



Pluto serves Persephone a Pomegranate

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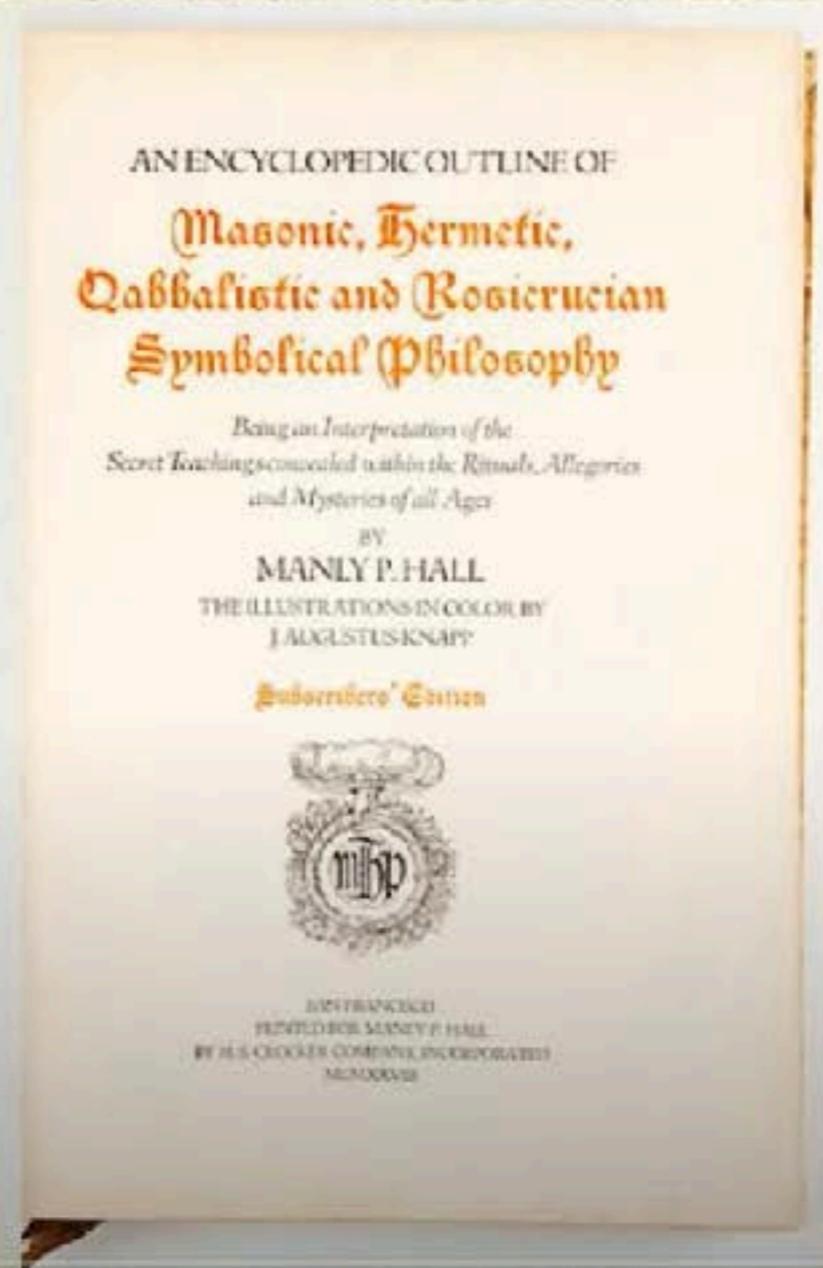
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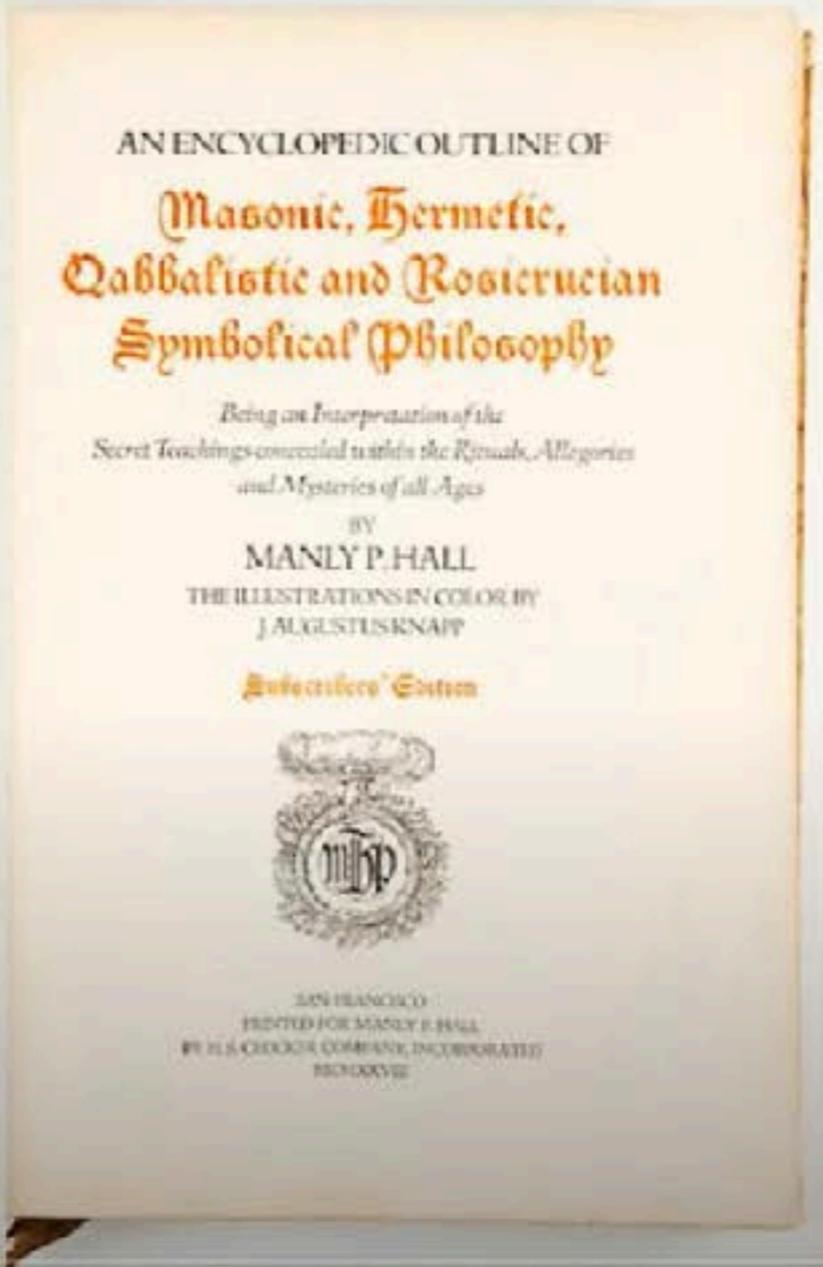
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THE
ELEUSINIAN
AND
BACCHIC MYSTERIES.

A DISSERTATION.

BY
THOMAS TAYLOR,

TRANSLATOR OF "PLATO," "PLOTINUS," "PORPHYRY," "JAMBlichus," "PROCLUS,"
"ARISTOTEL," ETC., ETC.

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES, EMENDATIONS, AND GLOSSARY,

BY
ALEXANDER WILDER, M. D.

Εἰ τὰς ΤΕΛΕΤΑΙΣ καθαρταίς ἡγούνται καὶ περι-
βάττηρα καὶ ἀγισμοί, ἃ τῶν ἐν ἀπορήτοις δρωμένων,
καὶ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ μετενσίας γυμνασμάτα εἰσιν.

PROCLUS: *Manuscript Commentary upon Plato, I. Alcibiades.*

WITH 85 ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. I. RAWSON.

FOURTH EDITION.



NEW-YORK:
J. W. BOUTON, 8 WEST 28TH STREET.
1891.





Eleusinian Ceremony.—Denkmäler Sculptur.

It was required of all candidates that they should be first admitted at the Mikra or Lesser Mysteries of Agrae, by a process of fasting called purification, after which they were styled *mystæ*, or initiates. A year later, they might enter the higher degree. In this they learned the *aporrheta*, or secret meaning of the rites, and were thenceforth denominated *ephoroi*, or *epoptæ*. To some of the interior mysteries, however, only a very select number obtained admission. From these were taken all the ministers of holy rites. The Hierophant who presided was bound to celibacy, and required to devote his entire life to his sacred office. He had three assistants, the torch-bearer, the *kerux* or crier, and the minister at the altar. There were also a *basileus* or king, who was an archon of Athens, four curators, elected by suffrage, and ten to offer sacrifices. —Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries, by Thomas Taylor:13-4



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AN INITIATION CEREMONY IN THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES.

The candidate and his attendant are here shown undergoing the trial of immortality in the cave of the spring beneath the cliff, and in the shadow of the departed. On the further side of the stream Hades, the god of the underworld, sits on his golden throne, surrounded by his attendants, and in the hands of the dog, guardian of the gates of death. Above the entrance of the cave, the figure of Ceres, carrying the cornucopia, which she has won through the storm of the winter world, the place for the abode of her daughter Persephone, whom Hades has abducted to his realm, is to be seen. In the lower left, the candidate is shown in the act of being initiated into the mysteries, and the figure of Hades is seen in the background, surrounded by his attendants. The scene is set in a cavernous space, with a blue and purple glow, and a large, colorful illustration depicting an initiation ceremony in the Eleusinian Mysteries.

The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

Part Three



THE most famous of the ancient religious Mysteries were the Eleusinian, whose rites were celebrated every five years in the city of Eleusis to honor Ceres (Demeter, Rhea, or Isis) and her daughter, Persephone. The initiates of the Eleusinian School were famous throughout Greece for the beauty of their philosophic concepts and the high standards of morality which they demonstrated in their

daily lives. Because of their excellence, these Mysteries spread to Rome and Britain, and later the initiations were given in both these countries. The Eleusinian Mysteries, named for the community in Antica where the sacred dramas were first presented, are generally believed to have been founded by Esopos about fourteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, and through the Platonic system of philosophy their principles have been preserved to modern times.

The rites of Eleusis, with their mystic interpretations of Nature's most precious secrets, overshadowed the civilizations of their time and gradually absorbed many smaller schools, incorporating into their own system whatever valuable information these lesser institutions possessed. Heckerthoen sees in the Mysteries of Ceres and Bacchus a metamorphosis of the rites of Isis and Osiris, and there is every reason to believe that all so-called secret schools of the ancient world were branches from one philosophic tree which, with its root in heaven and its branches on the earth, is—like the spirit of man—an invisible but ever-present cause of the objectified vehicles that give it expression. The Mysteries were the channels through which this one philosophic light was disseminated; and their initiates, resplendent with intellectual and spiritual understanding, were the perfect fruitage of the divine tree, bearing witness before the material world of the recondite source of all Light and Truth.

The rites of Eleusis were divided into what were called the Lesser and the Greater Mysteries. According to James Gairdner, the Lesser Mysteries were celebrated in the spring (probably at the time of the vernal equinox) in the town of Agræ, and the Greater, in the fall (the time of the autumnal equinox) at Eleusis or Athens. It is supposed that the former were given annually and the latter every five years. The rituals of the Eleusinians were highly involved, and to understand them required a deep study of Greek mythology, which they interpreted in its esoteric light with the aid of their secret keys.

The Lesser Mysteries were dedicated to Persephone. In his *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, Thomas Taylor sums up their purpose as follows: "The Lesser Mysteries were designed by the ancient theologians, their founders, to signify occultly the condition of the unperfected soul invested with an earthly body, and enveloped in a material and physical nature."

The legend used in the Lesser rites is that of the abduction of the goddess Persephone, the daughter of Ceres, by Pluto, the lord of the underworld, or Hades. While Persephone is picking flowers in a beautiful meadow, the earth suddenly opens from its somber depths and, grasping her in his arms, carries the screaming and struggling goddess to his subterranean palace, where he forces her to become his queen.

It is doubtful whether many of the initiates themselves understood the mystic meaning of this allegory, for most of them apparently believed that it referred solely to the succession of the seasons. It is difficult to obtain satisfactory information concerning the Mysteries, for the candidates were bound by inviolable oaths never to reveal their inner secrets to the profane. At the beginning of the ceremony of initiation, the candidate stood upon the skins of animals sacrificed for the purpose, and vowed that death should seal his lips before he would divulge the sacred truths which were about to be communicated to him. Through indirect channels, however, some of their secrets have been preserved. The teachings given to the neophytes were substantially as follows:

The soul of man—often called *Psyche*, and in the Eleusinian Mysteries symbolized by Persephone—is essentially a spiritual thing. Its true home is in the higher worlds, where, free from the bondage of material form and material concepts, it is said to be truly alive and self-expressive. The human, or physical, nature of man, according to this doctrine, is a tomb, a quagmire, a false and impermanent thing, the source of all sorrow and suffering. Plato describes the body as the sepulcher of the soul; and by this he means not only the human form but also the human nature.

The gloom and depression of the Lesser Mysteries represented the agony of the spiritual soul unable to express itself because it has accepted the limitations and illusions of the human environment. The crux of the Eleusinian argument was that man is neither better nor wiser after death than during life. If he does not rise above ignorance during his sojourn here, man goes at death into eternity to wander about forever, making the same mistakes which he made here. If he does not outgrow the desire for material possessions here, he will carry it with him into the invisible world, where, because he can never gratify the desire, he will continue in endless agony. Dante's *Inferno* is symbolically descriptive of the sufferings of those who never freed their spiritual natures from the cravings, habits, viewpoints, and limitations of their Platonic personalities. Those who made no endeavor to improve themselves (whose souls have slept) during their physical lives, passed at death into Hades, where, lying in rows, they sleep through all eternity as they had slept through life.

To the Eleusinian philosophers, birth into the physical world was death in the fullest sense of the word, and the only true birth was that of the spiritual soul of man rising out of the womb of his own fleshly nature. "The soul is dead that slumbers," says Longfellow, and in this he strikes the keynote of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Just as Narcissus, gazing at himself in the water (the ancients used this mobile element to symbolize the transitory, illusory, material universe) lost his life trying to embrace a reflection, so man, gazing into the mirror of Nature and accepting as his real self the senseless clay that he sees reflected, loses the opportunity afforded by physical life to unfold his immortal, invisible Self.

An ancient initiate once said that the living are ruled by the dead. Only those conversant with the Eleusinian concepts of life

could understand that statement. It means that the majority of people are not ruled by their living spirits but by their senseless (hence dead) animal personalities. Transmigration and reincarnation were taught in these Mysteries, but in a somewhat unusual manner. It was believed that at midnight the invisible worlds were closest to the terrestrial sphere and that souls coming into material existence slipped in during the midnight hour. For this season many of the Eleusinian

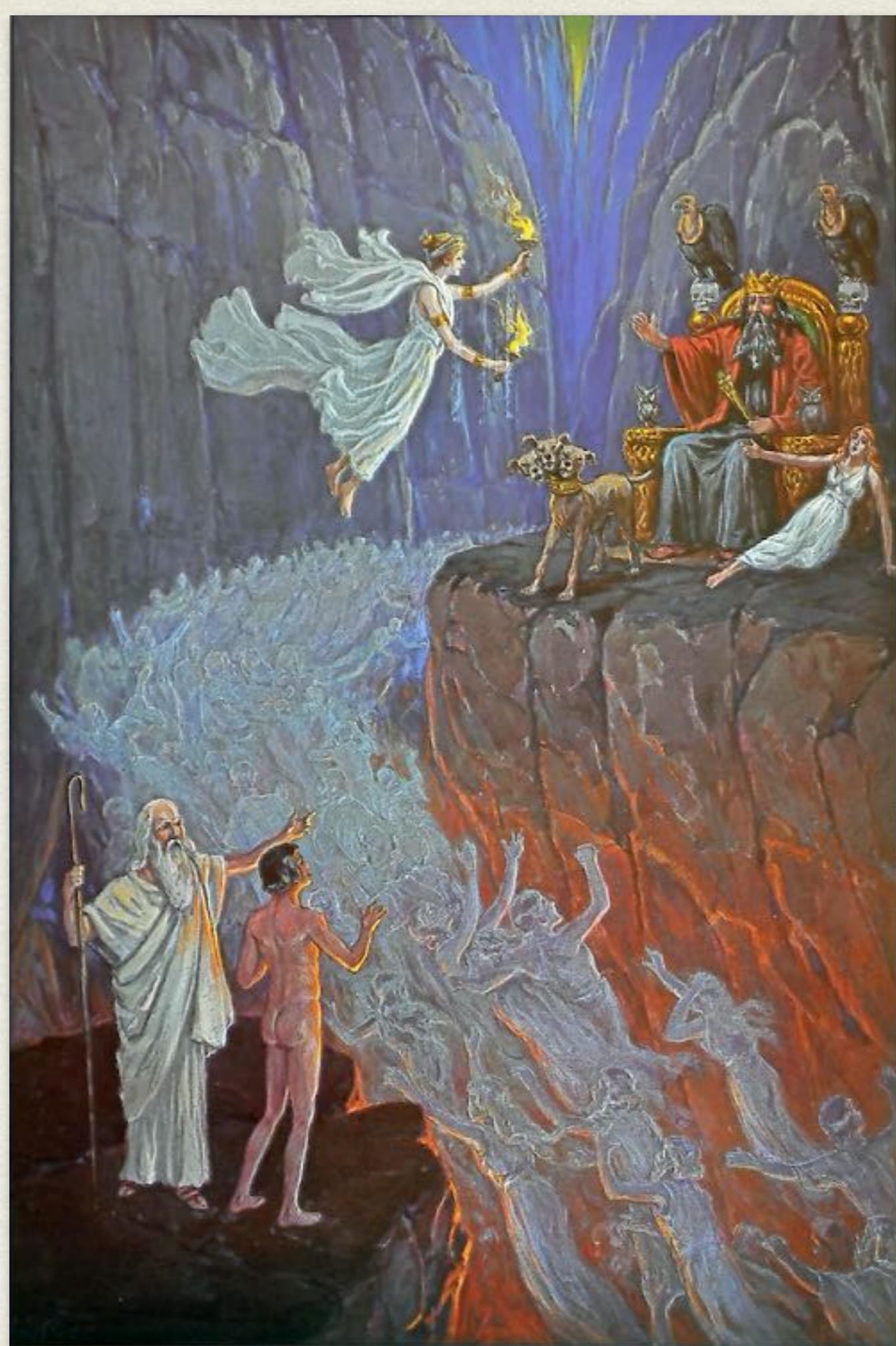


From Thomson's *Revel des Figures*, Goussier, Plérome, Fontaine, Mame et cie Paris, 1880.

THE RITE OF PERSEPHONE.

Pluto, the lord of the underworld, represents the body intelligence of man; and the rite of Persephone is symbolic of the divine nature assumed and defiled by the animal soul and dragged downward into the sinister darkness of Hades, which it has used as a prison for the material, or objective, sphere of incarnation.

In his *Disquisition upon the Sacred Greek Verse*, James Collins presents the following version of the mysteries taking place during the nine days required for the enactment of the Greater Eleusinian Rites. The first day was that of general meeting, during which there to be initiated were questioned concerning their several qualifications. The second day was spent in a procession to the sea, possibly for the submerging of an image of the presiding goddess. The third day was opened by the sacrifice of a bull. On the fourth day the mystic helped containing certain sacred symbols was brought to Eleusis, accompanied by a number of female devotees carrying smaller baskets. On the evening of the fifth day there was a torch race, on the sixth a procession led by a statue of Ceres, and on the seventh an all-night vigil. The eighth day was devoted to the repetition of the previous ceremonies for the benefit of any who might have been prevented from attending sooner. The ninth and last day was devoted to the deepest philosophical truths of the Eleusinians, during which an image of the symbol of Bacchus was exhibited as an emblem of supreme importance.

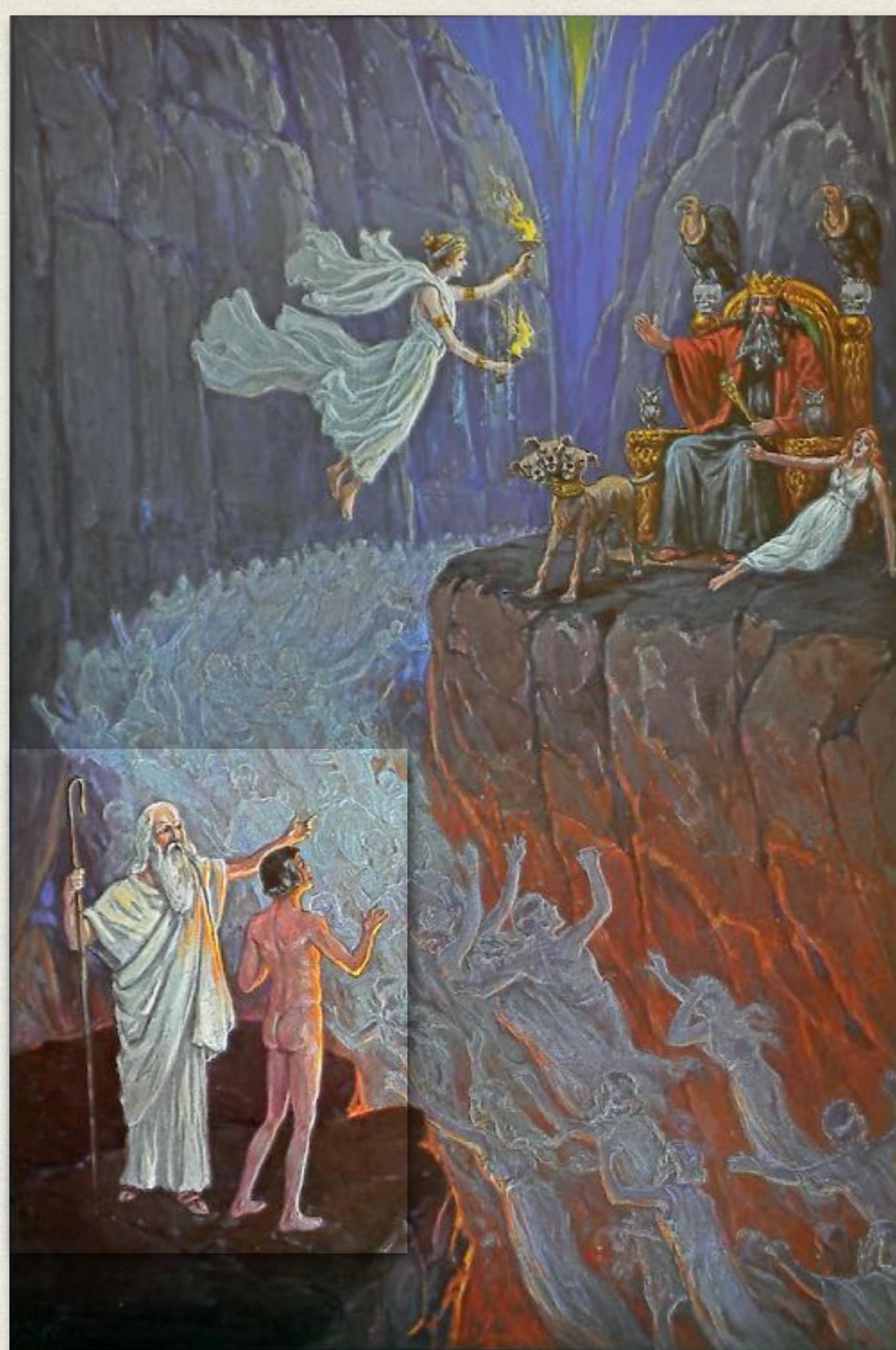


An Initiation Ceremony in the Eleusinian Mysteries

The candidate and his aged initiator are here shown standing on the brink of a chasm dividing the world of the living from that of the dead and through which stream the shades of the departed. On the farther side of the chasm Hades, the god of the underworld, sits on his golden throne surrounded by the emblems of death and attended by Cerberus, the three-headed dog, guardian of the gates of death. Above the yawning cleft hovers the figure of Ceres, carrying the two torches which light her way through the gloom of the netherworld. She pleads for the liberation of her daughter Persephone, whom Hades has abducted and would force to become his queen. John A. Weisse thus describes the ritual of the Eleusinia: “Soon the thunder rolled, lightning flashed, strange and fearful objects appeared, and the place seemed to shake and be on fire; hideous spectres glided through the building, moaning and sighing; frightful noises and howlings were heard. Mysterious apparitions, representing the messengers of the infernal deities, Anguish, Madness, Famine, Disease, and Death, flew around. As the trembling crowd of novices advanced amid this fearful spectacle, representing the torments of this life and those of *Tartarus*, they heard the solemn voice of the hierophant explaining them and exhibiting his symbols of supreme deity, which but added to the horrors of the scene, when suddenly a serene light and objects of bliss appeared and opened an *Elysium* to the initiated Eleusinian phalanx, who had, in a short time and space, experienced the miseries of Earth, the tortures of Tartarus, and the happiness of Elysium.” (See *The Obelisk in Freemasonry*.) –text beneath the color plate facing STOAA:29

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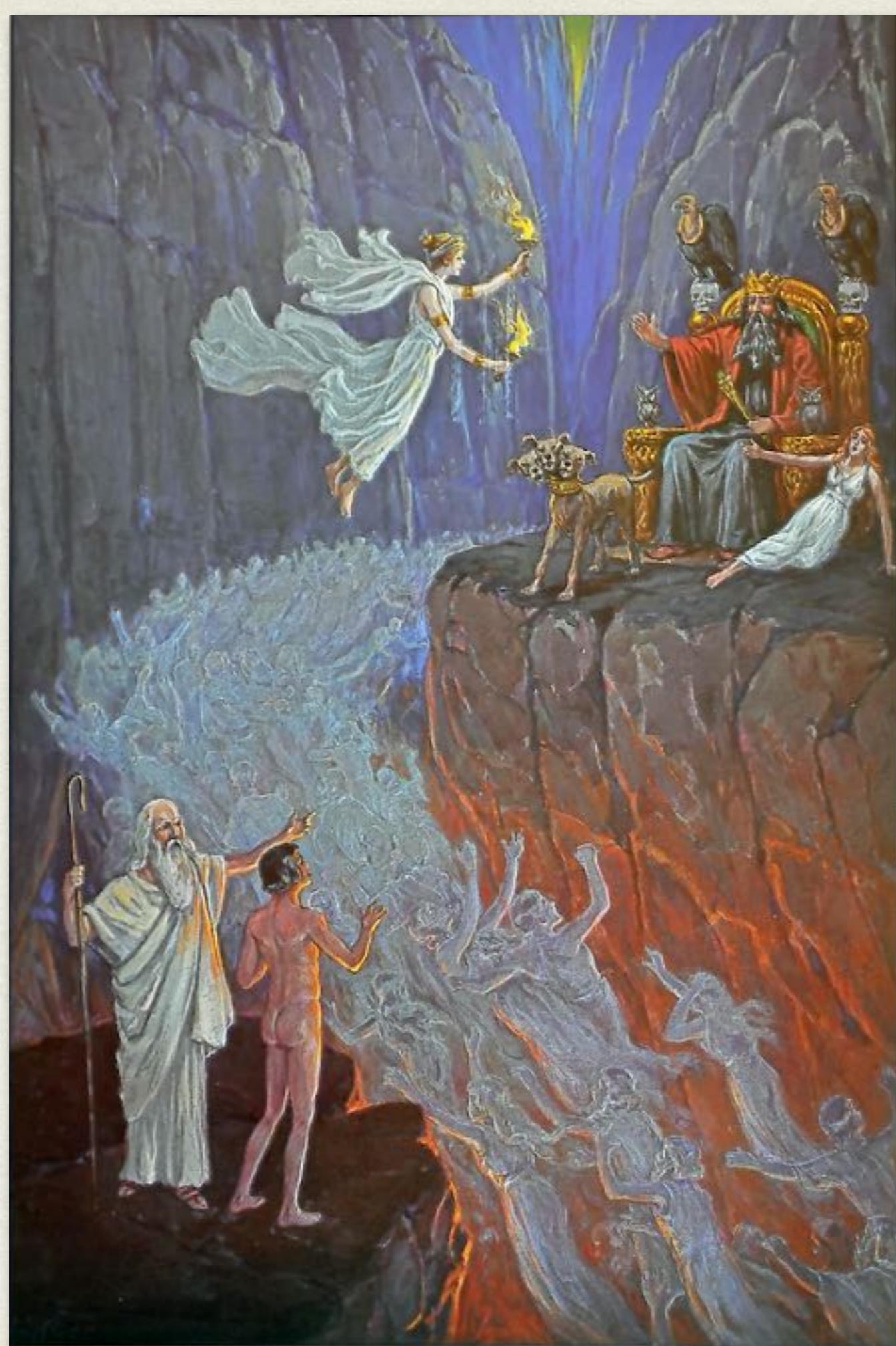
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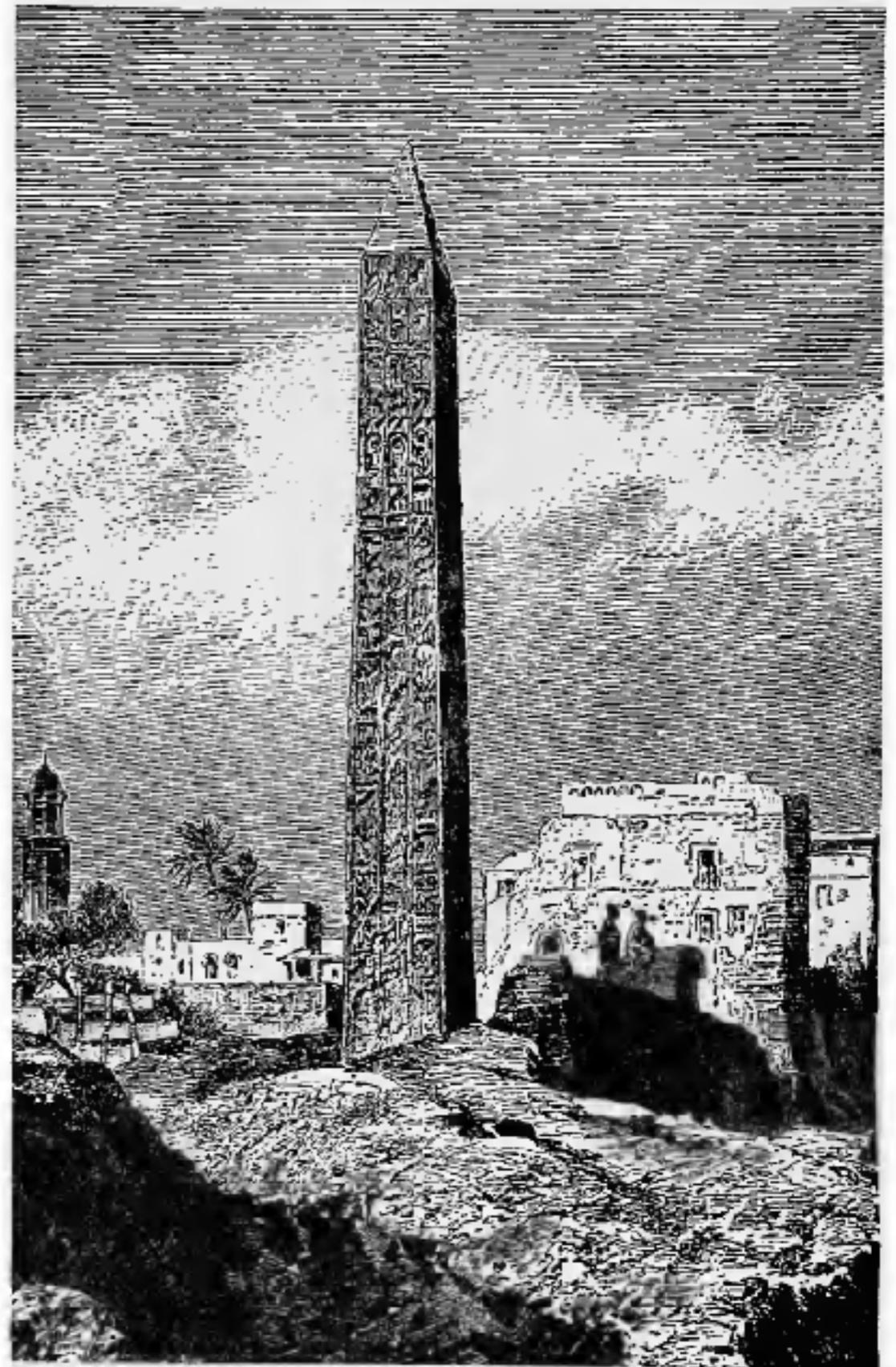
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EGYPTIAN SYMBOLS COMPARED WITH THOSE DISCOVERED
IN AMERICAN MOUNDS.

BY
JOHN A. WEISSE, M.D.,

Author of "Origin, Progress and Destiny of the English Language and Literature."

WITH
COLORED AND PLAIN ILLUSTRATIONS, THE HIEROGLYPHS OF THE
AMERICAN AND ENGLISH OBELISKS, AND TRANSLATIONS
INTO ENGLISH BY DR. S. BIRCH.

NEW YORK:
J. W. BOUTON, 706 BROADWAY.
1880.



The Obelisk as it stood at Alexandria.
(From "Ebers' Egypt.")

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PLUTO AND SERAPIS IDENTICAL

In the simplicity of the primitive religion, Pluto and Proserpina were considered merely as the deities of death presiding over the infernal regions; and, being thought wholly inflexible and inexorable, were neither honored with any rites of worship, nor addressed in any forms of supplication; but in the mystic system they became personifications of the active and passive modifications of the pervading Spirit concentrated in the earth. Pluto was represented with the polos or disk on his head, like Venus and Isis, –and, in the character of Serapis, with the *patera* of libation, as distributor of the waters, in one hand and the cornucopia, signifying its result, in the other. His name *Pluto* or *Plutus* signifies the same as this latter symbol, and appears to have arisen from the mystic worship; his ancient title having been *Aides* or *Afides*, signifying the Invisible, which the Attics corrupted to *Hades*. –Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology:103-4

An 18th-century engraving depicting the underworld of Greek mythology, showing (foreground) Charon, the ferryman, in his boat; (bottom left) Cerberus, the three-headed dog guarding the entrance; and (centre left) Hades, ruler of the underworld, and his wife, Persephone. The body of water is the River Styx.





An Initiation Ceremony in the Eleusinian Mysteries

The candidate and his aged initiator are here shown standing on the brink of a chasm dividing the world of the living from that of the dead and through which stream the shades of the departed. On the farther side of the chasm Hades, the god of the underworld, sits on his golden throne surrounded by the emblems of death and attended by Cerberus, the three-headed dog, guardian of the gates of death. Above the yawning cleft hovers the figure of Ceres, carrying the two torches which light her way through the gloom of the netherworld. She pleads for the liberation of her daughter Persephone, whom Hades has abducted and would force to become his queen. John A. Weisse thus describes the ritual of the Eleusinia: “Soon the thunder rolled, lightning flashed, strange and fearful objects appeared, and the place seemed to shake and be on fire; hideous spectres glided through the building, moaning and sighing; frightful noises and howlings were heard. Mysterious apparitions, representing the messengers of the infernal deities, Anguish, Madness, Famine, Disease, and Death, flew around. As the trembling crowd of novices advanced amid this fearful spectacle, representing the torments of this life and those of *Tartarus*, they heard the solemn voice of the hierophant explaining them and exhibiting his symbols of supreme deity, which but added to the horrors of the scene, when suddenly a serene light and objects of bliss appeared and opened an *Elysium* to the initiated Eleusinian phalanx, who had, in a short time and space, experienced the miseries of Earth, the tortures of Tartarus, and the happiness of Elysium.” (See *The Obelisk in Freemasonry*.) –text beneath the color plate facing STOAA:29



Persephone



In the rape of Proserpine the daughter of Ceres, it is said, that she was the Queen of the realms of Pluto. The beautiful figurative truth in this story seems to have been long lost sight of. A little penetration, however, will soon restore it. Ceres, is acknowledged to mean the harvest; her daughter Proserpine was that portion of the harvest, with which the farmer cropped his ground; who having hidden the grain within the furrow, which is below the surface of the earth, it was therefore said, that she was within the realms of Pluto. And as the harvest is the richest treasure which we can have from the ground; the small portion which we hide below the surface may well be called the Queen. Her name of Proserpina so often mentioned by Ovid; is evidently corrupted from Persephone, i.e. the grain hidden; which is compounded of Peri, seed or grain, and Saphan, to hide, or Saphaneh, the hidden; which make Peri-saphaneh, which exactly agrees with the process of harvest, and the tenor of the fable. –Mythological Astronomy:46



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 Initiates of Greece and Rome (MPH):13-4

Pluto and Persephone



The sign and myth of the mother and child were known thousands of years before the Christian era. The drama of the Mysteries of Demeter represents Persephoneia, her daughter, as carried away by Pluto or Hades into the world of the dead; and when the mother finally discovers her there, she has been installed as queen of the realm of Darkness. This myth was transcribed by the Church into the legend of St. Anna going in quest of her daughter Mary, who has been conveyed by Joseph into Egypt. Persephone is depicted with two ears of wheat in her hand; so is Mary in the old pictures; so was the Celestial Virgin of the constellation. Albumazar the Arabian indicates the identity of the several myths as follows: "In the first decan of the Virgin rises a maid, called in Arabic *Aderenosa*, that is, pure immaculate virgin, graceful in person, charming in countenance, modest in habit, with loosened hair, holding in her hands two ears of wheat, sitting upon an embroidered throne, nursing a boy, and rightly feeding him in the place called Hebraea; a boy, I say, named Iessus by certain nations, which signifies Issa, whom they also call Christ in Greek." -Isis Unveiled:1259

Our Lady of the Three Ears



Let us press the question further: Can the Virgin Mary be the same as Venus-Aphrodite, or as Cybele, Hathor, Ishtar, and the rest? We think of the words of the goddess Isis addressed to her initiate Apuleius, c. 150 A.D., which are cited at the opening of Primitive Mythology:

“I am she that is the natural mother of all things, mistress and governess of all the elements, the initial progeny of worlds, chief of the powers divine, queen of all that are in hell, the principal of them that dwell in heaven, manifested alone and under one form of all the gods and goddesses. At my will the planets of the sky, the wholesome winds of the seas, and the lamentable silences of hell are disposed; my name, my divinity is adored throughout the world, in divers manners, in variable customs, and by many names. For the Phrygiaos that are the first of all men call me the Mother of the gods of Pessinus; the Athenians, which are sprung from their own soil, Cecropian Minerva; the Cyprians, which are girt about by the sea, Paphian Venus; the Cretans, which bear arrows, Dictynian Diana; the Sicilians, which speak three tongues, infernal Proserpine; the Eleusinians, their ancient goddess Ceres; some Juno, others Bellona, others Hecate, others Ramnusie, and principally both sort of the Ethiopians, which dwell in the Orient and are enlightened by the morning rays of the sun; and the Egyptians, which are excellent in all kind of ancient doctrine, and by their proper ceremonies accustomed to worship me, do call me by my true name, Queen Isis. –The Masks of God, v.III:42-3



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Ceres-Demeter

Ceres-Demeter and her earthly wanderings in search of her daughter are the euhemerized descriptions of one of the most metaphysico-psychological subjects ever treated of by human mind. It is a mask for the transcendent narrative of the initiated seers; the celestial vision of the freed soul of the initiate of the last hour describing the process by which the soul that has not yet been incarnated descends for the first time into matter, "Blessed is he who hath seen those common concerns of the underworld; he knows both the end of life and its divine origin from Jupiter," says Pindar. –Isis Unveiled:811

Apuleius invokes her by the names of Eleusinian Ceres, Celestial Venus, and Proserpina; and she answers him by a general explanation of these titles. "I am," says she, "Nature, the parent of things, the sovereign of the elements, the primary progeny of time, the most exalted of the deities, the first of the heavenly gods and goddesses, the queen of the shades, the uniform countenance; who dispose with my nod the luminous heights of heaven, the salubrious breezes of the sea, and the mournful silence of the dead; whose single deity the whole world venerates in many forms, with various rites, and many names." –Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology:175

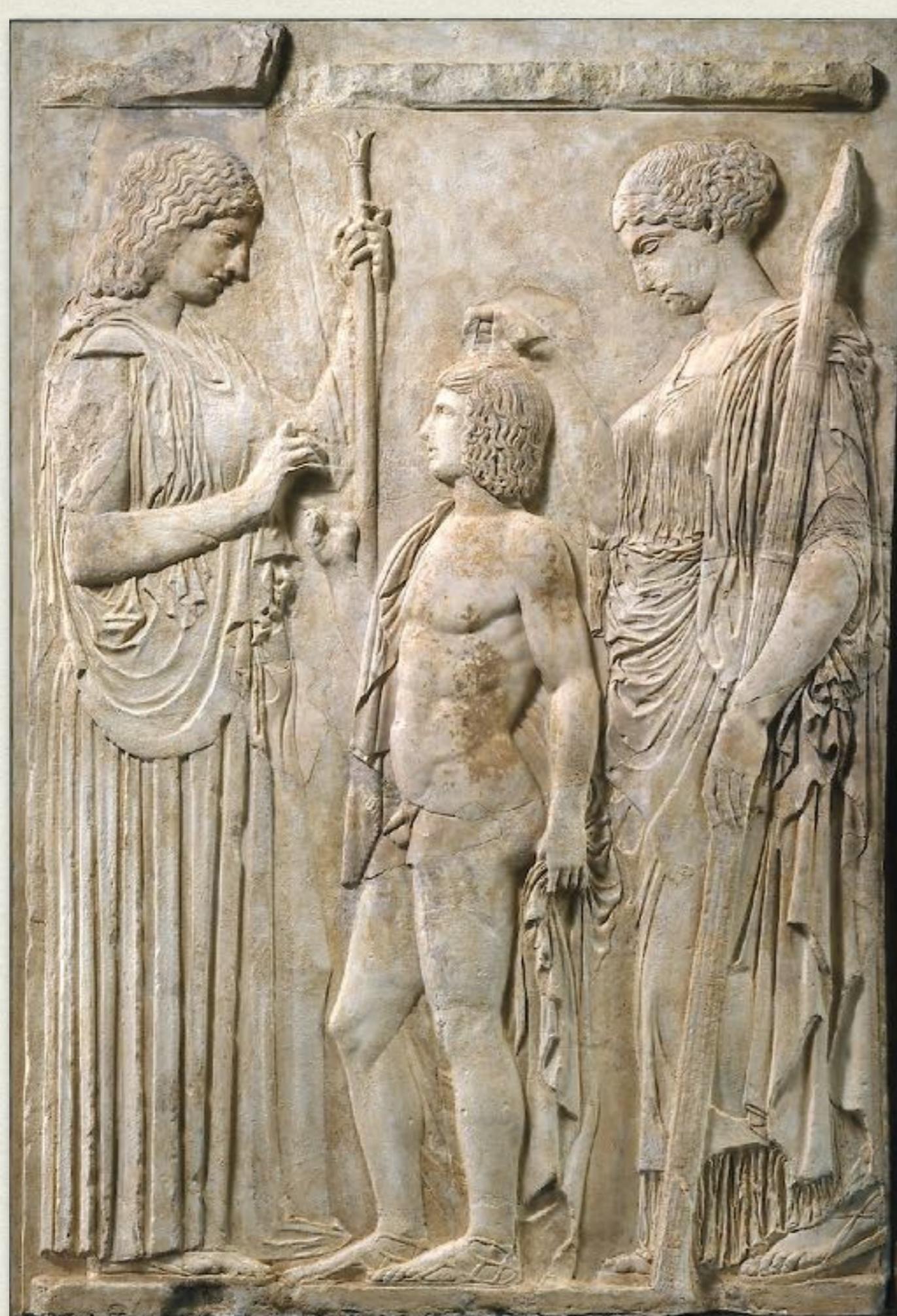


Demeter, enthroned and extending her hand in a benediction toward the kneeling Metaneira, who offers the triune wheat. Detail of the belly of an Apulian red-figure hydria, ca. 340 BC.

From Mystes to Epoptes

Like all other mysteries, the Eleusinian were divided into the greater and the lesser, and the latter, like the Bacchic and Cabiric rites, lasted nine days, and were merely preparatory, consisting of lustrations and sacrifices. The ceremonies of initiation into the greater mysteries were opened by the herald exclaiming: "Retire, ye profane." The aspirant was presented naked, to signify his total helplessness and dependence on Providence, [after which] he was clothed with the skin of a calf. An oath of secrecy was then administered, and he was asked: "Have you eaten bread?" The reply was "No. Proserpine cannot return to the earth because she has eaten of the fruit of the infernal regions; Adam falls when he tastes of earthly fruit. I have drunk the sacred mixture, I have been fed from the basket of Ceres; I have laboured; I have entered into the bed." That is to say, he had been placed in the *pastos*, in which the aspirant for initiation was immured during the period of his probation. He was then made to pass through a series of trials, similar in character to those adopted in other mysteries, after which he was introduced into the inner temple, where he beheld the statue of the goddess Ceres, surrounded by a dazzling light. The candidate who had heretofore been called a *mystes*, or novice, was now termed *epoptes*, or eye-witness, and the secret doctrine was revealed. —The Secret Societies of All Ages and Countries:82-3





Ten marble fragments of the Great Eleusinian Relief

ca. 27 B.C.–A.D. 14

Demeter, the goddess of agricultural abundance, stands at the left, clad in a peplos and himation (cloak) and holding a scepter. At the right is Persephone, her daughter and the wife of Hades, the god of the underworld. She is dressed in a chiton and himation. Each goddess extends her right hand toward a nude youth, but it is no longer possible to determine what they held. The boy is thought to be Triptolemos, who was sent by Demeter to teach men how to cultivate grain. On contemporary Athenian vases, he is usually shown as a bearded adult seated in a winged chariot about to set out on his civilizing mission. The original marble relief was found at the sanctuary of Demeter at Eleusis, the site of the Eleusinian mysteries.

The original Greek work and a number of Roman copies survive. Here, the ten Roman fragments are embedded in a cast of the Greek relief. Compared to the original, the execution of the hair and drapery in the copy is sharper and accords with the style current in Augustan art.



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The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

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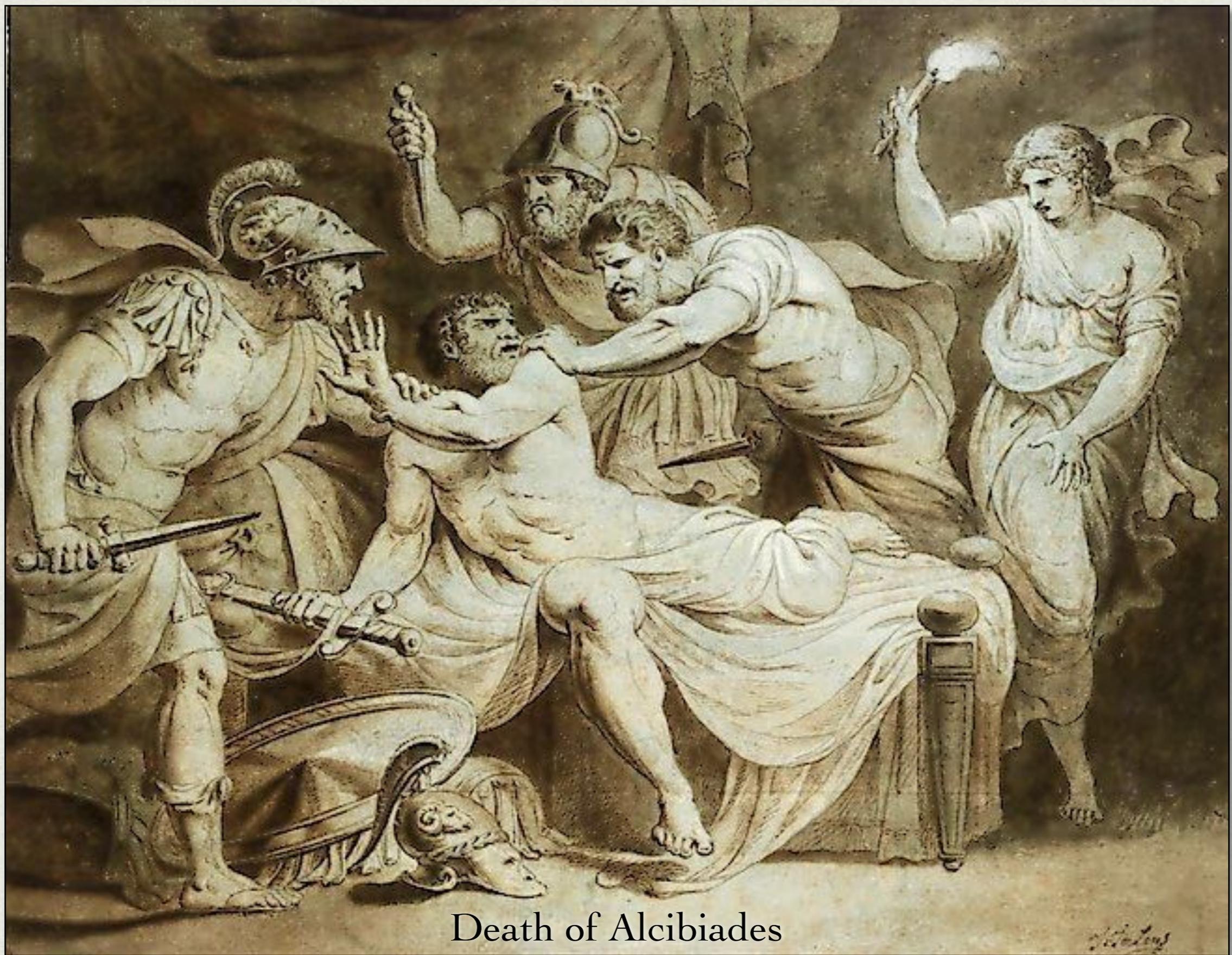
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Death of Alcibiades

Alcibiades [famous Greek general and student of Socrates, but also a profligate] was banished and consigned to the Furies for having revealed the mysteries of Ceres. Prometheus, Tantalus, Oedipus, and Orpheus, suffered various punishments for the same reason. –The Secret Societies of All Ages and Countries:27

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“Man,” says Plutarch, “is compound; and they are mistaken who think him to be compounded of two parts only. For they imagine that the understanding is a part of the soul, but they err in this no less than those who make the soul to be a part of the body, for the understanding (*nous*) as far exceeds the soul, as the soul is better and diviner than the body. Now this composition of the soul (*ψυχη*) with the understanding (*νοῦς*) makes reason; and with the body, passion; of which the one is the beginning or principle of pleasure and pain, and the other of virtue and vice. Of these three parts conjoined and compacted together, the earth has given the body, the moon the soul, and the sun the understanding to the generation of man.

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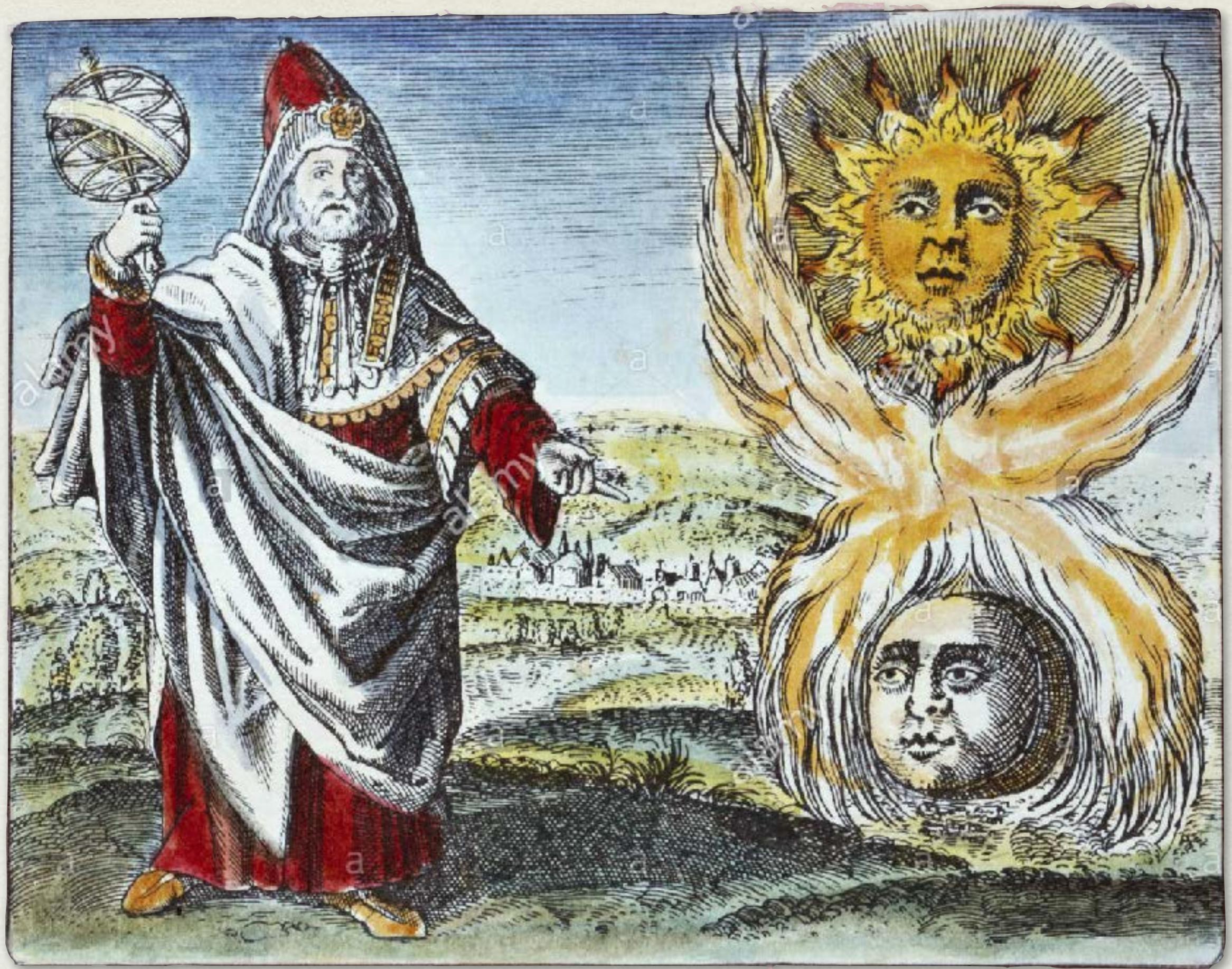
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"The Light is me, I am the Nous (the mind or Manu), I am thy God, and I am far older than the human principle which escapes from the shadow." –The Divine Pymander

Johfra Bosschart (1919-1998), The Vision of Hermes Trismegistus, 1972



Thus here again divine Spirit is symbolised by the Sun or Fire; divine Soul by Water and the Moon, both standing for the Father and Mother of Pneuma, human Soul, or Mind, symbolised by the Wind or air, for Pneuma, means "breath." -SD2:113

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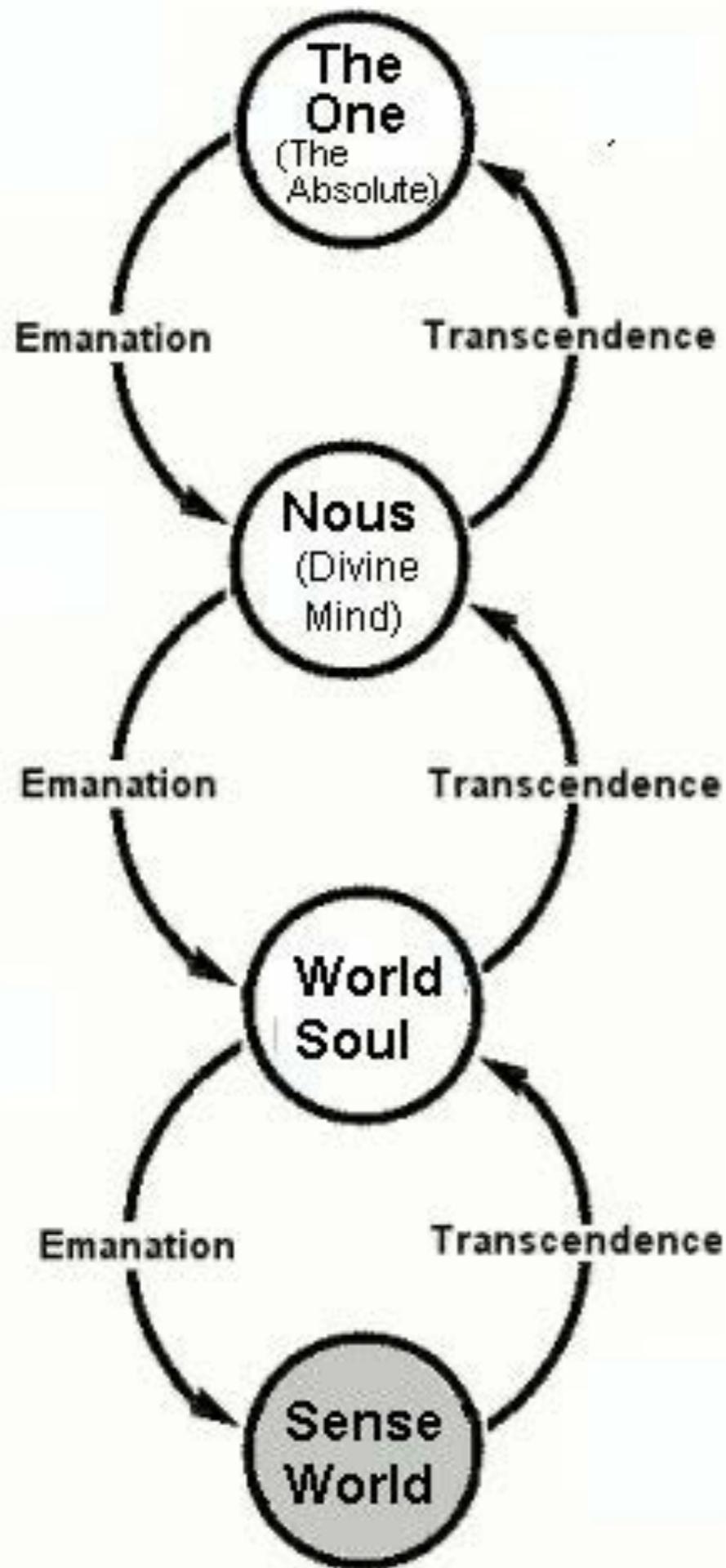
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But after a certain time, the νοῦς [nous] aspires to reascend to its fountain head the Sun, whereupon Persephone, with her colleague the Celestial Hermes, separates it with gentleness and by slow degrees from the grosser ψυχή [soul]. This is the Second Death: the vows flying up to the Sun, but the ψυχή remaining in the Moon in a dreamy sort of existence, until gradually absorbed into her substance, exactly as the Earth gradually absorbs into herself the remains of the body. –The Gnostics and Their Remains:349

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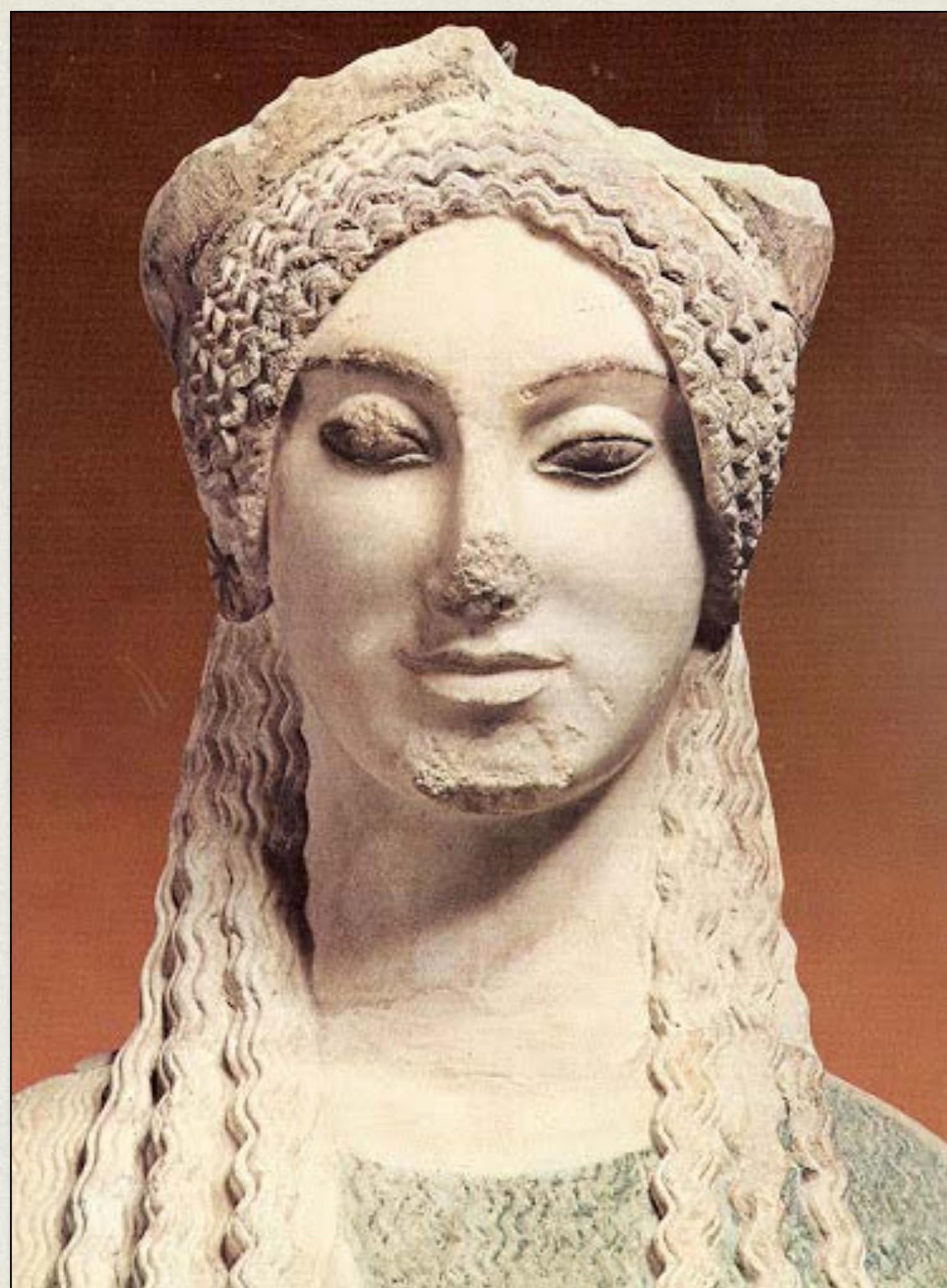
“Man,” says Plutarch, “is compound; and they are mistaken who think him to be compounded of two parts only. For they imagine that the understanding is a part of the soul, but they err in this no less than those who make the soul to be a part of the body, for the understanding (*nous*) as far exceeds the soul, as the soul is better and diviner than the body. Now this composition of the soul (*ψυχη*) with the understanding (*νοῦς*) makes reason; and with the body, passion; of which the one is the beginning or principle of pleasure and pain, and the other of virtue and vice. Of these three parts conjoined and compacted together, the earth has given the body, the moon the soul, and the sun the understanding to the generation of man.

“Now of the deaths we die, the one makes man two of three, and the other, one out of two. The former is in the region and jurisdiction of Demeter, whence the name given to the Mysteries, *τελειν*, resembled that given to death, *τελευταν*. The Athenians also heretofore called the deceased sacred to Demeter. As for the other death it is in the moon or region of Persephone. And as with the one the terrestrial, so with the other the celestial Hermes doth dwell. This suddenly and with violence plucks the soul from the body; but Proserpina mildly and in a long time disjoins the understanding from the soul. For this reason she is called Monogenes, only-begotten, or rather begetting one alone; for the better part of man becomes alone when it is separated by her. Now both the one and the other happens thus according to nature. It is ordained by Faith that every soul, whether with or without understanding (*νοῦς*), when gone out of the body, should wander for a time, though not all for the same, in the region lying between the earth and moon. For those that have been unjust and dissolute suffer there the punishment due to their offences; but the good and virtuous are there detained till they are purified, and have, by expiation, purged out of them all the infections they might have contracted from the contagion of the body, as if from foul health, living in the mildest part of the air, called the Meadows of Hades, where they must remain for a certain prefixed and appointed time. And then, as if they were returning from a wandering pilgrimage or long exile into their country, they have a taste of joy, such as they principally receive who are initiated into the Sacred Mysteries, mixed with trouble, admiration, and each one's proper and peculiar hope.” –*Isis Unveiled*:1028-9



Johannes van den Berg

“And Pistis Sophia cried out most exceedingly, she cried to the Light of lights, which she had seen from the beginning... and uttered this repentance: Save me, O Light, for evil thoughts have entered into me” –Pistis Sophia ch. 32



The fable of Persephoneia, who, as her name indicates, was the goddess of destruction, is fabled to have sprung from Jupiter and Ceres, the most general personifications of the creative powers. Hence she is called Kore, the *universal* daughter, or general secondary principle; for though properly the goddess of Destruction, she is frequently distinguished by the title *Soteira* [savior], and Preserver, and represented with ears of corn upon her head, as goddess of Fertility. She was, in reality, the personification of the heat or fire supposed to pervade the earth, which was held to be at once the cause and effect of fertility and destruction, as being at once the cause and effect of fermentation, from which both proceed. The mystic concealment of her operation was expressed by the black veil or bandage upon her head, which was sometimes dotted with asterisks; whilst the hair, which it enveloped, was made to imitate flames. –
Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology:82-3

Kore No. 674

from Athens

Height 3 feet

c. 500 BCE

marble

(The Acropolis Museum, Athens)

The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

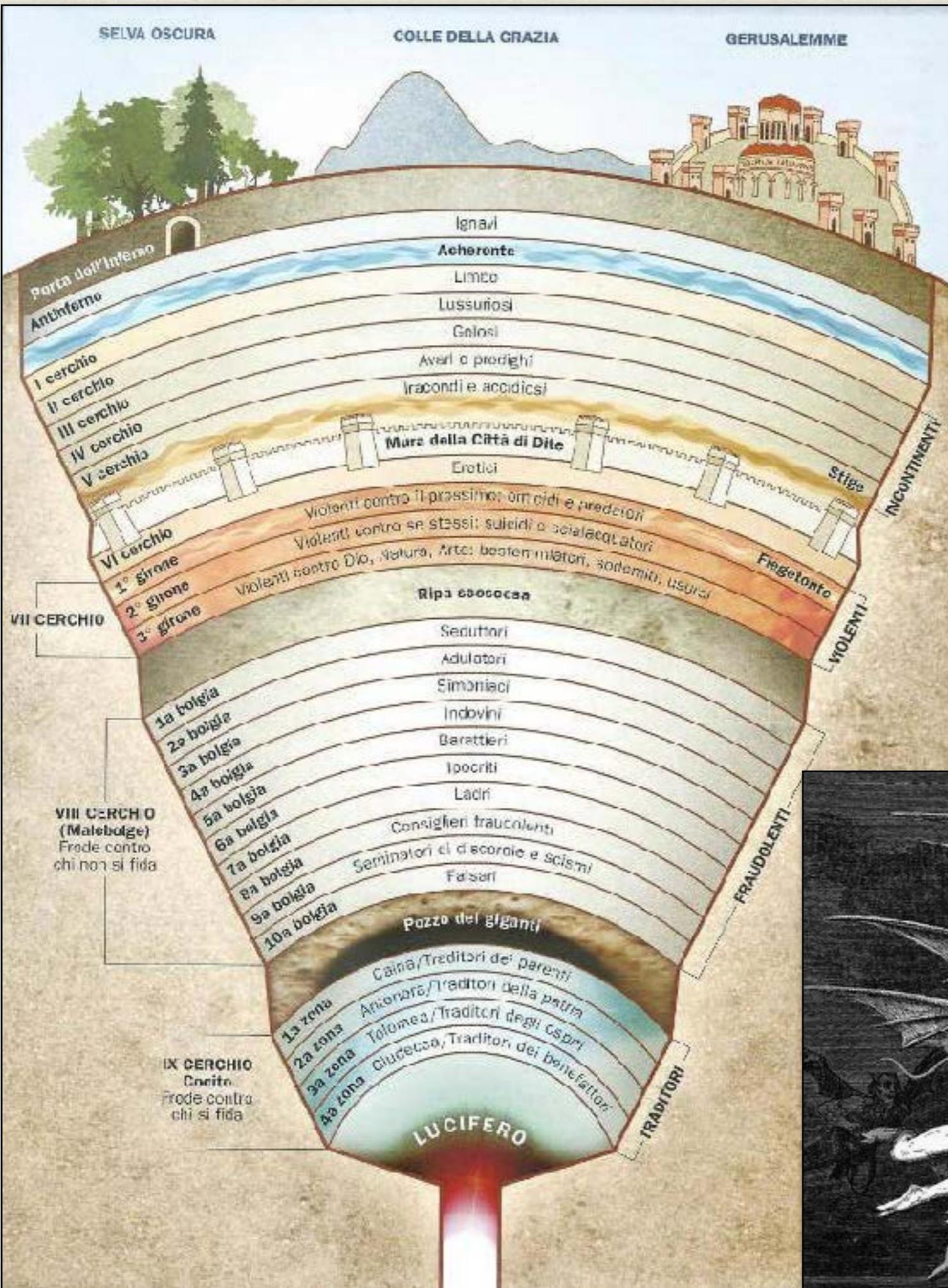
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The soul of man--often called *Psyche*, and in the Eleusinian Mysteries symbolized by Persephone--is essentially a spiritual thing. Its true home is in the higher worlds, where, free from the bondage of material form and material concepts, it is said to be truly alive and self-expressive. The human, or physical, nature of man, according to this doctrine, is a tomb, a quagmire, a false and impermanent thing, the source of all sorrow and suffering. Plato describes the body as the sepulcher of the soul; and by this he means not only the human form but also the human nature.

The gloom and depression of the Lesser Mysteries represented the agony of the spiritual soul unable to express itself because it has accepted the limitations and illusions of the human environment. The crux of the Eleusinian argument was that man is neither better nor wiser after death than during life. If he does not rise above ignorance during his sojourn here, man goes at death into eternity to wander about forever, making the same mistakes which he made here. If he does not outgrow the desire for material possessions here, he will carry it with him into the invisible world, where, because he can never gratify the desire, he will continue in endless agony. Dante's *Inferno* is symbolically descriptive of the sufferings of those who never freed their spiritual natures from the cravings, habits, viewpoints, and limitations of their Plutonic personalities. Those who made no endeavor to improve themselves (whose souls have slept) during their physical lives, passed at death into Hades, where, lying in rows, they slept through all eternity as they had slept through life.

To the Eleusinian philosophers, birth into the physical world was death in the fullest sense of the word, and the only true birth was that of the spiritual soul of man rising out of the womb of his own fleshly nature. "The soul is dead that slumbers," says Longfellow, and in this he strikes the keynote of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Just as Narcissus, gazing at himself in the water (the ancients used this mobile element to symbolize the transitory, illusionary, material universe) lost his life trying to embrace a reflection, so man, gazing into the mirror of Nature and accepting as his real self the senseless clay that he sees reflected, loses the opportunity afforded by physical life to unfold his immortal, invisible Self. --STOAA:29



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The knowledge of the Perfect Man is very deep, and hard to be attained to. The beginning of perfection is the knowledge of man, but absolute perfection is the knowledge of God. He (Adamas) is designated by the Phrygians as, the 'Green Wheat-ear cut off'; on this account, at the Eleusinian rites, the initiated hold up in silence to the Directors the wondrous mystery, the green ear of wheat. This wheat-ear is the Perfect Son descended from the Adamas above, the Great Giver of light, like the Hierophant himself.

—The Gnostics and Their Remains:101-2

You will note that the applicant eventually arrives at knowledge and begins to know; the disciple or the initiate starts with knowing, and through his ability to express esoterically that which he knows is able to reveal the light, and by that light to destroy all illusion, glamour and maya; he brings about resurrection upon the physical plane—a resurrection from the death which physical plane life inevitably confers. —Rays and Initiations:286

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Part Three

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The mystics of Eleusis also laid stress upon the evil of suicide, explaining that there was a profound mystery concerning this crime of which they could not speak, but warning their disciples that a great sorrow comes to all who take their own lives. This, in substance, constitutes the esoteric doctrine given to the initiates of the Lesser Mysteries. As the degree dealt largely with the miseries of those who failed to make the best use of their philosophic opportunities, the chambers of initiation were subterranean and the horrors of Hades were vividly depicted in a complicated ritualistic drama. After passing successfully through the tortuous passageways, with their trials and dangers, the candidate received the honorary title of *Mystes*. This meant one who saw through a veil or had a clouded vision. It also signified that the candidate had been brought up to the veil, which would be torn away in the higher degree. The modern word *mystic*, as referring to a seeker after truth according to the dictates of the heart along the path of faith, is probably derived from this ancient word, for faith is belief in the reality of things unseen or veiled.

The Greater Mysteries (into which the candidate was admitted only after he had successfully passed through the ordeals of the Lesser, and not always then) were sacred to Ceres, the mother of Persephone, and represent her as wandering through the world in quest of her abducted daughter. Ceres carried two torches, intuition and reason, to aid her in the search for her lost child (the soul). At last she found Persephone not far from Eleusis, and out of gratitude taught the people there to cultivate corn, which is sacred to her. She also founded the Mysteries. Ceres appeared before Pluto, god of the souls of the dead, and pleaded with him to allow Persephone to return to her home. This the god at first refused to do, because Persephone had eaten of the pomegranate, the fruit of mortality. At last, however, he compromised and agreed to permit Persephone to live in the upper world half of the year if she would stay with him in the darkness of Hades for the remaining half.

The Greeks believed that Persephone was a manifestation of the solar energy, which in the winter months lived under the earth with Pluto, but in the summer returned again with the goddess of productiveness. There is a legend that the flowers loved Persephone and that every year when she left for the dark realms of Pluto, the plants and shrubs would die of grief. While the profane and uninitiated had their own opinions on these subjects, the truths of the Greek allegories remained safely concealed by the priests, who alone recognized the sublimity of these great philosophic and religious parables.

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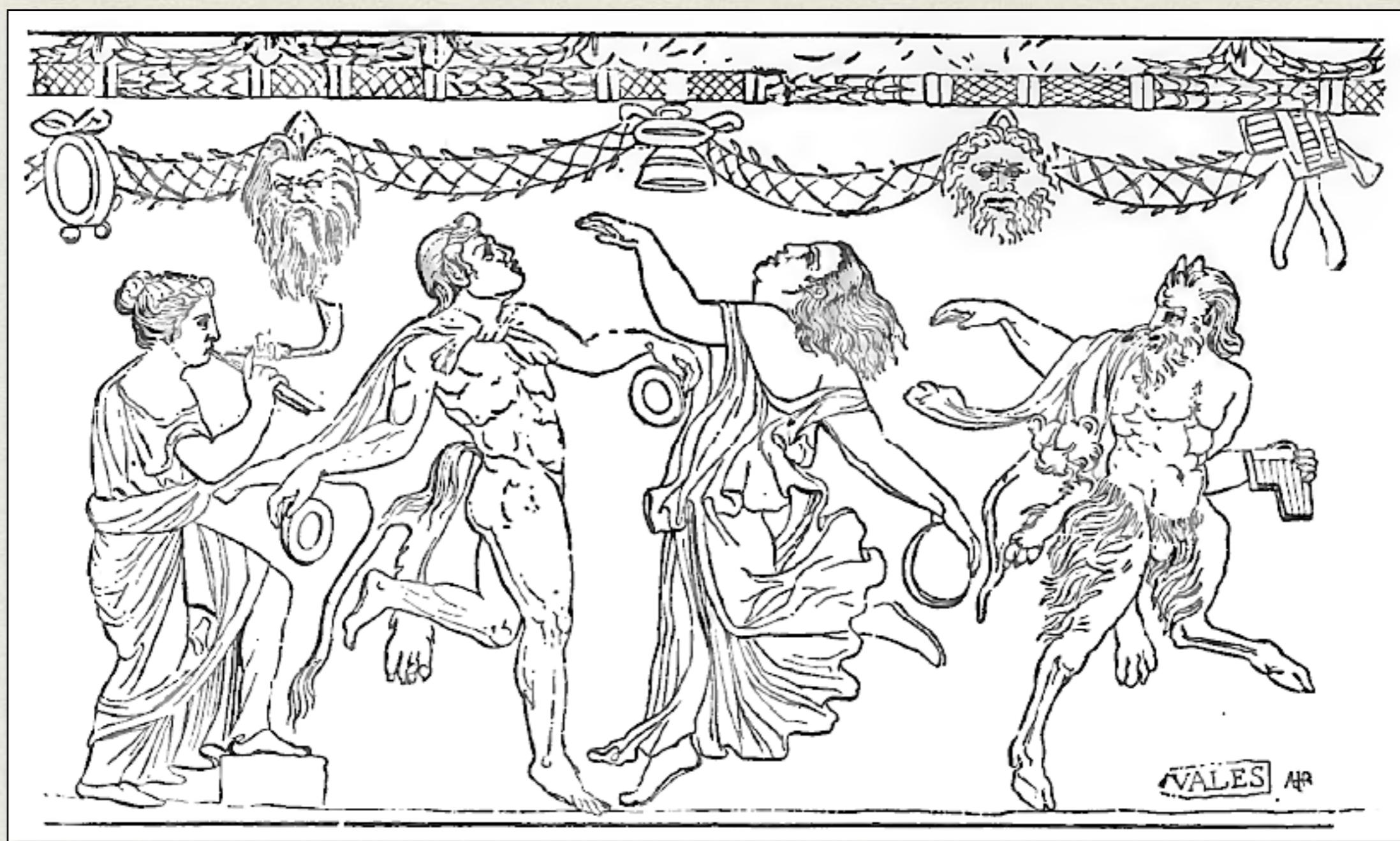
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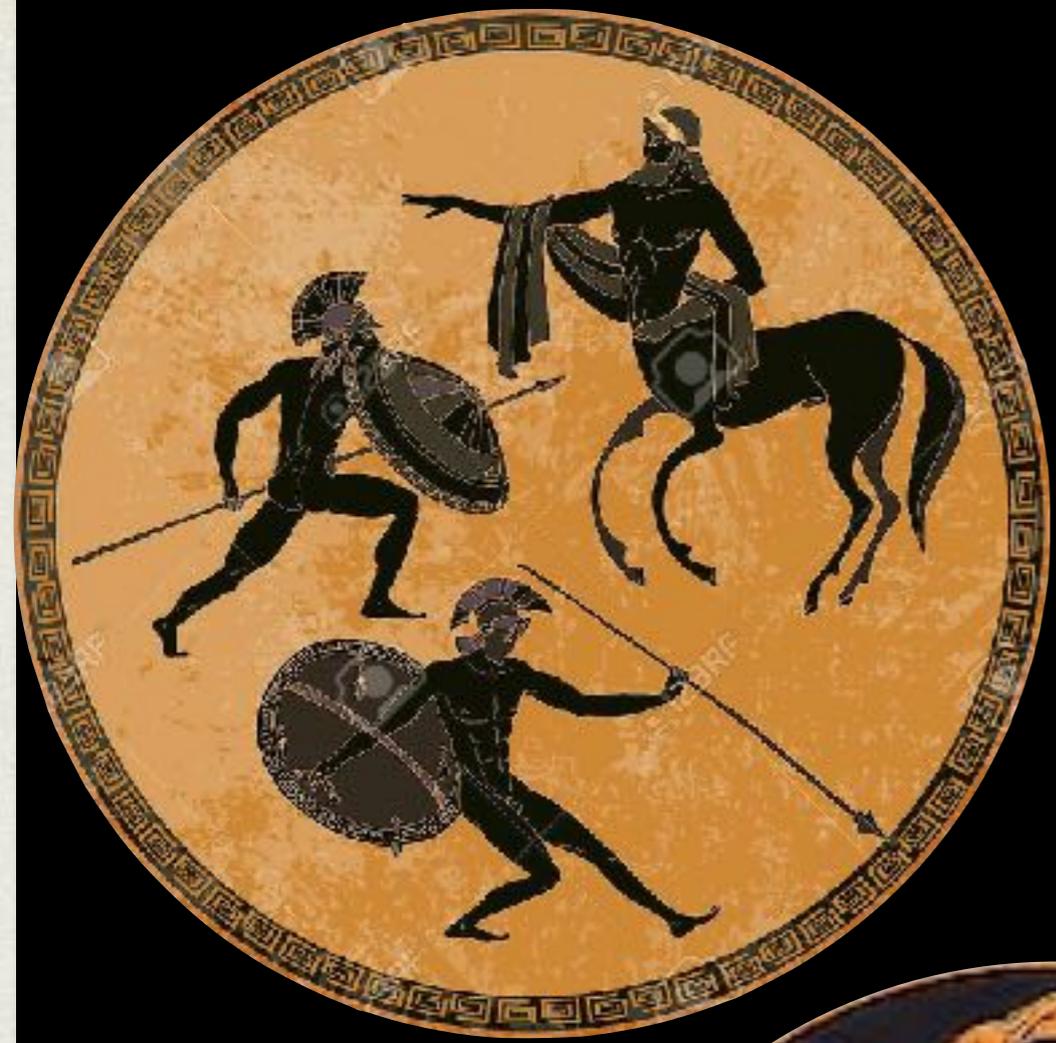
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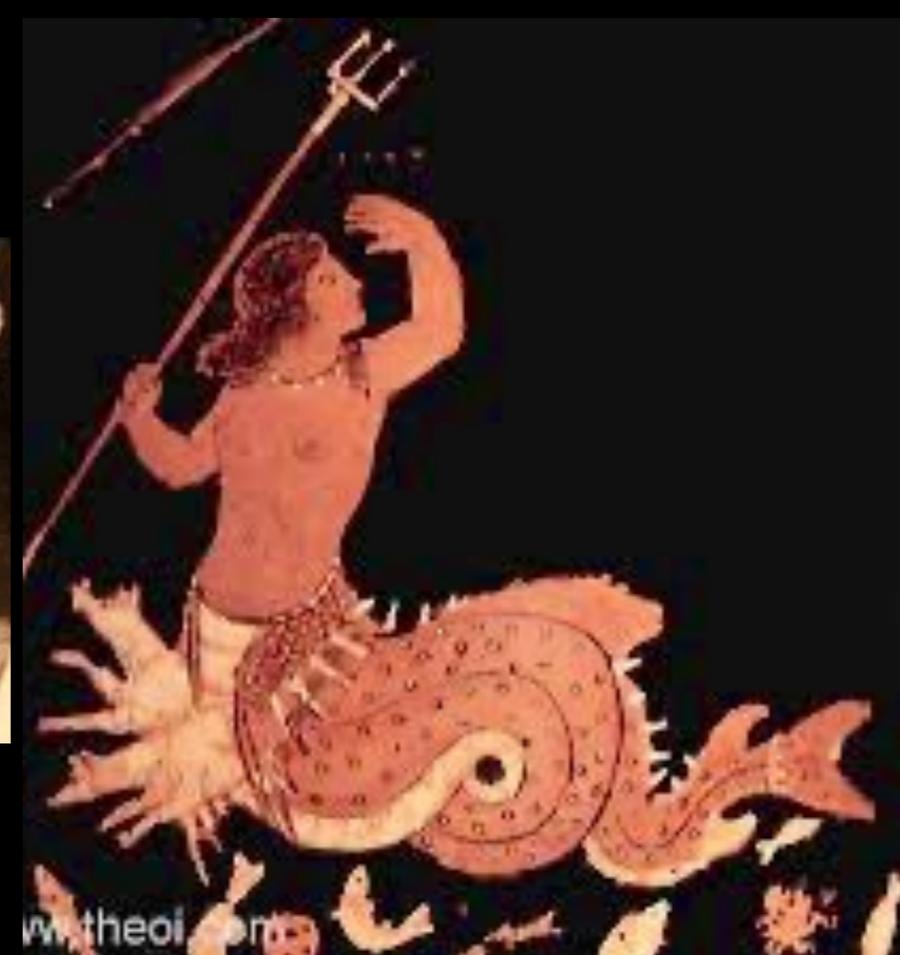


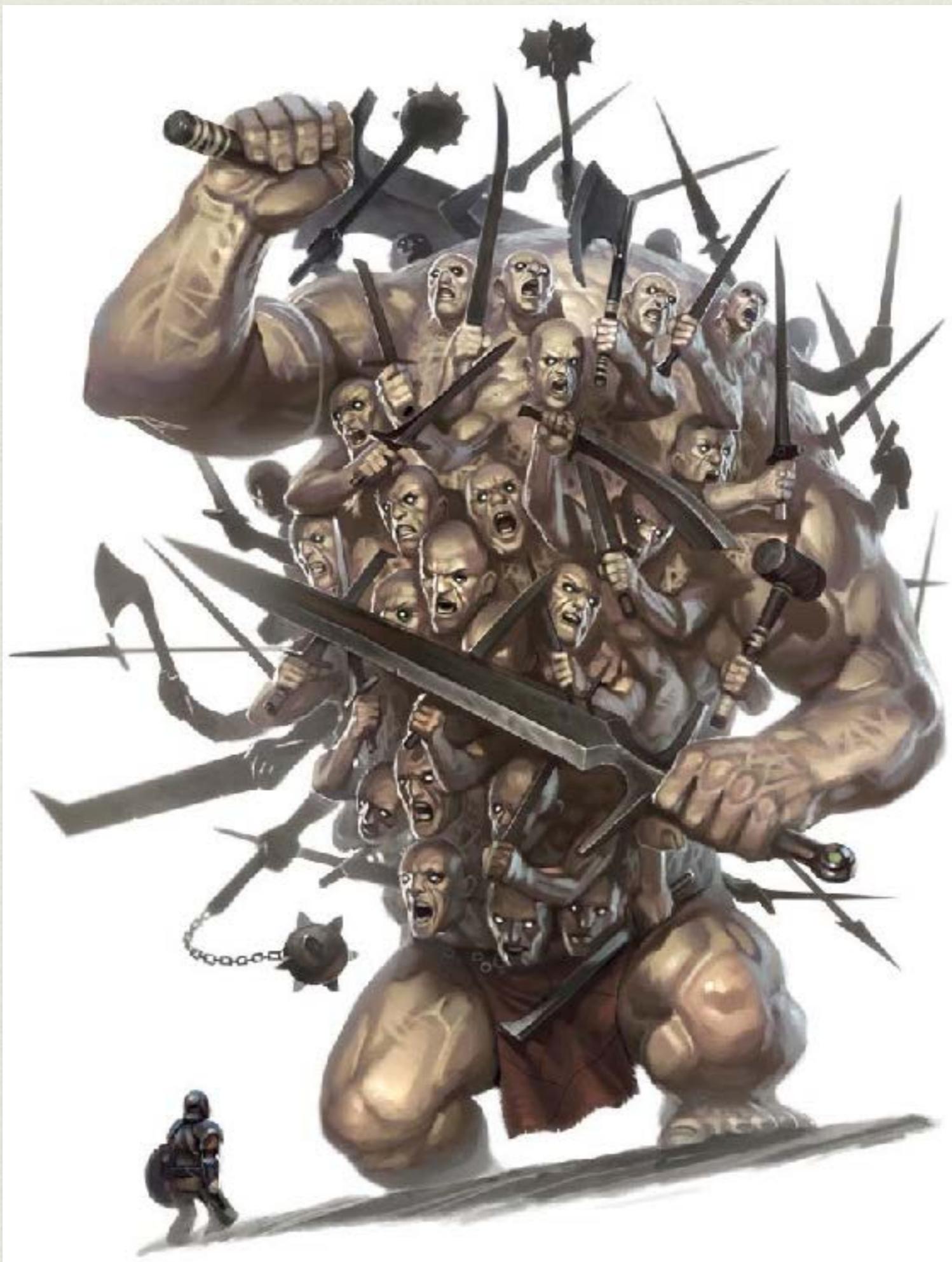
“...for the Mysteries, as is well known, were celebrated by night; and in the ‘Republic of Plato’, souls are described as falling into the estate of generation at midnight; this period being peculiarly accommodated to the darkness and oblivion of a corporeal nature; and to this circumstance the nocturnal celebration of the *Mysterie* doubtless alluded. In the next place, the following vivid description presents itself to our view:

“In the midst, an Elm dark and huge expands its boughs and aged limbs; making an abode which vain Dreams are said to haunt, and under whose every leaf they dwell. Besides all these, are many monstrous apparitions of various wild beasts. The Centaurs harbor at the gates, and double-formed Scyllas, the hundred-fold Briareus, the Snake of Lerna, hissing dreadfully, and Chimæra armed with flames, the Gorgous and the Harpies, and the shades of three-bodied form.” –Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries:57-8



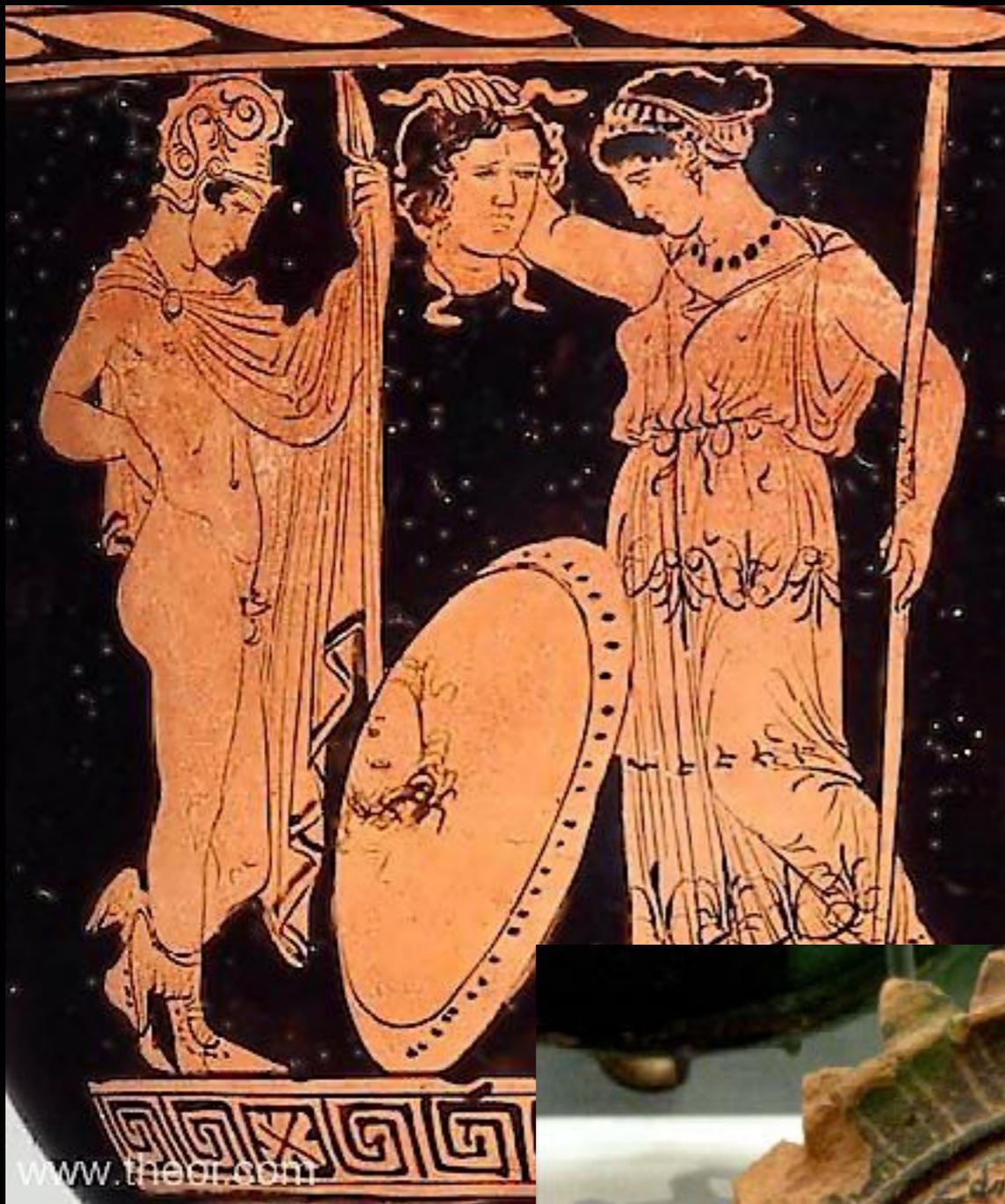
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The Greater Mysteries (into which the candidate was admitted only after he had successfully passed through the ordeals of the Lesser, and not always then) were sacred to Ceres, the mother of Persephone, and represent her as wandering through the world in quest of her abducted daughter. Ceres carried two torches, intuition and reason, to aid her in the search for her lost child (the soul). At last she found Persephone not far from Eleusis, and out of gratitude taught the people there to cultivate corn, which is sacred to her. She also founded the Mysteries. Ceres appeared before Pluto, god of the souls of the dead, and pleaded with him to allow Persephone to return to her home. This the god at first refused to do, because Persephone had eaten of the pomegranate, the fruit of mortality. At last, however, he compromised and agreed to permit Persephone to live in the upper world half of the year if she would stay with him in the darkness of Hades for the remaining half.

The Greeks believed that Persephone was a manifestation of the solar energy, which in the winter months lived under the earth with Pluto, but in the summer returned again with the goddess of productiveness. There is a legend that the flowers loved Persephone and that every year when she left for the dark realms of Pluto, the plants and shrubs would die of grief. While the profane and uninitiated had their own opinions on these subjects, the truths of the Greek allegories remained safely concealed by the priests, who alone recognized the sublimity of these great philosophic and religious parables.

The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

Part Three

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I would have you appreciate the extent of the task a man undertakes when he consciously sets about ridding himself of glamour preparatory to extended service. He is in conflict then with the whole glamour of the entire plane and is apt to be overwhelmed by a realisation of what he is facing. This is one of the causes of the deep depression and those profound inferiority complexes which render some people completely futile or lead eventually to suicide. Their own personal glammers tie them in to national or planetary glamour and thus condition their life expression and their thinking. –Glamour A World Problem:206-7

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Le Suicidé,
by Édouard Manet,

Then there is a class which are really not dead, such as suicides, and sudden deaths, and highly wicked people. Elementals enter into all of them, and thus get a fictitious personality and intelligence wholly the property of the shell. They galvanize this shell into action, and by its means can see and hear as if beings themselves, like us. The shells are, in this case, just like a sleep-walking human body. Through habit, they will exhibit the advancement they got while in the flesh. –Blavatsky: Collected Writings IX:107-8