decorated with a variety of creatures representing the forms sustained by Nature. Occasionally but not often, this type of Diana carries lunar emblems or ox horns. The face is benign and matronly. Examples exist in which the head, hands, and feet are of bronze; and the rest of the figure is of marble or alabaster—both of which are associated with the lunar power.

The principal figure of Diana in the temple at Ephesus was protected from the gaze of the profane by a splendid veil. Pausanias states definitely that during the ceremonies this veil was raised upward. Apparently the use of veils was governed by an exact formula. The veil before Jupiter Olympus was lowered to the pavement to expose the image, and the veils of Isis were always drawn to the sides. Why the upward motion was used in the case of Diana has been the cause of considerable speculation because it generally exposes the image in the least solemn manner. The feet are first seen, whereas in the case of Zeus the magnificent head was immediately visible. Actually the raising of the veil was peculiarly appropriate, for in the revelation of Nature the lower and lesser parts are seen first and only afterwards are the higher and more splendid aspects revealed.

The Carpentum of Diana Ephesia was a high festival named for the sacred vehicle or cart (*carpentum*) in which the image of the goddess was drawn through the streets. On these occasions the statue was adorned with magnificent vestments and robes embroidered with the most sacred and secret symbols. The image was supported with bars of gold.

The honor in which Diana was held can be summarized in the words of Apuleius who was an initiate of her Mysteries: "Thou rollest the sphere of the universe round the steady poles, dost illuminate the sun, govern the world, and tread on the dark realms of Tartarus. The stars move responsive to thy command, the Gods rejoice in thy divinity, the hours and seasons return by thy appointment, and the elements reverence thy decree."\*

The figure of Diana Ephesia is of the order of art. It instructs the soul through the eyes as the words of the wise instruct the mind through the ears. Art depends upon impact for its ministry. It is accepted as in all parts appropriate and significant. Through the contemplation of the noblest works of man, the consciousness is invited to partake of the nutritive quality of the sublime. Thus nourished by gratitude and sustained by holy resolutions, the soul presses on and, sustained from within itself, seeks the source of all nutrition—the ever-flowing fountains of the Good.

The Temple of Diana at Ephesus is included among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and its beauty rivaled the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus. It has been said that the Ionic order of columns was specially invented to adorn the temple and the most celebrated architects and artisans of Asia Minor contributed to its grandeur. Early travelers were so completely overwhelmed by this sanctuary that most of them have failed to leave us an adequate description.

However Vitruvius, the initiated Roman architect, has given a remarkable description of the vast temple itself. The building stood upon a marshy ground, selected to minimize the possibility of damage by earthquakes. A very deep foundation was first excavated, and additional strength was provided by laying a bed of charcoal covered with wool sacks. Whole mountains were quarried to secure the necessary stones until, it has been said, the foundation was strong enough to support Atlas while he upheld the

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\* *The Metamorphosis, or Golden Ass, of Apuleius* translated by Thomas Taylor.

heavens. The temple required 220 years to build, and Strabo reported that the magnificent structure was burned by Herostratus on the day that Alexander the Great was born (356 B.C.). Herostratus was inspired by an obsessing determination to be remembered after his death. He said that the name of the man who committed such an awful deed would never be forgotten. He was right, but the buildings were later restored.

In his book *Ephesus, and the Temple of Diana*, Edward Falkener summarizes the tragic circumstances which ended in the total destruction of this beautiful and wonderful sanctuary. Apparently Julius Caesar protected the temple, but in the reigns of Tiberius and Nero the buildings were damaged. In 64 A.D. Nero thoroughly pillaged the Temple of Diana. An edict framed by Constantine Magnus (280?-337) ordered all the pagan temples to be closed and access forbidden. Also governors of all the provinces were empowered to claim the treasures of the temples for the imperial exchequer. It is unlikely that the temple existed later than 399 A.D.

We have no certain record of the arts or sciences which formed the curriculum of the sacerdotal college of Diana. The transcendental secrets perished with their priesthood. We know however that the Ephesian writings which were supposed to have been burned did not perish utterly. It seems probable that fragments of the Mysteries of Ephesus contributed to the secret teachings of the Gnostics, the Cabalists, and the Essenes. Even in ruin, the wisdom of the Great Diana continued to influence the destiny of philosophy and religion.

### *Pythagoras*

Pythagoras of Samos was born in the sixth century B.C. probably between the years 590 and 580. He has been referred to as the first European adept and as the most ini-

tiated man of all time. In my two books, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* and *Journey in Truth*, is summarized what is known about this great philosopher and his teaching. He traveled extensively visiting most of the centers of ancient learning; and about his fiftieth year established his own school at Crotona, a Dorian colony in Italy. Thomas Taylor, the distinguished English Platonist, considers Pythagoras to have been the most important scientist of the pre-Christian world. The system of instruction which he founded included elements of Brahmanism and Hindu mysticism, and it has been claimed that he was the only European admitted into the esoteric doctrines of Hinduism. H. P. Blavatsky states that in India Pythagoras was known under the name of Yavanacharya (the Ionian teacher).\*

In early Masonic documents he is referred to as "Peter Gower," a Grecian, a master of former times. It is interesting to note that in the Pythagorean School women were accepted on the same basis as men and could advance to the highest grades of instruction. This may seem to be a unique circumstance, but actually the education of women was a major consideration among the Grecian states. After the death of Pythagoras, his wife became the head of his school and later married the most advanced member of the Pythagorean community.

One of the best biographies of Pythagoras is found in *The History of Philosophy* by Thomas Stanley, and this work passed through a number of editions in the seventeenth century. The section concerning Pythagoras has been reprinted by PRS. The *Life of Pythagoras* by Iamblichus was translated by Thomas Taylor and is considered to be the definitive work on the master's life. As is usual in the biographies of adepts, the factual fragments relating to the man were gradually transformed into a symbolical exposition of the initiation rites as they were set forth in the Mystery tradition. It has been established with reasonable

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\* *The Theosophical Glossary* by H. P. Blavatsky.



Portrait of Pythagoras based upon an ancient coin.

certainly that most of the disciplines in Western religion were derived from the teachings of Pythagoras.

Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie in his remarkable book *The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia* presents a number of interesting sidelights relating to Pythagoreanism. He points out that members of the order resided in large houses with their wives and children. The curriculum included a study of Homer and Hesiod; and their food consisted mainly of bread, honey, and water. The system practiced three degrees. The first was the *mathematici* concerned with the exact sciences; the second was the *theoretici* devoted to metaphysical researches; and the third, the *electi* dedicated to the most esoteric instruction limited only to the most advanced pupils. In addition to these teachings, members were expected to engage in manual tasks, such as gardening and maintaining the property of the society.

Several scholars including Ouvaroff have assumed that the Greeks were sustained by three contemporary institu-

tions. The first of these was the state religion based upon a polytheistic theology. This consisted principally of public celebrations and the veneration of the various deities in their proper temples and shrines. Greek mythology, as it has descended to us in lore and legend, perpetuates the popular faith of that time. It was a kind of pagan orthodoxy, adapted to the naturalistic tone of Grecian life.

The second division was the philosophical schools. There were many of these, each under the leadership of a renowned and venerated teacher. The Platonic Academy was the most famous of these organizations, but numerous others flourished in the temperate intellectual climate of Grecian democracy. These philosophical groups made valuable contributions in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, and atomism. The third aspect of the cultural tradition was the Mysteries dedicated primarily to the regeneration of humanity. The Mysteries did not originate in Greece but were brought there from Egypt which in turn had received them from India.

A few writers have regarded these three branches of learning as competitive. Naturally all candidates in search of wisdom were drawn from members of the state religion, and the basic symbolism was gradually interpreted on abstract levels. The philosophical schools covered a wide field of mental activity. Some were theistic, others agnostic, and a few completely materialistic. Freedom of thought and speech was much admired by the populace in general and, while some rivalry certainly existed, it was on an intellectual plane. The Mysteries were dedicated to the most advanced aspects of human learning. They made use of the state religion and the philosophical schools but sought to release spiritual values from bondage to literal forms or intellectual speculations.

Plato, for example, certainly maintained the dignity of the state religion and at the same time functioned on a completely rational level, seeking in various ways to correct the



abuses and corruptions in the fields of religion and politics. At the same time, he was an initiate of the Mysteries by which his philosophy was ensouled and elevated to the contemplation of Divine Truth. While Plato is remembered principally for his intellectual powers, it is reported that in his older years he dedicated his soul to the contemplation of spiritual realities. It is said that he left writings revealing his theological convictions but these have not survived. Nearly seven hundred years after the death of Plato, Proclus the Neoplatonist attempted to restore the Platonic theology.

Our discussion of Neoplatonism is reserved for the section dealing with the Egyptian Mysteries. It may be appropriate to discuss the theology of the Greeks prior to the advent of Pythagoras. The state religion certainly existed prior to this date, but it is assumed that it was devoid of esoteric overtones. The epic poems of Homer proved conclusively that the Olympian deities and their entourage of lesser divinities were familiar to the Greeks at least eight hundred years before the Christian era. Hesiod's *Theogeny* confirms this beyond doubt. It only remained for philosophical and scientific minds to interpret the old myths as allegories concealing the true story of the formation of the universe and the place of humanity in the Divine Plan.

The Neoplatonists assumed that this analogy was already known by initiates who had found the keys through contact with Egypt and the Far East. One doctrine however which apparently was not promulgated before Pythagoras was reincarnation. Because there was a conflict between this Oriental teaching and the state religion, it was concealed from the public until the reconciliation could be achieved. Pythagoras taught reincarnation to his own disciples but bound them by obligations of discretion.

There is some indication that Pythagoras was aware of the Jewish religion and was influenced by the teachings of Moses. The theoretic arithmetic associated with the Pythagoreans and restored in Egypt by Theon of Smyrna became

closely involved in the cabalistic speculations of Jewish scholars.\* Pythagorean teachings bearing upon a community of the wise reappears also in the practices of the Essenes of Syria and Lebanon. Pythagorean diagrams can also be found in alchemical manuscripts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries A.D.

### *The Tablet of Cebes*

Thomas Stanley in *The History of Philosophy* refers briefly to Cebes as a disciple of Socrates (470?-399 B.C.). The *Tablet* is the only writing of Cebes which has survived, although it is known that he prepared other works including one dealing with the infernal world. Unlike several of the more prominent members of the Socratic School, Cebes did not found a sect of his own and is therefore entitled to be regarded as a true Socratic. It is recorded that Cebes was one of that small group of intimate followers who were present at the death of Socrates.

Cebes is said to have been a citizen of Thebes, and Xenophon ranks him among those close friends of Socrates who lived pure and noble lives. Plato mentions Cebes as a friendly and thoughtful person, and characterizes him in the *Phaedo* as a sagacious investigator of truth, never yielding his assent without convincing reason.† Cebes wrote at least three dialogues of which only the *Tablet* is extant.

In the dialogue *Gerundio*, a stranger, contemplating the votive inscriptions in the Temple of Kronos, examines in astonishment a strange tablet depicting the different departments of human life. While he is contemplating the picture, an old man approaches him and explains that the tablet is of foreign origin, having been placed in the temple by one following the disciplines of Pythagoras or perhaps Parmenides. When questioned by Cebes, the old man describes

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\* *Kabbala Denudata* by Knorr von Rosenroth.

† *A Choice of Emblems* by Geoffrey Whitney.

the design according to the account given by the original artist.

Although the *Tablet of Cebes* has not descended to us in its original form, several reconstructions based upon the description have been attempted. It is likely that these restorations are defective, but they give us at least a slight conception of the scope of the design. If the original were by a genuine Pythagorean, it almost certainly contained keys of interpretation not preserved in the more recent versions.

The *Tablet of Cebes* has been a source of constant inspiration to the writers of emblem books. Translations and versions of the *Tablet* have passed through numerous editions since its first appearance in print in 1497. In some cases the text is accompanied by a woodcut or engraving of the symbolic picture. Possibly the most famous of these modern versions is by the celebrated Dutch designer and engraver Romyn de Hooghe whose plate dated 1670 is reproduced herewith. There is also an excellent example in *Theatro Moral de la Vida Humana* by Otho Vaenius, Amberes: 1733.

The original dialogue of Cebes is ethical rather than philosophical, although there are numerous hints of deeper meaning. When we examine the de Hooghe engraving, we see outside the gate in the right foreground groups of children emerging from a dark cavern under the watchful gaze of a reclining female figure signifying Nature—the mother of all living. At the left of the gate is a handsomely dressed lady holding a goblet from which the children are drinking. In Greek mythology this cup is said to be filled with the water of Lethe which causes those who partake of it to forget the divine regions from whence they came. The figure holding the goblet is called Delusion, and all who enter the mortal state are to some degree under her influence. Near the center of the picture is an elderly man denominated Genius—in this case signifying a being possess-



The Tablet of Cebes; from an original engraving by Romyn de Hooghe. From *Choice of Emblems* by Geoffrey Whitney, Leyden: 1586.

ing transcendent wisdom and who acts as a guardian angel or archetypal teacher. He is also a personification of the moral and ethical traditions which guide those not yet able to direct their own lives.

Above the gate is the letter *A* which occurs frequently in Baconian and Rosicrucian symbolism. Here it may represent Alpha, the beginning of mortal existence, and can also stand for Adam, the progenitor of humanity. Those passing through this ancient and ruinous doorway enter the region of sensuous confusion. They are in bondage to appetites, ambitions, and desires; and they flock about the figure of Fortune. Fortune, or "Fama," was a favorite subject of fifteenth to eighteenth century artists who usually depicted her carrying an urn for the ashes of the dead and a horse's halter and bit to indicate bondage to possessions. In the engraving by Romyn de Hooghe, Fortune is tossing a crown to her votaries, most of whom are abandoned to pleasure or grief. Fortune stands upon a globe which signifies insecurity, and what she gives with one hand she takes away with the other. Those who are favored immediately excite the cupidity of the less fortunate who then covet her gifts and will commit all manner of crimes to secure them.

Within the next circle are gathered a number of scholars who are seeking to cultivate the different types of learning to which they are especially addicted. They are the custodians of enlightenment and are assumed to have acquired aesthetic maturity. At this point it is interesting to quote a few lines from the ancient text accompanying the tablet. Of the intelligentsia it states: "Some are Poets; some, so-called Orators. Some are Reasoners; others are Musicians, Mathematicians, Geometricians, Astronomers, Critics, Aristipian Pleasure seekers, or Aristotelian Peripatetic scientists!" The wise old man then describes the fate of these scholars: "That potion which they received from Delusion remains active in them; so also Ignorance, Senselessness, Prejudice and other Badness. None of this fades out from them till they leave SHAM-CULTURE, enter on the right

road, and drink the purifying medicaments. Through this purification having sloughed off all their evils such as Prejudice and Ignorance, then, and not before, shall they be saved . . . nor shall they be released from a single evil merely because of any Science."

Among these scientists one is looking at the stars, several are discoursing; and there also appears a large cask which might symbolize the barrel of Diogenes which was his residence in the Athenian forum for a number of years.

The upper part of the picture within the third wall is first wild and rough. There is a small door which only a few can discover, and this leads up a perilous path toward the palace hidden by clouds. This is the way of true wisdom which Cebes calls happiness; and he concludes his discourse with the simple statement: "Wisdom alone is a Good, while Foolishness is the only Evil."

Near the top, the narrow ascending path ends abruptly. Beyond the break are mysterious shadowy figures. When the traveler reaches this place, he can go no further without the help of the immortals who must carry him across the gulf.

There is no escape from the journey represented by the *Tablet of Cebes*. Each living person must pass through each of the interludes suggested by the departments of the picture. Having survived all temptations and preserved the mind from that sophistication which is its own most dangerous ailment, the truth seeker continues on his difficult journey. Before him rises a steep and lofty peak, and those who approach it must be strengthened by faith alone for they cannot see the summit toward which they climb.

The mountain may be considered as representing Olympus, but in poetic allegories it is more often described as Parnassus, the abode of the Muses. It is on the steep side of Parnassus that Pegasus, the winged horse, stamped upon the earth with his hoof and brought forth the ever-flowing fountain of Helicon. The waters of this fountain are streams

of inspiration which make this world a place of beauty and nourish the aspiring human soul.

Thus we trace the course of human life through the three conditions which correspond with the degrees of the initiation rites of primitive people. The psychic nature locked within the physical body develops through clearly defined stages—of which the lowest is imagination; the second, intellectualism; and the third, intuition. Each level must exhaust its lessons before the truth seeker can proceed on his journey to enlightenment. Emotionally he is plagued with many miseries. He is jealous and the victim of his own jealousy. He hates and is destroyed by his own hatred. His ambitions become excessive, and he is finally torn down by the ruthless avarice of his associates.

At this point disillusioned, he seeks to escape by passing into the second circle, hoping that his mind can solve his dilemma. He then discovers the discord of intellectuals. There is little true fraternity among them since each has his own explanations which he tries to force upon his confreres. Most of all, factors are established through the observations of natural phenomena; but the interpretations are according to the fashions of the day—the certainties of the moment may be among the absurdities of the future. Finding all instruction deficient in true insight, the wanderer continues his way finally realizing that, before he can climb the rugged slopes of the central mountain, he must discipline his own character. Even as he approaches his goal, he may falter or, through some compromise of character, fall from the steep cliffs back into the misty realms of self-deceit.

If he can reach the summit, he comes to a pleasant region where he is welcomed by the Muses, or spirits of wisdom, and the Graces, or archetypes of beauty. He is then given the sacred drink of the gods—the water of Mnemosyne, or remembrance. He now knows who and what he was before he was born, why it was necessary for him to journey along

the mystical pattern set forth in the *Tablet of Cebes* and what lies beyond him after he has achieved victory over the ignorance and selfishness in himself. At this point he dwells within the light of his own consciousness.

Asked if learning helps man to attain liberation from the perils of the world, the old interpreter of the *Tablet* replied Socratically. He explained that little is to be gained by intellectual improvement unless the disciple prepares himself for honest study. As Heraclitus observed, "Opinionism is a falling sickness of the reason." Until the mind disciplines itself against the intensities of its own attitudes, there is no escape from pain. When opinions are wrong, the person can only free himself through recognition of his own mistakes; without this, few can achieve salvation. Those who attempt to maintain their own intensive prejudices and still press forward to a life of wisdom must arrive in the end at failure and confusion.

People come into this world with naturally curious minds and an awareness of their own ignorance. Gradually however they are taught the opinions of their associates and are urged to become opinionated in turn. By the time they have graduated from school, young people have lost the facility to contemplate realities without prejudice. They no longer live to grow in wisdom and grace but devote their attention to the accumulation of wealth and the advancement of career. In later years most of them discover the vanity of worldly fame but are no longer able to break away from the habits that now have come to dominate them. Finally these troubled souls depart from mortal life into that strange world of sleep, only to be reborn again through the same gate they entered in previous lifetimes.

Most editions of the *Tablet* have a kind of appendix bearing upon the subject of good and evil. This is probably a later addition, and Dr. Guthrie who published the translation of the *Tablet* in 1910 considers that this appendix was derived from the Stoics.\* The section can be summarized in

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\* *The Greek Pilgrim's Progress* by Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, Ph.D.



a series of brief statements: If a man lives badly, it will appear to him that life is evil. But another who lives well decides that life is good. As life cannot be both good and evil, but is essentially of the nature of good because it is necessary, the answer is obvious. It is not life but man himself who determines his fortune or misfortune. It follows that the solution does not lie in changing life but in the improvement of living so that each will prosper in a benevolent environment appropriate to his own nature.

Although little known in modern times, the *Tablet of Cebes* is a genuine relic of the ancient Mysteries, and the revival of the design is closely associated with the restoration of the esoteric sciences by the alchemists and Rosicrucians of the seventeenth century.

### *Plato*

That Plato of Athens was an initiate of the Mysteries is evident from his writings which contain numerous intimations and veiled references to these sacred institutions. He could not speak more clearly, being bound by vows and obligations to preserve inviolate the secrets of the temple. As Dr. Alexander Wilder points out, it would not have been safe for Plato to discourse in familiar language the doctrines illustrated and enforced at the sacred orgy. Aeschylus barely escaped death, and Aristarchus was charged by Cleantes with impiously profaning the secrets of the Mysteries because he divulged the heliocentric doctrine now imputed to Copernicus.\*

The vast learning and erudition of Plato could only have originated in a broad and deep scholarship, and several early writers list the masters and schools with which he associated himself. *The Life of Plato* by Olympiodorus is a useful compendium of such information, and many later historians have drawn from this source.

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\* *The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries* by Thomas Taylor, edited by Alexander Wilder (See Wilder glossary).

Plato lived with Socrates for eight years; and during this period he composed several dialogues, supposedly faithful reports of his master's words. However, he added much material of his own and, when he recited his *Lysis*, Socrates exclaimed: "O Hercules! How many things doth this young man feign of me." Diogenes Laertius states definitely that Plato put many words into the mouth of Socrates that the old man never spoke.

In *The City of God* St. Augustine says that Plato, feeling that his own inventions and Socrates' instructions fell short of the true aim of philosophy, determined to travel to any place where report told him that he might drink of the spring of learning—even to the furthestmost parts of the earth. Cicero is the authority for this statement.

While in Sicily Plato secured three books of natural philosophy by Philolaus the Pythagorean. Eugubinus suggests that Plato secured certain of the mystical part of his philosophy from the Hermetic books of Egypt. He was also inspired by the Jewish lawgiver Moses whose works had been translated into Greek before the reign of Alexander the Great. The Neoplatonist Numenius asks: "What else is Plato than a Moses who (speaks Greek, or) reveals Greek tendencies?"

The most important of Plato's journeys in search of wisdom took him to Egypt where he remained for some time studying geometry and making observations of celestial motions. He settled in the province of Sais "learning of the wise men there, what they held concerning the Universe, whether it had a beginning, and whether it is moved at present, wholly or in part, according to Reason."\*

Thomas Taylor, the greatest of all modern interpreters of the Greeks, discovered among the manuscripts in the British Museum evidence to the effect that Plato was initiated into the Greater Mysteries when he was forty-nine years of age. The ceremony took place in one of the subterra-

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\* *The History of Philosophy* by Thomas Stanley, Esq.

nean halls near the Great Pyramid of Giza. The Isiac Table formed the altar before which the divine Plato stood and received that which was always his but which the ceremony of the Mysteries enkindled and brought from its dormant state. After a further three months' sojourn in the halls of the Pyramid, the initiate Plato was sent out into the world to do the work of the Great Order, as Pythagoras and Orpheus had before him.\*

The initiation of Plato was translated by John Yarker from the French of Charles and Auguste Beaumont which was published in Paris in 1867. In this work there is a prologue called "Initiation of Plato" in which is digested a great amount of ancient lore. While the compilation is modern, the research is authentic and sets forth in considerable detail the type of esoteric ritual Plato *might* have passed through in the temples of Egypt. An English version translated by John Yarker appears in that curious Masonic publication *The Kneph*.†

The nobility of Plato's mind, the extent of his learning, and the vast influence of his thought upon the entire course of Western civilization make it important for us to know the source of his extraordinary inspiration. Those institutions of esoteric arts and sciences which bestowed such a man upon the world deserve universal admiration. It is therefore most necessary that we prove beyond reasonable doubt that Plato was actually initiated into those Mysteries which are the fountains of human felicity.

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\* This statement of Thomas Taylor's is not in his published writings, but was a private observation to a friend. The Isiac Table, often called the Bembine Tablet because it was for some time in the collection of Cardinal Bembo, is now in the Museum of Turin. It has been reproduced several times, and is available in my *Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy*.

† *Freemasonry of the Ancient Egyptians* by Manly P. Hall.



Portrait of Plato in carnelian stone by Fulvius Ursinus. From *The Path*, July, 1886.

According to Olympiodorus and Laertius, the first dialogue that Plato composed was the *Phaedrus*. In this composition which concerns beauty and love, the master states clearly that he is an initiate; although several translators have mutilated the lines, they have not succeeded in completely obscuring the substance. In this dialogue Plato writes: "But it will be then lawful to survey the most splendid beauty, when we shall obtain, together with that blessed choir, this happy vision and contemplation. And we indeed shall enjoy this blessed spectacle together with Jupiter, but others in conjunction with some other god; at the same time being initiated in those mysteries which it is lawful to call the most blessed of all mysteries. And these divine orgies will be celebrated by as many of us as shall remain in futurity; each of us at the same time possessing the proper integrity of his nature, and being freed from the molestations of evil. Likewise, in consequence of being *initiated* and becoming *spectators of mysteries*, we shall be familiar with entire, simple, quietly stable and blessed visions, resident in a pure light; and shall be ourselves pure and immaculate, and liberated from this surrounding vestment, which we

denominate body, and to which we are now bound, like an oyster to its shell."

In a footnote to the above paragraph, Thomas Taylor comments thus: "There is nothing belonging to antiquity more celebrated than the mysteries, and especially the Eleusinian, though the leading particulars of this august institution are perfectly unknown to the moderns, as I am able to evince, from a curious Greek manuscript in my possession of Psellus, *de Daemonibus secundum Graecorum Dogmata*; and from my own observations on the subject derived from the Platonic philosophy."\*

Plato's concept of the empire of the wise, ruled over by the philosopher-king, was but a political enlargement of the pattern of the Mystery Schools and the perfected men who governed them. The philosopher-king is the adept, the natural leader of mankind, the good shepherd, and the representative on earth of the sovereign gods.

The best evidence of the significance of the Mysteries is to be found in the lives and writings of those who received the initiations. Among the most famous were Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle; yet these same men acknowledged that, in comparison to the wisdom contained in the adytum of the Mysteries, they knew and taught only as small children. Incredible as this may seem, it bears out the thoughts of Porphyry who wrote that the initiates during their trials participated in a divine splendor and the gods themselves attended the initiators.

The Greek Mysteries gradually retired into obscurity after the rise of the Roman Empire under the twelve Caesars. The decadent forms practiced in Rome did not include the true esoteric doctrine. By the eighth century of the Christian era, the adept tradition of the Greeks had disappeared entirely from public view. Fragments of the rites survived in some of the early Christian mystical sects in an imperfect form.

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\* *The Phaedrus of Plato* translated from the Greek by Thomas Taylor.

Plato died while engaged in writing, after having lived exactly eighty-one years. Seneca tells us that wise men of Chaldea (magi) offered a sacrifice to his memory as being more than human because he had completed the perfect number (which nine multiplied by nine produces), his great climacteric year. Statues and altars were erected to his memory; the day of his birth was celebrated as a festival by his followers, and his portrait was preserved on engraved gems. Both Christians and non-Christians have vied with each other in expressing their admiration for Plato. On his sepulcher, the Athenians placed the following inscription:

From great Apollo Paion sprung,  
And Plato, too, we find:  
The saviour of the body, one;  
The other of the mind.\*

### *The Frogs of Aristophanes*

The old or Dionysiac comedy of the Greeks flourished in a period of extreme intellectual democracy (470-390 B.C.). It exercised what has been called a satirical censorship over public and private morals and, like Diogenes, "the dog of Athens," barked at all men's heels with impunity. Much in the same spirit as the court jester of medieval Europe, the Greek comic-dramatist and poet could mimic, denounce, expose, and deride as pleased his fancy. He was safe from serious consequences, protected by popular opinion, and always in a position to take refuge behind the argument that he wrote only to amuse and entertain. Incidentally there was no lack of encouragement, and the sharper and more extravagant his irony the better it suited the prevailing taste.

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\* *The Platonist*, Volume I, No. 3, April, 1881.

Here then was an excellent opportunity to perpetuate certain of the doctrines of the Mysteries without the true import being immediately evident to the uninitiated. Of course, the dramatist had to use a measure of discretion for even his almost unassailable position would not permit him to profane the sacred rites. Many of the old comedies however were evidently based upon the rituals of initiation and, when read with this thought in mind, are highly informative.

One of the greatest of the old comic dramatists was Aristophanes of Athens, a contemporary of Plato and Socrates. He is best remembered for his play *The Clouds* in which he pokes fun at the rising spirit of philosophical inquiry personified in the intellectual attitudes of Socrates. In this comedy Socrates is introduced to the audience seated in a large basket suspended near the top of the stage. When asked why he sits so high that he can even look down upon the gods, the old skeptic is made to reply: "For I should never have rightly discovered things celestial, if I had not suspended the intellect, and mixed the thought in a subtle form with its kindred air. But if, being on the ground, I speculated from below on things above, I should never have discovered them. For the earth forcibly attracts to itself the meditative moisture. Water-cresses also suffer the very same thing."

Socrates is reported to have been present at the first performance of *The Clouds* and, having been ridiculed unmercifully throughout the play, rose at the end and took a bow amidst general applause. But Alcibiades, a vain and proud young man, did not have so good a sense of humor. He recognized himself in one of the characters and was so outraged that he arranged to have the playwright waylaid and beaten for his audacity. This was a serious breach of etiquette and did nothing to increase the local popularity of Alcibiades.

Frederick von Schlegel comments thus upon the attitudes of the Socratics in this scholastic crisis: "The most honour-

able testimony in favour of Aristophanes is that of the sage Plato, who transmitted the *Clouds* (this very play, in which, with the meshes of the sophists, philosophy itself, and even his master Socrates, was attacked) to Dionysius the elder, with the remark, that from it he would be best able to understand the state of things at Athens."

It is not generally known that, in the comedy of *The Frogs*, Aristophanes has concealed parts of the rituals and symbolism of the Eleusinian Mysteries. It was debated even in his own time whether or not in this work he had transgressed the rules governing his dramatic privileges. The theme of the play is simple and noble. Aeschylus and Euripides had recently died and Athens was without great poets. Dionysus makes a journey to the underworld, determined to bring back Euripides to the realms of the living.

To reach the abode of shades in the world governed by Hades, Dionysus has to row himself across the Acherusian Lake and there he is greeted by frogs which croak melodiously. A little later, having reached the further shore of the lake, he hears the voices of the choruses made up of the souls of those who have been initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries. Some of the passages of these chants are truly sublime. A few examples will indicate the scope of the work, but only careful study will reveal all the details.

The chorus cries: "Brandish in your hand and wake up the flaming torches, Iacchus, O Iacchus, thou Hesperus of the nocturnal orgies. The meadow gleams with flame; the knee of the old men moves swiftly; and they shake off griefs and long cycles of aged years at the sacred act of worship. But do thou, blessed deity, gleaming with thy torch, lead straight forward to the flowery, meadowy plain the youths forming the chorus. . . . Ceres, queen of holy orgies, assist us, and preserve thy own chorus, and let me securely throughout the day sport and dance, and let me say much that is laughable, and much that is serious, and after having sported and jested in a manner worthy of thy festival, let me wear the head-band as conqueror."



The difficult and dangerous journey to the underworld was an essential part of the ritualism of all the Greek Mysteries that descended from the original Orphics. The initiate, here represented by Dionysus, descends into the mystery of generation to rescue his own soul. In this case the qualities of the soul are revealed through the symbolism of the hero-poets whose glorious words have brought joy to all men.\*

The artistry of the Greeks in revealing and, at the same time, concealing the depths of their mystical religion by the use of fables, myths, legends, and comedies was so subtle that the true intent has for the most part passed unnoticed. The Greek mythology, like that of most other ancient nations and races, is in reality an elaborate religious symbolism setting forth under a variety of fantastic forms a sublime theology about the origin of the gods, the creation of man, and the laws of nature.

Little is known of the personal life of Aristophanes, but it is evident from the numerous references appearing in his works that he was an initiate of the Mystery Schools. He was not a philosopher, in the strict sense of that word, but he shared the common convictions about life and manners that elevated the Grecians above most of the other ancient civilizations of the West. He believed that the gods on high Olympus laughed and that a sincere veneration for things sacred and divine did not impose upon the enlightened a somber piety. Life may be a serious matter, but no one can afford to take it too seriously. The smallness of the great and the greatness of the small and the wisdom of the foolish and the foolishness of the wise are as much a part of the Divine Plan as the motions of the heavens and the emotions of the human soul.

The satirist has an important function to perform for he must prevent men from ascending to heaven before their time. He will offend the self-righteous, outrage the worldly-wise, and shock those who take themselves and their own

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\* This subject is discussed by Hans Leisegang in "The Mystery of the Serpent," *The Mysteries*, Bollingen Series XXX-2.

opinions too seriously; but he also serves who only sweeps clean the steps of the temple. Aristophanes was an immortal poet; beneath the habit of the jester which he wore so well, one may perceive the larger outlines of the man himself. He was a faithful servant of the Mystery Schools, a spectator of those divine spectacles and pageantries composed of the daily conduct of ordinary people. He saw and he laughed, but he also understood.

### *Apollonius of Tyana*

The Ante-Nicean Father Justin Martyr became decidedly fretful when forced to admit that Apollonius of Tyana was eminently successful as a worker of miracles. Justin felt that it was unethical for a pagan to infringe upon the preserves of the Christian clergy. "How is it," the good father asks, "that the talismans of Apollonius have power in certain members of creation, for they prevent, *as we see*, the fury of the waves, and the violence of the winds, and the attacks of wild beasts; and whilst our Lord's miracles are preserved in *tradition* alone, those of Apollonius are *most numerous*, and *actually* manifested in present facts, so as to lead astray all beholders?" The Delphic oracle had declared that Apollonius would be remembered to the end of time but always his name would be calumniated.

Apollonius was born in the Cappadocian city of Tyana in the opening years of the Christian era, probably about 16 A.D. From early childhood he exhibited exceptional mental powers and at fourteen had so outdistanced his teachers that he was sent to Tarsus to complete his education. There he came under the guidance of the Phoenician master Euthydemus.

Apollonius remained at Tarsus for two years and, finding the atmosphere of the city too disturbed for scholarship, he then moved with his teacher to Aegae where he associated himself with the priests of the Temple of Asclep-

ius. Here he performed numerous miracles of healing by the aid of the god who dwelt in the temple. He acquired so great a reputation that, whenever a man was seen hurrying along the street, it was common to ask if he were off to see Apollonius.

When about sixteen years of age, Apollonius was introduced to the Pythagorean disciplines of Euxenus—a teacher of no great ability who possessed only the outer parts of the doctrine. Recognizing the limitations of his master, the young Tyanean resolved to assume the five-year period of silence recommended by Pythagoras. He also abstained from all animal food, even rejected leather for sandals, and declared that wine rendered turbid the ether of the soul.

As he grew to manhood, Apollonius was of most impressive and commanding appearance. He was tall, of magnificent proportions, and his features were as perfect as those of a Greek god. He never cut his hair which hung in soft ringlets upon his shoulders and down his back, and he clothed himself in white linen robes of excellent quality. So stately was his carriage and so powerful the force of his mind that he quelled a corn riot without speaking a word. Being at that time still in his vow of silence, he caused tablets to be brought to him upon which he wrote the solution of the problem.

After he had completed his vow of silence, Apollonius went to Antioch where he began to teach publicly at the Temple of Apollo. From Philostratus the Elder, the principal historian of Apollonius, we learn that the philosopher also spent some time among the Arabians, receiving instruction from them.\* Like Pythagoras upon whose life the young Tyanean patterned his career, he traveled extensively in every part of the Near East, associating himself with learned groups along his route. It was on the site of ancient Nineveh that Apollonius met Damis who became his faithful companion and disciple. The words of Damis on

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\* *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by Philostratus, English translation by F. C. Conybeare, M.A.



Apollonius of Tyana; from a copper engraving by Johannes Theodorus de Bry.

the occasion are recorded: "Let us go on, Apollonius; thou following the God, and I thee."

The two men then proceeded to Babylon where they remained for a year and eight months studying with the remnants of the magi, and then traveled on toward the frontier of India. Riding on camels, Apollonius and Damis approached the Himalaya Mountains where they were received and welcomed by the Brahman priests as persons long expected. The monastery where the philosophers first met the Indian sages was probably in what is now known as Nepal. In later years Apollonius described the Hindu mystics thus: "I saw the Indian Brahmins who live on the earth and not on the earth; in a citadel, without fortifications; without property, and yet in possession of all things."\*

H. P. Blavatsky declares the story of the travels of Apollonius in the Far East as narrated by Damis to be an allegorical account of his initiation into the ancient Mysteries.<sup>†</sup> The narrative of this most illustrious of the early post-Christian adepts is perpetuated in the life by Philostratus—a work compiled under the patronage of the Empress Julia Domna, wife of Septimius Severus. At that time the entire imperial house was concerned with the esoteric sciences and held Apollonius as little less than a god. It is written of Severus (see Lampridius) that he placed the statue of Apollonius in his oratory together with those of Jesus Christ, Abraham, and Orpheus; and was accustomed daily to perform religious ceremonies before them.

Apollonius exerted considerable influence upon the destinies of the Roman Empire through five of its rulers with whom he came into personal contact; namely, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, and Nerva. He was in Rome at the time Nero issued his famous decree forbidding philosophers to remain in the city. The sage carefully avoided political involvements, but was thrown into prison on the

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\* *The Gospel of Apollonius of Tyana* by Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, M.D.

† *Isis Unveiled* by H. P. Blavatsky.

charge of treason by Tigellinus, Nero's private inquisitor. This crafty Roman attempted to force Apollonius to some damaging admission by asking pointedly, "What do you think of Nero?" The answer given on this occasion was an outstanding example of philosophical thoughtfulness: "My dear Tigellinus, I think better of him than you do, for you think that he ought to sing, and I think that he ought to remain silent."

Apollonius was brought before the judicial body, the charges against him being presented on a long scroll which had been carefully and dishonestly prepared. But the sage was equal to the occasion—for when the scroll was opened the words suddenly faded from the paper, and the court dismissed the case for lack of charges. Later when he was nearly eighty years old, Apollonius was again arrested and brought before the Emperor Domitian and accused of being a sorcerer. Domitian ordered Apollonius to be detained but the sage expressed regret and, drawing his cloak about him, vanished in a flash of light from the midst of the tribunal.

Later Apollonius was at Ephesus at the time of the assassination of Domitian. The sage was in a small grove outside the city discoursing on the mysteries of nature. Suddenly he stopped speaking and then cried in a loud voice, "Smite the tyrant, smite him." It was later ascertained that at that very instant Domitian was killed in the distant city of Rome.

After the death of Domitian, Apollonius, having reached advanced age, disappeared from the pages of history. He sent his disciples away on one pretext or another, even causing the faithful Damis to depart on an errand. While thus alone, he is said to have entered his tomb and closed the walls behind him. According to some accounts, he was translated into the presence of the gods without death.

Apollonius of Tyana was not only a great magician but a truly enlightened philosopher. While in Asia he was instructed in the secrets of the Oriental adepts and initiated

into their orders. The Brahman initiates presented him with seven signet rings, one for each of the seven planets and their corresponding days of the week. He changed his ring daily and is reported to have gained certain mysterious powers through the proper use of these signets.

In order to appreciate the mind of Apollonius, we cannot do better than to quote from a letter written by him to the Consul Valerius on the event of the loss of his son: "There is no death of anyone, but only in appearance, even as there is no birth of any, save only in seeming. The change from being to becoming seems to be birth, and the change from becoming to being seems to be death, but in reality no one is ever born, nor does one ever die. It is simply a being visible and then invisible; the former through the density of matter, and the latter because of the subtlety of being—being which is ever the same, its only change being motion and rest."\*

According to some authorities, before the end of his life the Tyanean magician was initiated into the rites of Eleusis, the greatest of the Grecian Mystery Schools. He was also admitted into the Egyptian sanctuaries and studied with the hermit-sages of Memnon and in the temples along the Upper Nile.

### *The Initiation of Apuleius*

The description given by Apuleius in *The Metamorphosis, or Golden Ass*, of his initiation into the Mysteries of Isis is one of the most important accounts of esoteric rituals to be found in the literature of the world. Apuleius lived in the second century A.D. about the time of Antoninus Pius. He devoted much of his life to travel, and had been well instructed in the universal philosophies of Greece. He studied in Carthage, later in Athens, and finally in Rome; and it

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\* *Apollonius of Tyana* by G. R. S. Mead; for more detailed information, see *The Phoenix* by Manly P. Hall.

was in this latter city that he received his final initiation into the rites of the Mother of the Gods and became one of the pastophori of Osiris.

*The Metamorphosis* is in every way a curious production for it describes the adventures and misfortunes of a man transformed by sorcery into an ass. The hero of the fable remains in this miserable condition until he is restored by the eating of a sanctified rose. Thomas Taylor thus explains the design and meaning of the book: "Is it not therefore most probable that the intention of the author in this work was to show that the man who gives himself to a voluptuous life, becomes a beast, and that it is only by becoming virtuous and religious, that he can divest himself of the brutal nature, and be again a man?"\*

The eleventh book of *The Metamorphosis* is devoted entirely to the initiation of Apuleius but, as must be expected, the narration is veiled. The complete account is worthy of the most careful study, but the essence of it is contained in the following words of the initiate himself: "Then also the priest, all the profane being removed, taking hold of me by the hand, brought me to the penetralia of the temple, clothed in a new linen garment. Perhaps, inquisitive reader, you will very anxiously ask me what was then said and done? I would tell you, if it could be lawfully told; you should know it, if it was lawful for you to hear it. But both the ears and the tongue are guilty of rash curiosity. Nevertheless, I will not keep you in suspense with religious desire, nor torment you with long-continued anxiety. Hear, therefore, but believe what is true. *I approached to the confines of death, and having trod on the threshold of Prosperine, I returned from it, being carried through all the elements. At midnight I saw the sun shining with a splendid light; and I manifestly drew near to the Gods beneath, and the Gods above, and proximately adored them.* Behold, I have nar-

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\* See "Introduction" in *The Metamorphosis, or Golden Ass, of Apuleius*, translated from the original Latin by Thomas Taylor.



rated to you things, of which, though heard, it is nevertheless necessary that you should be ignorant."

Salverte notes the following lines from *The Metamorphosis*, book 11, "We must not, however, imagine that the Egyptian priests trusted entirely to the impenetrability of their hieroglyphics. When Apuleius obtained the first degree of initiation, the books destined for his instruction were brought by the priest from the most secret part of the sanctuary. It was not enough that the images of diverse species of animals were used in place of stenographic writing; one part of these books was written in unknown characters; and the language in all of them was further preserved from the curiosity of the profane, by the addition of numerous accents, absurd and varied in their forms, and undoubtedly changing the value of the letters above which they were placed."

Thomas Taylor shows that the development of the Principle from which the soul descended, accompanied by a vision of those principles, formed a part of the sacred Mysteries and that *inspection* consisted in beholding the gods themselves invested with a resplendent light.\*

In the morning after his initiation, Apuleius was consecrated by being dressed in twelve stoles painted with the figures of animals. He ascended a wooden throne in the midst of the temple, carrying in his right hand a burning torch. His head was encircled with a chaplet of palm leaves projecting like rays of light. As he thus stood resembling a statue of the sun god, the curtains of the temple were suddenly drawn aside and he was exposed to the gaze of the multitude. From this time on he celebrated the most fortunate day of his initiation as his birthday, for on that occasion he was born again into the abode of eternal light and wisdom.

Later Apuleius was initiated into the rites and nocturnal orgies of the god Serapis and, after a further lapse of time,

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\* *The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries* by Thomas Taylor.



Apuleius; from *The Works of Apuleius*, London: 1889.

was accepted into the Osirian cult of the Roman Isis. He gives us few details of the circumstances except that it was necessary for him to sell his clothes in order to secure the needed funds. He is careful to point out, however, that he parted with his garments at the command of the divinity and as an evidence of devotion—and not because the priests insisted upon any kind of payment.

In the Eleusinian rites there was strong emphasis upon the female principle. In his *Metamorphosis*, Apuleius describes a dream in which a divine form emerged from the ocean. The great goddess speaking with a divine voice then addressed Apuleius: "Behold, Lucius, I, moved by thy prayers, am present with thee; I, who am Nature, the parent of things, the queen of all the elements, the primordial progeny of ages, the supreme of Divinities, the sovereign of the spirits of the dead, the first of the celestials, and the uniform resemblance of Gods and Goddesses. I, who rule by my nod the luminous summits of the heavens, the salubrious breezes of the sea, and the deplorable silences of the realms beneath: and whose one divinity the whole orb of the earth venerates under a manifold form, by different rites, and a variety of appellations. Hence the primogenial Phrygians call me Pessinuntica, the mother of the Gods; the Attic Aborigines, Cecropian Minerva; the floating Cyprians, Paphian Venus; the arrow-bearing Cretans, Diana Dictynna; the three-tongued Sicilians, Stygian Proserpine; and the Eleusinians, the ancient Goddess Ceres. Some also call me Juno, others Bellona, others Hecate, and others Rhamnusia. And those who are illuminated by the incipient rays of that divinity the Sun, when he rises, viz. the Ethiopians, the Aarii, and the Egyptians skilled in ancient learning, worshipping me by ceremonies perfectly appropriate, call me by my true name, queen Isis." From this it may be implied that the Eleusinian Mysteries belonged to that order of esoteric institutions which celebrated the Mysteries of the Divine Mother, a

point which was further sustained by the Emperor Julian in his *Oration to the Mother of the Gods*.

Although Apuleius devoted his entire patrimony and such other slender means as he possessed to his search for those secret ceremonies through which by certain spectacles and auditions men become liberated from the injury of the human passions, he did not remain long impoverished. The gods bestowed upon him such abilities of character and grace of personality as enabled him to attain distinction and success. All his philosophic writings reveal his addiction to the doctrines of Plato and a natural capacity for essential learning. The people of Carthage erected a statue as a testimony of their esteem. Other communities did likewise and, on at least one occasion, he was honored with the freedom of the city.

### *Plutarch and the Vision of Aridaeus*

Although Plutarch is remembered principally for his *Lives*, his numerous essays which have been gathered to form the *Opera Moralia* are of far greater interest to readers with a philosophic turn of mind. These shorter works—numbering about sixty—contain many references to the Mysteries and the doctrines held by celebrated teachers. There are choice fragments covering the education of children, the proper way for a young man to hear poetry, and advice to the married. Our author draws from many learned sources, and proves a wide acquaintance with most useful subjects. His mind was both profound and liberal, and he writes as a thoughtful spectator observing the actions of his fellowmen with a proper scholarly detachment.

Plutarch of Chaeronea was born in Boeotia about 50 A.D. and received part of his philosophic education in Athens. It is reported that he later went to Rome where he lectured on subjects relating to Greek scholarship, and may

possibly have been the mentor of the Emperor Hadrian. We learn from one of his essays which was dedicated to his wife on the occasion of the death of their daughter that he raised four sons. Trajan elevated him to the rank of consul and later Hadrian made him procurator of Greece. Plutarch died in the town of his birth, having attained his seventieth year.

G.R.S. Mead gives us the following estimation of Plutarch's character: "He was one of the most enlightened of the ancients, exceedingly well versed in the details of the religious philosophies and the sciences of his day, . . . he was also a man of wide religious experience, holding high office at Delphi in the service of Apollo and also in connection with the Dionysiac Rites, and had a profound knowledge of the inner grades of the Osiric Mysteries, and doubtless of other Mystic traditions."

Not only was Plutarch archon and priest of the Pythian Apollo and an initiate of the secret Mysteries of Dionysus



Plutarch of Chaeronea. From an edition of his *Lives* published in London in 1823.

but there is every evidence that he remained for a time in Alexandria where he gained an intimate knowledge of the Gnostics and the Mysteries of Serapis. It is therefore astonishing that nowhere among his extensive writings is there any reference, direct or indirect, to early Christianity. This does not appear to be due to an intolerant attitude for he speaks well of many controversial subjects. Perhaps some writings have been lost or destroyed; probably we will never know.

*The Vision of Aridaeus* occurs as the conclusion of Plutarch's essay "On the Late Vengeance of the Deity." Like Plato's *Vision of Er* and Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, the *Vision* purports to be a true and faithful account of an experience of a living man in the abode of the dead. Aridaeus was a corrupt and profligate person who wasted his substance in riotous living. As the result of a severe fall, he passed into a state of suspended animation and apparently died. Three days later while being prepared for burial, he regained consciousness with a complete memory of what had occurred to him in the world beyond the grave. So astonishing was the experience that Aridaeus became a new person, devoted entirely to virtue and piety. Only to the closest of his associates did he confide the details of his journey to Hades.

The true meaning of the *Vision* can be implied from the words of Plutarch in one of his essays: "When a man dies he goes through the same experience as those who have their consciousness increased in the Mysteries." Aridaeus, then, in his profane life signifies the relapsed state of man. The human being in whom the eye of the soul has not been opened is devoted to the service of the animal instincts, being without any conception of his divine estate. After initiation all this was changed—the powers of the soul were strengthened, the appetites were disciplined, the passions were moderated, and the intellect was elevated to the contemplation of spiritual realities. The symbolic death and

resurrection was a familiar device employed by the Mystery Orders to represent the regeneration of man.

Aridaeus explained that when his consciousness escaped from the body he experienced a sensation like that of a sailor who had been swept overboard into deep water. After a little time he seemed to breathe in every part of himself and to see in all directions at once as though the single eye of the soul had been opened. He was in space and no objects were visible save the stars which were at enormous distances from each other and of great size; they poured forth marvelous radiations of color and sound. The most significant statement in the *Vision* is that concerning the souls of the dead which rose in flame-like bubbles (auras). These bubbles finally broke and human forms (the astral bodies) emerged. He then described the confusion of those who, passing into death unenlightened, faced eternity terror-stricken and moved in panic-driven herds. Later he discovered others shining with radiance and peace, and moving through the higher reaches of space. Aridaeus then wandered through an inferno, not unlike that painted by the genius of Dante. At last coming to the end of his vision, he felt himself as though "sucked through a tube by a terribly strong and violent in-breath." He returned to his body just in time to prevent himself from being buried alive.

The Neoplatonist Proclus gives five examples of persons apparently dead who were called back from the grave to bear witness to the superphysical mysteries of life.\* The wonders reported by these witnesses were in most respects similar to those described by Aridaeus and include elements peculiar to the ritualism of the Mysteries.

Plutarch was brought up in an unusual home, and this may have had an important part in the shaping of his genius. He received his first education in a family circle with his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather as his teachers. The compound perspective of four genera-

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\* *The Phoenix* by Manly P. Hall. For further details concerning the five examples, see pp. 30-35.

tions naturally would result in early mental excellence. Cicero tells us that in later life Plutarch consoled himself for the loss of his wife by remembering what he had learned in his initiation. "Had he not," asks the great Roman statesman, "obtained the certitudes of the Mysteries of Bacchus that 'the soul remains incorruptible, and that there is a hereafter'?"

In his essay "Isis and Osiris," Plutarch reveals a deep understanding of the Egyptian metaphysical tradition. It is believed that he drew upon the historical fragments of Manetho who wrote of the state of Egypt before the deluge. Plutarch also left another curious work, "The Word EI, Engraven over Apollo's Temple at Delphi" in which are preserved many valuable observations relating to the rituals of the oracle.

In referring to the vapors which poured from the oracular vent at Delphi, our priest of the Mysteries attempts to explain those strange exhalations of the earth which so affect the human soul as to enable it to predict the future.\* Plutarch concludes that a daemon, or spirit, moves in the fumes and without this superhuman being the subterranean air was nothing but a vain breath.

In his analysis of man, Plutarch recognized a distinction between 'nous' and 'psyche,' that is, between the *understanding* and the *soul*. The sun bestowed the understanding; the moon, the soul; and the earth, the body. When the soul ascends and mingles with the understanding, the result is reason; but when the soul descends and unites its energies with those of body, the product is passion. This simple formula should be of considerable interest to modern psychologists who would be much wiser if they would devote a little time to an investigation of the Mystery doctrines.

In his essay "A Discourse concerning the Daemon [Genius] of Socrates," Plutarch describes the familiar spirit who attended the old Athenian skeptic as that part of his

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\* *De Divinatione* by Cicero.



own nous, or understanding, which had not "plunged" into the corruptible flesh but remained free of the body, floating about the head as a luminous principle. Only the uninitiated believed that the higher essence of the mind was held captive by the brain. Those who had received the secret instructions sought to rise to union with the daemon, whereas the foolish would draw this free spirit into the body and bind it to the objects of the appetites. Plutarch held with Pythagoras that the perfection of man, accomplished through the practice of secret rites, released the soul from the sphere of illusion and restored it to the company of the blessed gods.

### *Vergil and His Aeneid*

Publius Vergilius Maro, generally known simply as Vergil, was born 70 B.C. and died in 19 B.C. He was born of farming parents near Mantua; and received his education at Cremona, Milan, and Rome. He has been justly described as the Poet Laureate of the Augustan Age. One of Vergil's instructors was Siro the Epicurean, and from his familiarity with Greek philosophy and mythology it was assumed that he had been initiated into the Mysteries. The major poetic achievement of Vergil was the *Aeneid*, on the composition of which he labored for eleven years. He had planned to work at least three more years, but death interrupted his endeavor. Some have claimed that Vergil ordered that his great epic poem should be burned if he died before its revision but the Emperor Augustus countermanded the order.

Thomas Taylor opens his discussion of *The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries* by a reference to Dr. Warburton, noting that in his *Divine Legation of Moses* he ingeniously proved that the sixth book of Vergil's *Aeneid* represents some of the dramatic rituals of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Taylor doubts that Vergil was ever initiated into these rites



Vergil; from an ancient portrait. From *The Age of Fable, or Beauties of Mythology* by Thomas Bulfinch, Philadelphia: 1897.

but derived his knowledge of them from other sources. If this is true, it must follow that the obligations of secrecy were no longer strictly enforced among the Romans. The point under special consideration is the dramatization of the journey of candidates through the infernal regions. That such scenes were displayed is supported by a reference from Pindar which Taylor found in the writings of Clemens Alexandrinus. According to Pindar, "Blessed is he who, having seen those *common concerns* in the underworld, knows both the end of life and its divine origin from Jupiter." Taylor further supports his opinion with a quotation from Proclus in his *Commentary on Plato's Politicus*. Proclus points out that it is from the sacerdotal and symbolical mythology that Plato himself derived his own peculiar doctrine.

The *Aeneid*, a work divided into twelve books, sets forth the wanderings of a Trojan prince after the fall of Troy in the twelfth century B.C. The structure is similar to Homer's *Odyssey* but is far more political in its implications. The Trojan prince Aeneas, under the admonishment of the ghost of Hector and the advice of his patron deity Venus, departed from the ruined city carrying his father, leading his little son by the hand, and accompanied by his wife. Later joined by other Trojan refugees, he began a migration in search of a new homeland as promised by oracles and visions. He reached Sicily and while there his father Anchises died. The wanderers reached Carthage. Here Dido fell in love with Aeneas, but Jupiter sent Mercury to warn him that he should leave Carthage with all haste. Aeneas then passed to the coast of Sicily where he established a colony. The Trojan prince reached Italy to consult the Cumaean sibyl.

Book 6 of the *Aeneid* sets forth in great detail the journey of Aeneas through the underworld, guarded and guided by the Cumaean sibyl. It is generally assumed that the account sets forth an initiation ceremony based upon the Eleusinian Mysteries. Aeneas besought assistance of the sibyl for two purposes—first, he wished to interrogate his father's ghost to discover the future of the survivors of the Trojan war; and second, to be shown the time and place for the foundation of a new nation. The sibyl first required that Aeneas and his companions should make the prescribed sacrifices to the shades of the dead and the deities of the underworld. The Cumaean sibyl then addressed Aeneas:

“The gates of hell are open night and day;  
Smooth the descent, and easy is the way;  
But to return, and view the cheerful skies,  
In this the task and mightily labor lies.”

She then counseled the Trojan prince, telling him that in a grove before the gateway of hell was a great tree—a

sacred oak that was host to a mistletoe. Aeneas had to pluck this branch which was called the "golden bough" and bear it with him in the subterranean realm. Thus protected and led by the sibyl, Aeneas passed safely through the horrors of the afterlife and came finally into the presence of his father's ghost. From this noble shadow the sublime mysteries of the soul of the world were told to the Trojan prince. Anchises led his mortal son Aeneas through the elysian fields where those dwelt who had expiated their sins.

"Then are they happy, when by length of time  
The scurf is worn away of each committed crime;  
No speck is left of their habitual stains,  
But the pure ether of the soul remains.  
But, when a thousand rolling years are past,  
(So long their punishments and penance last,)  
Whole droves of minds are, by the driving god,  
Compell'd to drink the deep Lethaeian flood,  
In large forgetful draughts to steep the cares  
Of their past labors, and their irksome years,  
That, unrememb'ring of its former pain,  
The soul may suffer mortal flesh again."

The last line of this quotation certainly implies reincarnation and may well indicate that it was part of the instruction bestowed upon initiates of the Eleusinian rites. The structure of the underworld in Vergil's poem parallels closely the pattern set forth by Thomas Taylor in his *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*. Vergil's description prepared the way for Dante's *Inferno*, and it is significant that Dante selects Vergil to conduct him through the gloomy passageways of the afterlife. Dante's account in turn heavily influenced Christian thinking, and the fate of souls in punishment is vividly represented by Michelangelo in his great painting of the *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel.

In *The Secret Societies of All Ages and Countries*, Charles William Heckethorn makes the following interesting observations on the Greek Mysteries: "The sixth book of the 'Aeneid,' and the 'Golden Ass' of Apuleius, contain descriptions of what passed in the celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries. In the former work, Aeneas and his guide, having finished their progress through the infernal regions, are dismissed through the ivory gate of dreams. But there was another gate of horn through which the aspirant entered; for all caverns of initiation had two gates, one called the *descent* to hell, the other the *ascent* of the just. The ancient poets said that through the gate of horn issued true visions, and through the gate of ivory false. Now from this, and the fact that Aeneas and his guide issue through it, it has been inferred by some critics that Virgil meant to intimate that all he had said concerning the infernal regions was to be considered a fable. But such could not have been the poet's intention. What he really implied was that a future state was a real state, whilst the representations thereof in the mysteries were only shadows. The ivory gate itself was no other than the sumptuous door of the temple, through which the initiated came out when the ceremony was over."

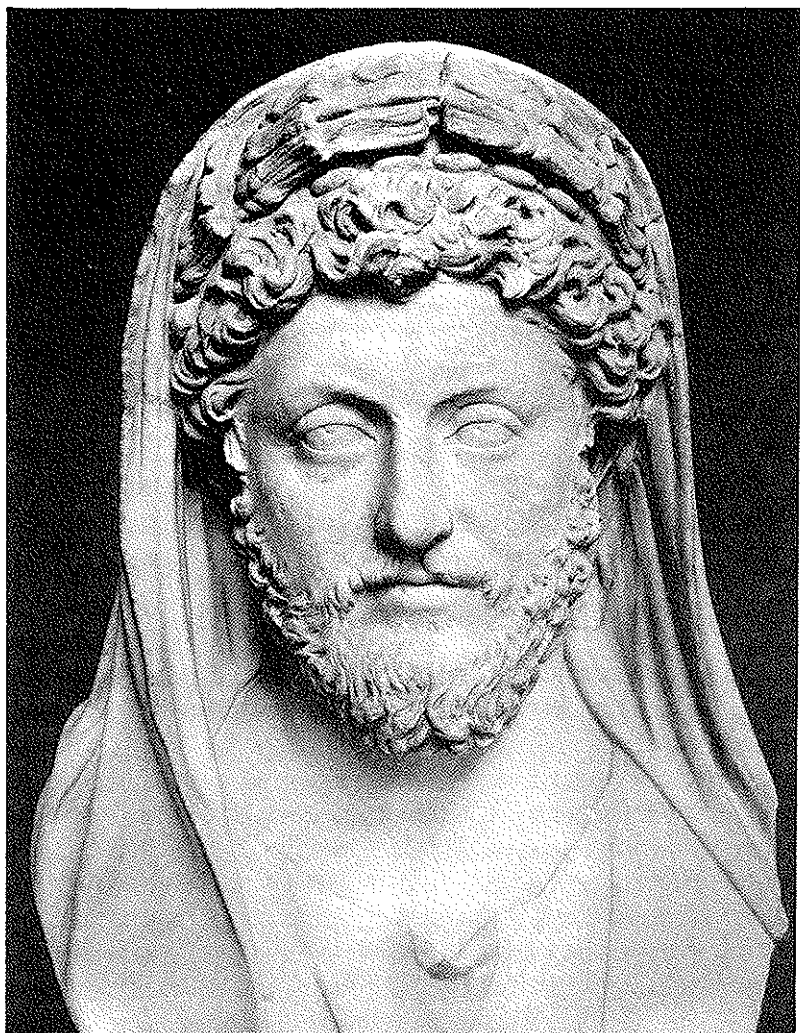
### *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher, must be included in that small group of imperial persons entitled to universal respect and regard. He was the adopted son of Antoninus Pius and succeeded him as ruler of the Romans. Marcus Aurelius became Augustus in 161 A.D., and died after a brief illness on March 17, 180 A.D. Annus Verus, the father of the emperor, died when Antoninus was only three months old. In his *Reflections*, the emperor gives thanks to the gods that it had been his good fortune to have wise grandparents, devout parents, a

loving sister, learned teachers, admirable associates, honorable kinsmen and friends, and nearly everything which could contribute to well-being. When eleven years old, Marcus Aurelius renounced his social position and took upon himself the dress and life of a philosopher. He became an earnest student living abstemiously and labored so diligently in the advancement of his character that he injured his health, causing great anxiety to his family. He associated himself with the sect of the Stoics, he combined stoical discipline with the study of Roman law, and prepared himself for leadership both in statesmanship and military strategy.

Marcus Aurelius was among the initiates of the old Mysteries. Having journeyed to Syria and Egypt, he returned to Italy by way of Athens and was there initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries. His biographers have pointed out that Marcus Aurelius always conformed to the established rites of his age and performed the required religious ceremonies with due solemnity. The historians make a point that one should not conclude from the emperor's policy that he was a superstitious man—but only that he held it to be a sacred duty to support those institutions which were approved by his people. It appears that the emperor believed the substance of the Orphic mysticism. He emphasized that a man should not fear death but rather be apprehensive that through ignorance he be dead while yet he lives. Each should so conduct himself as to be ready at any moment to depart from this world with a good hope. He spoke of the child which leaves the womb at birth and compared this mystery with the departure of the soul from the body when its earthly journey is finished. As a child is born and comes into life by leaving the womb, in like manner the soul on leaving the body may pass into another existence which is better.

The philosophy of Marcus Aurelius is contained in a little book called *Reflections*, or *Meditations*. The work has also appeared in English under the title *Thoughts*. There can be



Marcus Aurelius Antoninus; from the portrait bust in the British Museum.

no doubt as to the authenticity of the work, and it supplies the thoughtful student with a clear picture of the emperor's mind and heart. In the Stoic philosophy happiness is not the chief object of living. The true end to which man should be dedicated is a life conformable with Nature. In the teachings of the Stoics it is by obeying the laws of the universe that the human being obtains tranquillity of mind, contentment, and finally enduring happiness. To obey the Divine Plan for man, each person must study and cultivate four virtues—wisdom, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Wisdom is the knowledge of good and evil; justice, the skill to reward each according to his merits; fortitude, the courage to endure labor and pain in the cause of principle; and temperance, moderation of all things.

One of the most interesting entries in the *Meditations* summarizes the personal philosophy of Aurelius: "Never value anything as profitable to thyself which shall compel thee to break thy promise, to lose thy self-respect, to hate any man, to suspect, to curse, to act the hypocrite, to desire anything which needs walls and curtains."

Marcus Aurelius died in Lower Pannonia or at Vienna in the fifty-ninth year of his age. His son Commodus was with him at the end. The remains of the emperor—probably his ashes—were carried to Rome, and his memory received the honor of deification. Commodus erected a column to the memory of his father, and this still stands in the Piazza Colonna at Rome. Records of that period in Roman history which include the years of Marcus Aurelius are defective, and some of the dates have been filled with legend and fable. As a result only the meager outline of the emperor's career can be accepted as completely authentic. For the rest we must depend upon the philosophy of the emperor for a proper estimate of his place in the descent of mystical philosophy.



*Flavius Claudius Julianus, The Initiate*

Flavius Claudius Julianus, surnamed Julian the Apostate, was born at Constantinople, November 17, 331 or 332 A.D. He was of noble descent, although his ancestry presents a rather confused pattern. Julian was the son of Julius Constantius and his second wife Baslina, the grandson of Constantius Chlorus and his second wife Theodora, and the nephew of Constantine the Great. Julian was no exception to the general rule that those born near to the purple lived precariously. Constantius II, the son of Constantine the Great, upon his accession ordered that all the male descendants of Constantius Chlorus and his second wife Theodora be massacred. Julian and his elder half-brother Gallus were spared because they were small children who could not be regarded as dangerous to the ambitions of Constantius II. The emperor caused the two boys to be educated in strict confinement in different places in Ionia and Nicomedia.

Julian, as he reported in his epistles to the senate and people of Athens, was treated with all the honors and considerations appropriate to his station but was constantly surrounded by spies eager to report the most harmless of his words and actions to the emperor.

At the time of his birth, the Flavian family which ruled over Rome was nominally Christian as the result of the conversion of Constantine the Great. Between his fifth and fourteenth years, Julian received a careful and learned education and, with his half-brother who later joined him in the castle of Macellum, he was instructed in the basic principles of the Christian religion; and later even officiated as a lecturer in the Christian Church. It is recorded that the teachers of these young men were Nicocles Luco, a grammarian, and Ecebolus, a rhetorician. These scholars were under the supervision of the eunuch Mardonius who was suspected of being secretly a pagan and of Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia.

The circumstances which caused Julian to return to the pagan doctrines of the classical world have been variously explained. He was by nature extremely sensitive with a highly developed capacity for veneration. His refined sense of values led him early in life to the realization of the greatness of such men as Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, and the integrity of their teachings. Julian's childhood also brought him in constant contact with the iniquities of the nominally Christian house of Flavian.

Another factor which may have impelled the young man toward the pagan schools was the strong Grecian influence in the prevailing educational system. Among the company of young men with whom the prince associated in the pursuit of knowledge was Gregory Nazianzen who afterwards became a celebrated Christian orator. Almost immediately Julian attracted attention, by both his talents and his knowledge. He was dedicated to Greek literature and philosophy and, of all the imperial Romans, he possessed the largest attainments in these fields.

While in the city of Ephesus, Julian formally renounced his Christian baptism and was initiated into the cult of the Mother of the Gods in subterranean chambers beneath the Temple of Hecate which was one of the vast complex of buildings composing the sanctuary of Diana. At that time the Ephesian master of the Neoplatonic sect was the aged and venerable Maximus of Ephesus, a disciple of Iamblichus and a celebrated adept in the secret science of theurgy. Julian had been referred to Maximus by Edesius of Pergamus who then presided over the Neoplatonic School. According to Madame Blavatsky, the ritual used on the occasion was Mithraic—and it should be remembered that Neoplatonism had already permeated all of these systems and embraced their secret rituals. She writes: "When Maxime, the Ephesian, initiated the Emperor Julian into the Mithraic Mysteries, he pronounced as the usual formula of the rite, the following: 'By this blood, I wash thee from thy sins. The Word of the Highest has entered unto thee, and

His Spirit henceforth will rest upon the NEWLY-BORN, *the now-begotten* of the Highest God. . . . Thou art the son of Mithra.'''\*

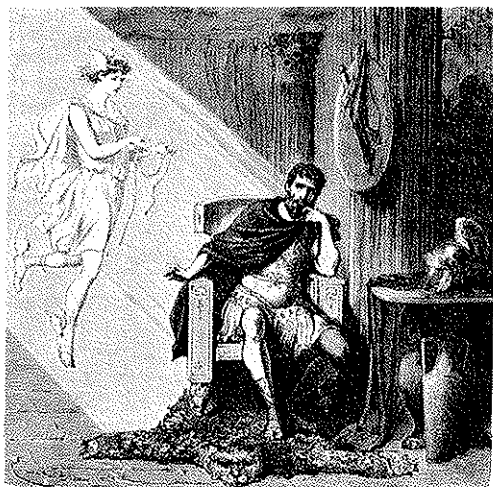
In 354 A.D. Gallus who had been created Caesar was deprived of the purple and put to death at Dalmatia. The emperor Constantius then summoned Julian from Athens and on November 6, 355, the young man was solemnly proclaimed Caesar; and as a guarantee of imperial sincerity was given the hand of the emperor's sister Helena, the youngest child of Constantine the Great. It has been said that Julian obeyed the summons reluctantly because the Greek Athena had more charms for him than the Roman Jupiter, and he was too well acquainted with the mythology of his ancestors not to know that even the embraces of Jupiter were sometimes fatal.

Julian, like many of the Latins who came under Greek influence, was strongly addicted to a belief in omens. Strange happenings were held to indicate divine favor—and even Pythagoras predicted events from the flights of birds. It was a custom when a prince of the imperial family took over the command of his army to hang crowns made of laurel leaves in the streets through which the procession passed. In the first Gallic town which Julian entered, one of these crowns was detached by the wind and fell upon his head. Later while Julian was marching through Vienna, he was greeted by an old woman who impressively saluted him as emperor and one favored by the gods. These fore-shadowings of future events certainly impressed the prince and may have influenced his later conduct.

In 361 A.D. the Roman legionnaires under Julian revolted against the orders of the Emperor Constantius and desired to proclaim Julian as emperor. Uncertain of what he should do, Julian fell into meditation according to ancient rites and, while in this condition, beheld a young man of radiant beauty. The apparition which Julian believed to

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\* *Isis Unveiled* by H. P. Blavatsky.



The Genius of Rome appears in a vision to the Emperor Julian. From Paul Christian's *Histoire de la Magie*, Paris: n.d.

be the guiding spirit of the Roman Empire warned Julian that if he did not take the rank of Augustus he would no longer have the protection of his guiding genius. Unable to refuse the acclaim of his soldiers, Julian received the imperial purple in Paris.

From the date of his entrance into Constantinople in 361, the life of Julian followed in the courses which he had most feared. In December of 362 while wintering, he composed his books against the Christian religion. The following February he wrote the *Misopogon*, and shortly after marched against the Persians. On June 26, 363, the rear of the Roman army was suddenly attacked by the Persians. Julian who commanded the vanguard hastened to the relief of his troops without his cuirass because the heat of the region made heavy armor almost insupportable. The Persians were repulsed and fled in confusion. Julian was pursuing them with the utmost bravery when in the midst of the confusion he was shot by an arrow through his liver. He fell from his horse mortally wounded and was carried to his

tent. Fully aware of his approaching death, he took leave of his friends with touching and beautiful words and with most sincere religious and philosophical convictions. He died the following morning at the age of thirty-two years. He was emperor less than two years, and by his own request his remains were buried at Tarsus.

The philosophical convictions of Julian were essentially Neoplatonic. While he was devoted to the writings of Plato, he was by nature inclined to mystical preoccupations. His early Christian training, his lonely years of virtual imprisonment, and his later acquaintance with teachers and philosophers associated with Neoplatonism intensified the tendencies of his disposition. The popular report that the emperor was given to superstitious rites and practices merely indicates that he was a transcendentalist and a thaumaturgist according to the Neoplatonic implications of these terms.

Julian believed himself to be a re-embodiment of Alexander the Great. Like the Macedonian, Julian was called from his studies to become the head of an empire concerned principally with the maintenance of its temporal power and domains. Alexander slept on the battlefield with the books of Aristotle serving as his pillow, and Julian held the writings of Plato in similar veneration. He was accompanied on his campaign by philosophers and scholars, and on his deathbed conversed with Maximus concerning the immortality of the soul in a manner reminiscent of the last discourse of Socrates. As an initiate of the ancient Mysteries, Julian could scarcely have rejected the transcendental implications of those rites. He obviously accepted them and practiced their disciplines insofar as he was able.

Julian was one of those remarkable characters in history who was born out of time. He belonged to the age of Socrates and Plato, but he lived in one of the most dissolute periods in Roman history. Marcus Aurelius and Julian were the most enlightened of the Caesars; and of those two, Julian was in all respects the more able.

In his letter to the philosopher Themistius, written soon after he had been raised to the dignity of Caesar, young Julian wrote regarding government: "To govern seems to me more than human; and a king, as Plato says, 'should be of a superior nature.'" Julian then summarized the doctrine of Plato: "First, he thinks that the governor ought to excell the governed, not only in virtue, but in nature; which is not easy to find among men. And also, that he should, to the utmost of his power, obey the laws, not those which were enacted on a sudden emergency, or compiled by men who were not entirely governed by reason; but by such, as, having pure minds and souls, had a view not only to present offences and contingencies, but from the nature of government, and also the nature of justice and of guilt, after obtaining all possible instruction, framed laws for all the people in general, without respect to friend or foe, to neighbour or relation."

In all his mystical and philosophical writings, Julian was simple and humble. He took no credit to himself and would not permit others to refer to him as wise. Conscious always of his own deficiencies, he said that he loved philosophy but had not won it for himself. The most philosophical writings of Julian were *Oration to the Sovereign Sun* and *Oration to the Mother of the Gods*. In these the emperor unfolded his own convictions with sincere emotional intensity. He visited the Temple of Cybele (the Mother of the Gods) at Pessinus and caused her worship to be restored. Thomas Taylor, in his translations of these two orations, supplied an extensive introduction and useful commentary showing the importance of Julian's references to the Pythagorean, Platonic, and Neoplatonic doctrines. The orations cannot be compared in profundity with the writings of Proclus or Plotinus, but they are dignified and reveal considerable scholarship.

As an initiate of pagan Mysteries, Julian was undoubtedly aware of the great program which these sacred institutions were attempting to perfect. The substance of

this program is clearly revealed in the writings of Plato. The world was waiting for the philosopher-king, and at the same time was consumed by fear at the possibility of the event. Julian certainly resolved to embody insofar as he was able the attributes of the philosopher-king. By circumstances almost miraculous and through the intercession of his genius, Julian the philosopher had been elevated to supreme power in the world of his day. Fear mingled with resolution, and Julian acknowledged his numerous ineptitudes. Yet he was resolved to try to bestow as much learning and good example as was possible. As a practical man he realized that if he went too far he would destroy everything. He therefore chose a quiet determination, unfaltering in its allegiance but tempered to the needs of the hour.

### *Vitruvius and the Roman Collegia*

The Romans, ambitious for the splendor of their cities and mindful of the importance of their public works, found it expedient to encourage the science of architecture and to bestow honors and rewards upon those especially gifted in its projects. During the reign of Augustus the Association of the Architects (the Roman Collegia) was entrusted with the building of palaces, temples, monuments, aquaducts, and tombs. This association was under the leadership and direction of Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (first century B.C.)—the most celebrated construction engineer of his time, and often referred to as the Father of the Modern Science of Architecture.

Unfortunately, nothing is known of the life of Vitruvius other than the general and impersonal references to his work which occur in his great textbook *De Architectura* which was dedicated to the Emperor Augustus. Even the oldest existing manuscripts of this extraordinary book only date from the tenth century; but during the medieval and

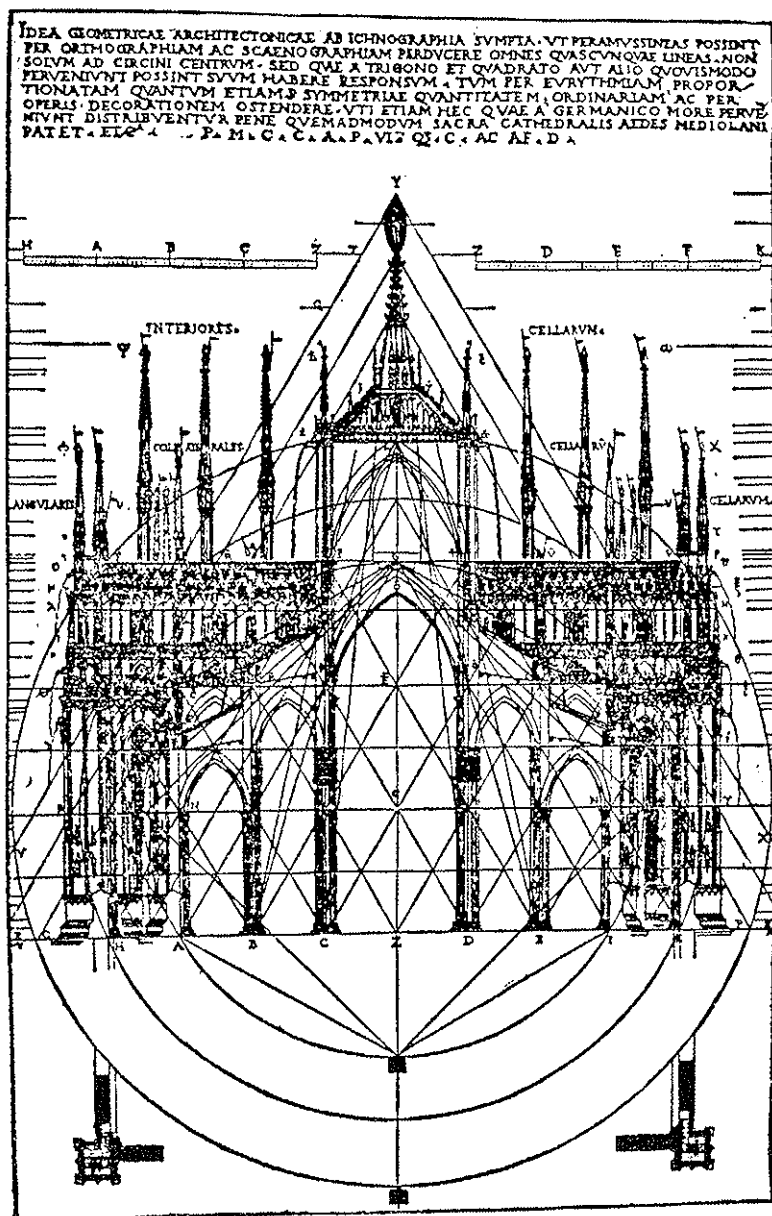
early modern periods of European history, the texts of Vitruvius were the principal authorities and dominated the entire concept of architecture.

It is usual to include Vitruvius among the initiates of the Dionysian rites; and to recognize him as a moving spirit in those confederations of builders which flourished in Syria, Persia, and even India—if we are to credit the reports of Strabo. It is probable that the restoration of secret societies in the tenth century was responsible for the renewed interest in the Vitruvian canons and the sudden appearance of manuscripts relating to them. We are not entirely certain that the so-called Vitruvian formulas originated with one man, for it is quite possible that they were the productions of an association rather than of an individual. An examination of the works themselves reveals considerable evidence that they are a compilation or accumulation of the choicest secrets of the old initiate-builders, arranged conveniently and abounding in hints and implications relating to the esoteric tradition.

Through the outward structure of the Vitruvian canons, we perceive the outlines of a mathematical and geometrical pattern of mystical and cabalistical analogies. The temple is the microcosm of the universe revealed through the dimensions and proportions of the human body. The important edition of *De Architectura*, published in 1521 under the editorship of Caesariano, contains two plates especially symbolical. These figures, representing the human body extended on a background of small squares, are reminiscent of certain mystical measurements established by Pythagoras. The designs of Caesariano appear with only slight modifications among the anatomical canons of Leonardo da Vinci and the rare text on artistic anatomy compiled by Albrecht Durer.

The Greek concept of esoteric philosophy extended its influence into the field of the arts, bestowing rigid rules of proportion and dimension. In architecture a complete structure was unfolded mathematically according to laws of





Section of Milan Cathedral showing the mathematical formula upon which it was built. From Cesariano's *Vitruvius*.

dynamic symmetry. A basic theme was repeated and amplified; then a series of variations upon that theme were introduced much in the same way as in musical compositions. The theme usually originated in the mathematical or geometric pattern governing the purpose for which the building was erected. Thus the temples of the gods and goddesses were symbolic representations in stone and marble of the powers, provinces, and attributes of these divinities. Any departure from the most rigid adherence to the traditional canons was frowned upon and, if necessary, was prevented by recourse to the authority of the state.

Anyone doubting that the Vitruvian writings originated among the Artificers of Dionysus should consider the numerous references to secret and divine matters scattered through *De Architectura*, i.e., "Propriety is that perfection of style which comes when a work is authoritatively constructed on approved principles. It arises from prescription, from usage, or from nature. From prescription, in the case of hypaethral edifices, open to the sky, in honour of Jupiter Lightning, the Heaven, the Sun, or the Moon: for these are gods whose semblances and manifestations we behold before our very eyes in the sky when it is cloudless and bright. The temples of Minerva, Mars, and Hercules will be Doric, since the virile strength of these gods makes daintiness entirely inappropriate to their houses. In temples to Venus, Flora, Proserpine, Spring-Water, and the Nymphs, the Corinthian order will be found to have peculiar significance, because these are delicate divinities and so its rather slender outlines, its flowers, leaves, and ornamental volutes will lend propriety where it is due. The construction of temples of the Ionic order to Juno, Diana, Father Bacchus, and the other gods of that kind, will be in keeping with the middle position which they hold; for the building of such will be an appropriate combination of the severity of the Doric and the delicacy of the Corinthian."

Here Vitruvius or his school makes use of architecture as a means of instructing the mind in the Orphic theogony. He

further reveals his familiarity with the Platonic concept of the Logos, the Soul of the World, impressing its module or *idea* upon the creation. The universal form therefore, developed by infinite repetition of this basic pattern, is infinitely diversified in quantity and quality throughout time and space.

The Pythagorean triad of the father, mother, and child—the Egyptian Osiris, Isis, and Horus—the famous forty-seventh problem attributed to Euclid, found its correspondence in these three orders of pillars. The father is the powerful and imposing Doric order. The mother is the Ionic order—the flutes in the column representing the folds of her draperies. The child is the Corinthian order—its adolescence represented by the slender symmetry of the column.

In the microcosm figure from Caesariano's edition of Vitruvius, vine leaves are wound in the hair of the extended human form. This in itself is sufficient to imply that the figure of Dionysus is intended. Of this the author of *The Canon* writes: “. . . here we have clearly and distinctly a curious survival of the cosmic deity of Greece, copied and disfigured by the crude draughtsmen of the Middle Ages, but faithfully preserved, and recognizable to the last.”\*

The celebrated magician Henry Cornelius Agrippa, in his *De Occulta Philosophia*, reproduced a number of curious symbols involving the human body stretched out on squares, circles, and stars. In some cases numbers were added but Agrippa supplied no satisfactory description of his devices. He merely explained that man contains within himself and his proportions all numbers, measures, weights, motions, and elements.

Although Caesariano published his version of the Vitruvian writings in the early sixteenth century, he must have been aware of the importance of his Dionysian figure. He did not derive the details of his design, especially the vine leaves, from preceding editions of Vitruvius. An examina-

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\* *The Canon* by Sterling.

tion of many early variants of the text and plates proves that while the basic concept is present in all, only Caesariano had emphasized the Dionysian symbolism. It would seem that he was aware of the esoteric cult of Dionysus and was himself sufficiently informed in its Mysteries to unfold the diagrams correctly.

The Roman *Collegia* also derived inspiration from the motions and relations of the heavenly bodies. Many of the great public buildings of Rome were developed from constellations and star clusters. In designing the sanctuary of a certain god or a public edifice dedicated to a particular purpose, the constellation appropriate to the deity was selected as the basis of the structural concept. Thus the finished building became an embodiment of an idea and, to those properly initiated, the structure could be read as easily as a printed book.

On one occasion Pythagoras, visiting an ancient city, explained to his disciples that the harmonic composition of its various public edifices could be played upon the lute. He intimated further that if the basic keynote of each structure were sounded the building would collapse. One is reminded of the falling of the walls of Jericho as the result of a blast of trumpets.

It was a cardinal tenet of the Dionysian cult that spiritual power and instruction could be accepted into the mind through the eyes. Perfect forms were in themselves therapeutic, could heal diseases, overcome irrational energies of the animal soul, purify and renovate the intellect, and release the divine energies latent in all men. Conversely, asymmetrical structures and inharmonious combinations of architectural elements, if allowed to dominate in the planning of a city, would corrupt public and private morals and lead to strife and contention.

The sacred science of architecture perfected by its initiated artisans enriched antiquity with magnificent monuments which remain to our day, wonders of the world and patterns which have inspired thousands of years of build-

ers. Unfortunately, the secret doctrine of the Dionysiacs is now generally unknown; as a result of this profound ignorance concerning essential principles, the modern world is deprived of this exact science of beauty and its civilizing force.

The Christian clergy developed a keen desire for splendid monasteries and magnificent cathedrals. Unfortunately, skilled architects and craftsmen were difficult to obtain and available converts were unskilled in such labors. To encourage the profession of architecture, the bishops of Rome conferred on members of the builders' guilds large and broad privileges. These craftsmen were allowed to govern their fraternities by laws, customs, and ceremonies peculiar to themselves. The membership of these associations included artisans of many nations—Italian, Greek, French, German, Flemish, and even Far Eastern countries. They journeyed from one region to another, erecting magnificent churches and cathedrals. As these projects required years, sometimes centuries, the builders lived in a sort of encampment—a self-governing community close to the site of their labors. Little effort was made by either the Church or state to investigate the private convictions of these privileged companies of men.

Later when the great cycle of cathedral building closed and the Church no longer required the assistance of skilled artisans, it deprived the building fraternities of many of the privileges previously conferred upon them. It forbade secret associations and required complete conformity with the religious premises and practices of the dominant faith. No longer permitted freedom of conscience, the artisans disbanded the outer forms of their associations and assumed new appearances which rendered them less conspicuous. The glory of the *Collegia* was gone; in its place emerged a stolid gentry of silent men engaged in sober trades and practices who assembled in guilds and trade unions.

Although the secret associations of the ancients, including the Roman Collegia, were dissolved in the fifth century by command of the Emperor Justinian, we know that the Mysteries were privately observed long after their public abolition. According to Edward Gibbon, the English historian, the Grecian (Dionysian) rites were never completely abolished. The reference by Psellus to the effect that the Mysteries of Ceres were observed in Athens eight hundred years after Christ was also mentioned by Gibbon. Hippolyto Joseph da Costa, in a fragment on the *Dionysian Artificers*, agrees with Gibbon that societies of initiated builders existed in Rome until the eighth century. After this time there was a general deterioration of the sciences and philosophy. Most of the labors of the ancients were obliterated, and the prevailing ignorance resulted in those long, misery-laden centuries commonly referred to as the Dark Ages. The Reverend George Oliver, an outstanding Masonic scholar, equates pagan Mysteries such as the Dionysian Artificers with the trade associations of architects which appeared during the Dark Ages under the special authority of the See of Rome.

### *Other Greek and Roman Initiates*

It is obvious that it will never be possible to identify all of those who were initiated into the higher degrees of the Greek Mystery System. Diogenes Laertius in his accounts of the lives of Grecian philosophers notes that some of these illustrious persons were initiates of the Mysteries. It may be helpful however to note that other celebrated persons are known to have been members of one or more of the esoteric schools. Cicero, Caesar, Pompey, and Tiberius were initiated into the Mysteries of the Cabiri in the sanctuary at Rhodes where Hipparchus and Poseidonius presided. Modern researchers have access to the writings of

classical authors but in the earlier works details are usually lacking.

A good example is the case of Sophocles—one of the noblest minds of his time—who is regarded as one of the outstanding classical Greek dramatists. He was born about 496 B.C. and died in 406 B.C. He had an extremely long life, and in addition to his theatrical activities had a distinguished career as a diplomat. He was also elected as a general of the army in 440. He was involved in the government of Athens in his middle eighties, and was one of the most respected thinkers of his time. Sophocles was a priest of the cult of Asclepius and there is no doubt his career involved elements of the Mystery tradition. To him death inevitably led to a future embodiment in which previous experiences contributed to the unfoldment of the moral powers. As a dramatist he probably contributed to the ritualistic dramas—especially those dealing with Dionysus. From the esteem in which he was held and from such of his writings as have survived, it is considered to be almost certain that he had been initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries.\*

The most famous of the surviving plays of Sophocles is *Oedipus Rex*. This work is highly allegorical and is enriched with numerous philosophical overtones. It can be likened to the ritual dramas performed in the Eleusinian Mysteries, and even today it is recognized as a masterpiece of dramatic writing. Mythologists in unfolding the tragic life of Oedipus nearly all draw heavily upon Sophocles for insight and appraisal of the earlier cults.

Thales of Miletus who lived in the sixth century B.C. was considered by his contemporaries to be one of the wisest of the Hellenes. He was a philosopher and cosmologist and was honored among his contemporaries as one of the Seven Sophists. Although none of his writings are known to have survived, some aphorisms attributed to him are noted by

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\* "Sophocles," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th Edition, Volume 17.

Thomas Stanley in his *History of Philosophy*. This author further notes that Thales traveled extensively and visited Crete to inform himself of the Mysteries of their religion, and near the end of his life journeyed to Egypt where he was instructed by the priests at Memphis. These accounts are confirmed by Laertius and Plutarch.

Among the friends of Thales was Solon, one of the distinguished statesmen of antiquity, and he also was included among the Seven Sophists. Solon studied philosophy with Psenophis of Heliopolis and Sonchis of Sais, two of the great initiated scholars of Egypt. It is evident from the surviving records that Solon was initiated into the Mysteries of Isis.

Although Philo Judaeus was born in Alexandria between 15 and 10 B.C. and was one of the outstanding members of the Jewish community in that city, he was profoundly influenced by Hellenistic philosophy. He contributed strongly to the introduction of Greek doctrines into the works of the Ante-Nicene Fathers. It is probable from his writings that he had considerable knowledge of the Grecian Mysteries and may have been initiated into one of the esoteric schools. There is also evidence that he was aware of the Hermetic System which was also strongly influenced by Hellenistic theology. G. R. S. Mead refers to Philo as an initiate philosopher. He quotes Philo as follows, "For it is written: . . . for the sacred sermon of initiation about the Ingenerable and about His potencies ought to be kept secret, since it is not within the power of every man to guard the sacred trust of the divine revelations."\* There is a report that Philo may have personally met St. Peter.

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, described by the historian Gibbon as the last Roman whom Cato or Tully could have acknowledged for their countryman, was born about the year 480 A.D., probably in Rome. He devoted his life principally to the pursuit of learning. Like the Em-

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\* "Philo of Alexandria on the Mysteries," *The Theosophical Review*, Volume 36.



perors Julian and Marcus Aurelius, he drew his philosophy from the fountains of Greek wisdom; and most of his writings reveal a heavy indebtedness to the classic authors. Gibbon also tells us that Boethius gave eighteen laborious years to the Schools of Athens which were supported by the zeal, learning, and diligence of Proclus and his disciples. He imbibed the spirit and indicated the method of his dead and living masters. Circumstantial evidence would indicate that like Julian and Aurelius he was an initiate of the Greek Mysteries.

His principal literary work *The Consolation of Philosophy* was written during his imprisonment. In the beginning of this work, Boethius tells us that while he was in prison Philosophy appeared to him in the form of a woman, her countenance full of majesty and her eyes revealing the deepest insight. Her clothing which was wrought of the finest thread formed one indivisible garment which she had wrought with her own hands. When Boethius inquired as to why Philosophy should come to him in his lonely prison, she asked if she should desert one whom she had nursed. She reminded him that she had stood with Anaxagoras when he went into exile, she had been with Socrates when he was executed, she had comforted Zeno of Elea when he was tortured by Nearchus, and she had not failed to be with Canius when he was put to death by Caligula. Her consolation she had given to Seneca when he was driven to suicide by Nero. Why then should she not be with Boethius in his hour of need? There is no greater moment in the life of mortals than that in which they approach death, and at that moment their philosophy—whatever it may be—stands beside them imparting courage and restoring spiritual tranquillity. One cannot read these thoughts without being convinced that Boethius had tread on the threshold of Persephone.

Boethius has come to be considered a martyr. He was accused of treason and the practice of magical arts and imprisoned for five years. At the end of that time, he was exe-

cuted in the tower prison of Pavia in 524 A.D. He is generally included in the hegemony of the Church as a devout Christian, and certainly contributed to the respect for the classical authors evident in early Church scholarship.

The place of Neoplatonism in relationship to the Greek Mysteries is best appreciated from the study of the principal exponents of the sect. The most important of the Neoplatonists were Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus, Proclus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Sallust, and the Emperor Julian. The principal center of Neoplatonism was in Alexandria which at that time was subject to the Roman Empire. After leaving Alexandria, Plotinus taught for a number of years in Rome where he was regarded with sincere admiration. Proclus, sometimes referred to as the Platonic successor, taught and wrote in Athens. We have decided therefore to include both Neo-Pythagoreanism and Neoplatonism in the section of this series devoted to the Egyptian initiates. It is known that several outstanding Neoplatonists were initiates of the Mysteries, and it could well be that they had all been accepted into the sacred rites.

The religious philosophy which underlies the Greek and Roman Mysteries can make a valuable contribution to modern society. Throughout the ancient world, the esoteric schools preserved those sacred traditions which ensouled secular knowledge and inspired thoughtful persons to keep faith with those divine powers and laws which control all created beings. The solemn rites elevated the mind, purified the emotions, and protected the body from those abuses which result from ignorance. They revealed through a sublime mysticism those eternal verities which are the source of enduring security and well-being. The initiates by the broadening and deepening of their understanding became indeed citizens of a spiritual commonwealth and gave allegiance to the majesty of truth itself.

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