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The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

Part Three

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The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

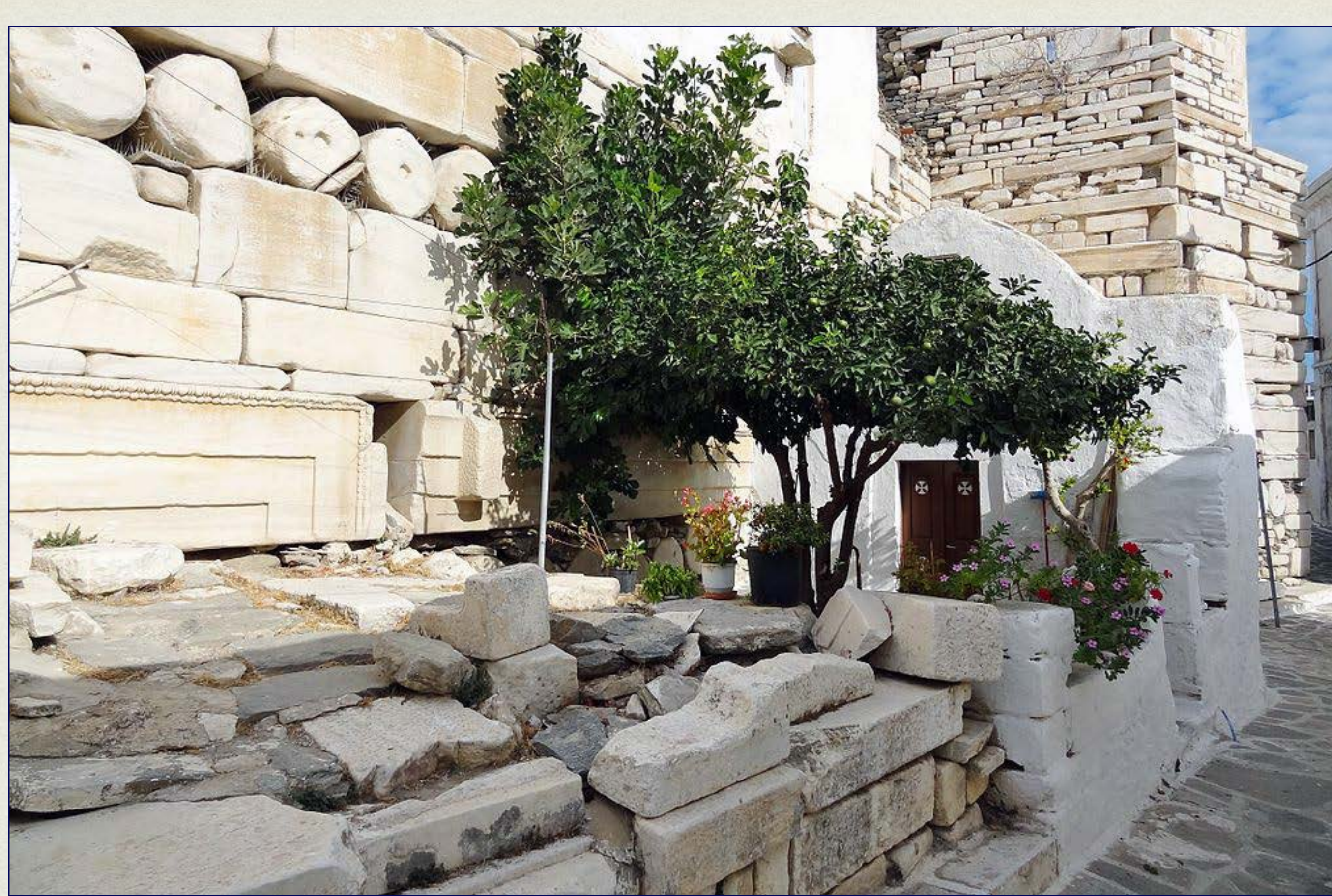
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Parian marble is a fine-grained semi translucent pure-white and entirely flawless marble quarried during the classical era on the Greek island of Paros in the Aegean Sea. –Wikipedia



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But how can we identify what has never had any touch of Form? We utterly eliminate every kind of Form; and the object in which there is none whatever we call Matter... To see darkness the eye withdraws from the light; it is striving to cease from seeing, therefore it abandons the light which would make the darkness invisible; away from the light its power is rather that of not-seeing than of seeing and this not-seeing is its nearest approach to seeing Darkness. So the Intellectual-Principle, in order to see its contrary [Matter], must leave its own light locked up within itself, and as it were, go forth from itself into an outside realm; it must ignore its native brightness and submit itself to the very contradiction of its being. –Plotinus Enneads:63

The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

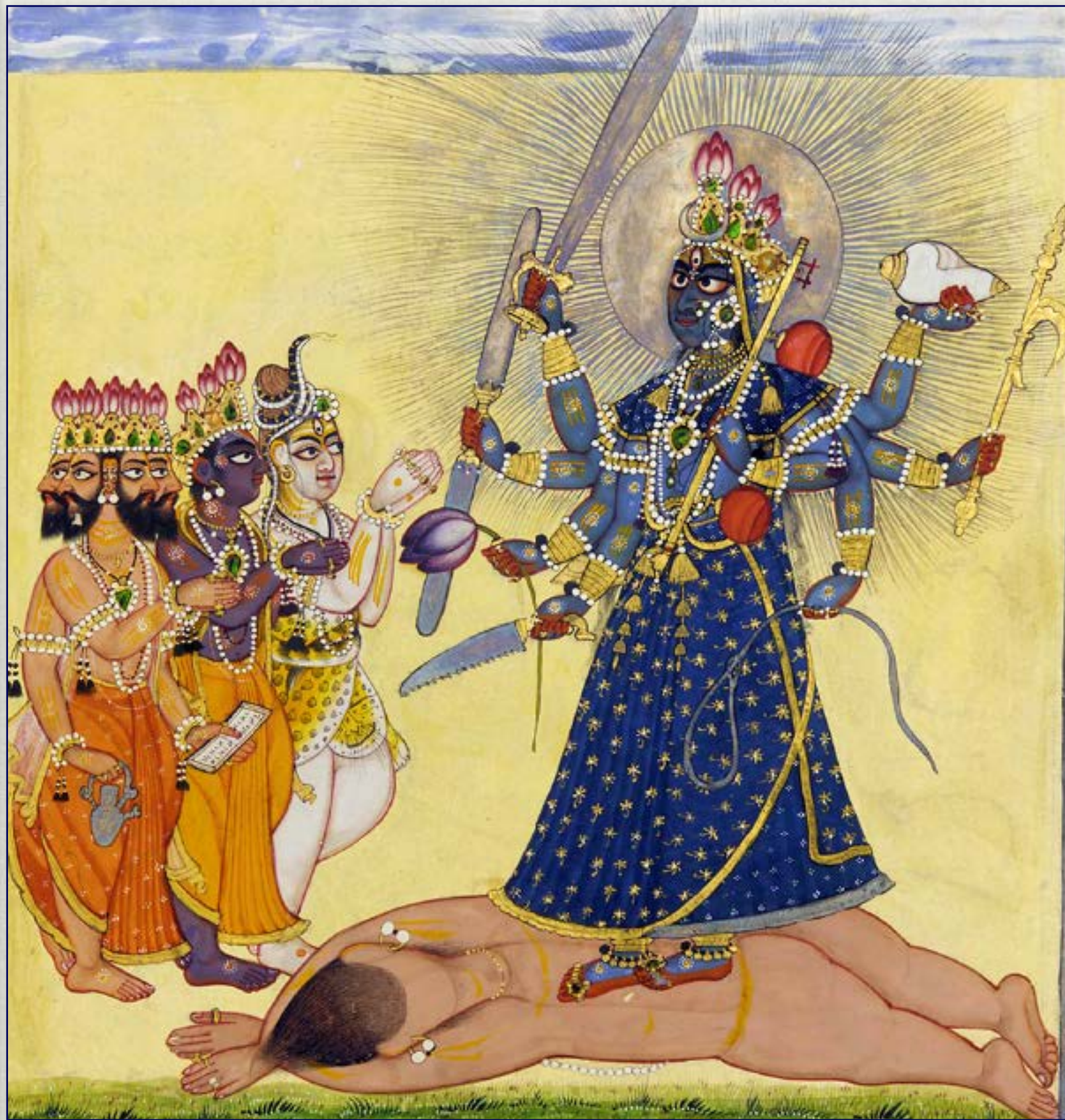
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Black Madonna

The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

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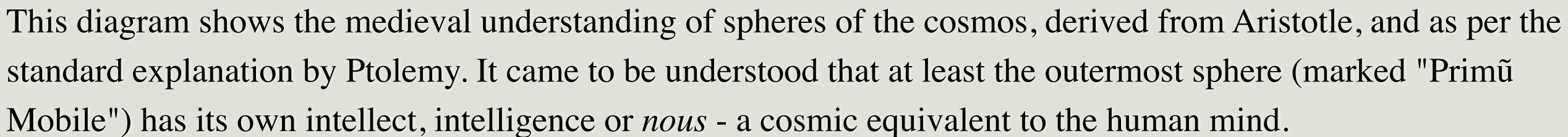
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DESCRIPTION OF INDIVIDUAL GEARS

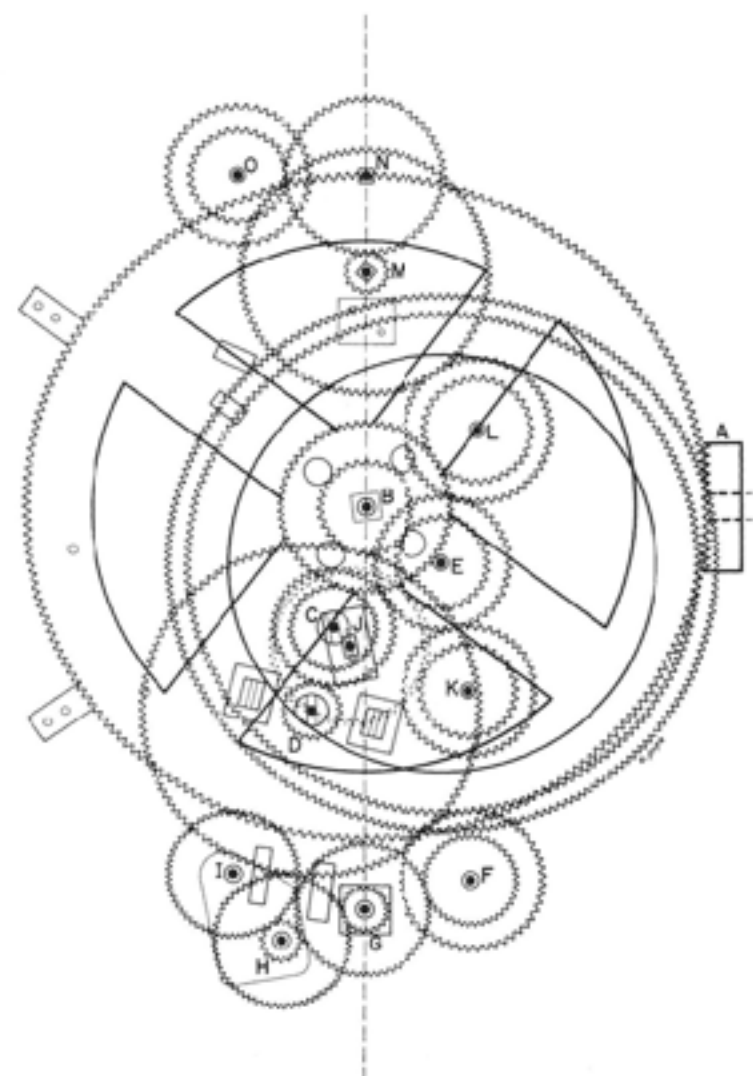


FIG. 29. General plan of all gearing, composite diagram.



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ESSAY
ON THE
MYSTERIES OF ELEUSIS;

BY
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EMPEROR OF RUSSIA;
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HONORARY MEMBER OF THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,
AND OF THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN THAT CITY;
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GOTTINGEN, &c.

**Ολβιος, ὃς τὰδ' ὅπα πειν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων.*

HOMER. Hymn. in Cer. v. 485.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,
By J. D. PRICE.

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With Observations,
By J. CHRISTIE.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR RODWELL AND MARTIN,
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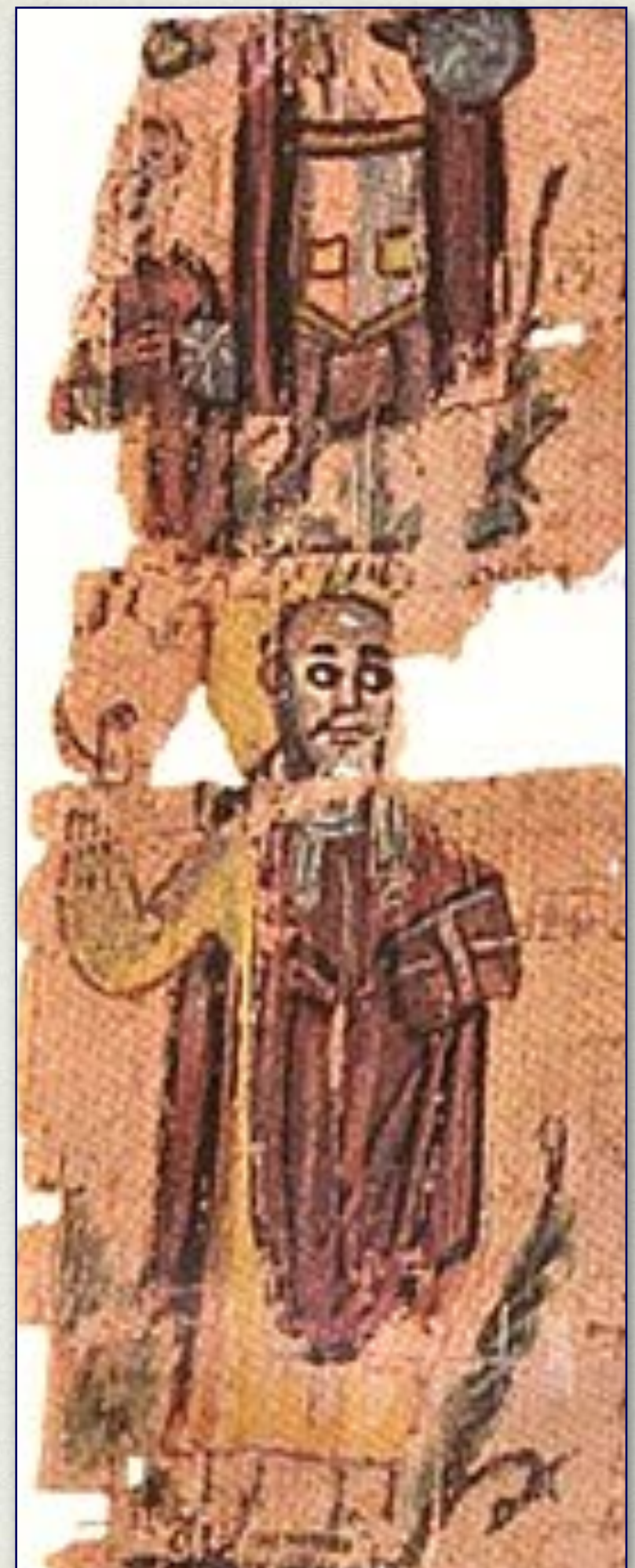
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This fragment of papyrus, which is from “The Alexandrian World Chronicle”, shows the black face of the cult statue as described by Clement of Alexandria, with a modius atop its head. Standing triumphant above is Theophilus, gospel in hand, and what may be the sun-disk of Serapis raised aloft.

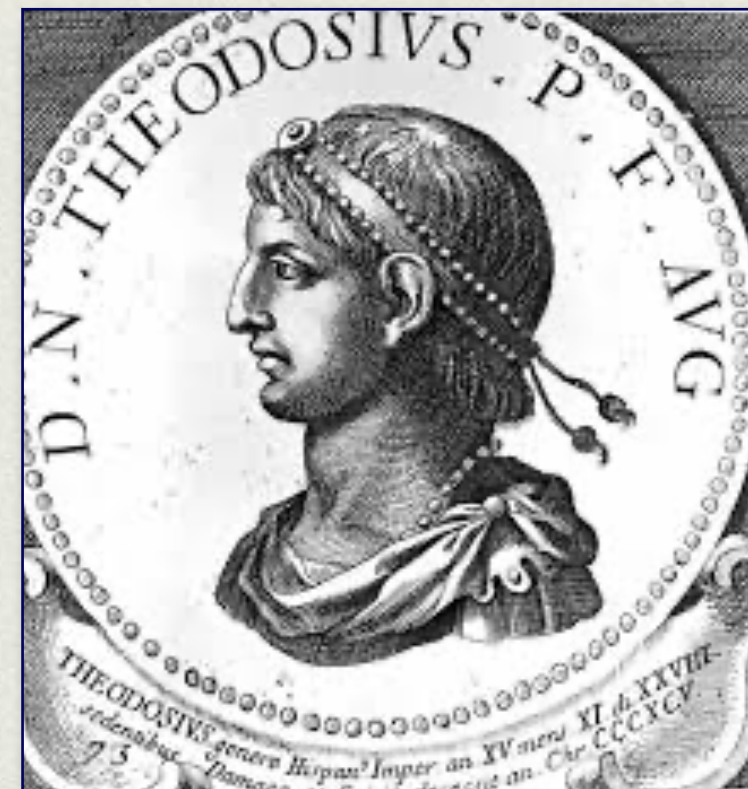


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ΚΑΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΖΑΝΝΗΝ
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ΑΠΟΚΡΥΦΟΝ

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THE MASKS OF GOD OCCIDENTAL MYTHOLOGY

By **JOSEPH CAMPBELL**
Author of Primitive Mythology and Oriental Mythology

"IN THE LONG VIEW OF THE HISTORY OF MANKIND, four essential functions of mythology can be discerned. The first is to elicit a sense of awe; the second, to make a meaning; the third, to support the social order; and the fourth, to initiate the individual into the realities of his own psyche, guiding him toward spiritual maturity." These profound and poetic lessons, so eloquently set forth in *The Masks of God*, are presented in this



THE MASKS
OF GOD



OCCIDENTAL
MYTHOLOGY

CAMPBELL



VIKING

THE MASKS
OF GOD



CREATIVE
MYTHOLOGY

CAMPBELL



VIKING



THE MASKS OF
GOD:
PRIMITIVE
MYTHOLOGY

CAMPBELL



VIKING



THE MASKS OF
GOD:
ORIENTAL
MYTHOLOGY

CAMPBELL



VIKING

The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

Part Three

Women and children were admitted to the Eleusinian Mysteries, and at one time there were literally thousands of initiates. Because this vast host was not prepared for the highest spiritual and mystical doctrines, a division necessarily took place within the society itself. The higher teachings were given to only a limited number of initiates who, because of superior mentality, showed a comprehensive grasp of their underlying philosophical concepts. Socrates refused to be initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries, for knowing its principles without being a member of the order he realized that membership would seal his tongue. That the Mysteries of Eleusis were based upon great and eternal truths is attested by the veneration in which they were held by the great minds of the ancient world. M. Ouvaroff asks, "Would Pindar, Plato, Cicero, Epictetus, have spoken of them with such admiration, if the hierophant had satisfied himself with loudly proclaiming his own opinions, or those of his order?"

The garments in which candidates were initiated were preserved for many years and were believed to possess almost sacred properties. Just as the soul can have no covering save wisdom and virtue, so the candidates--being as yet without true knowledge--were presented to the Mysteries unclothed, being first: given the skin of an animal and later a consecrated robe to symbolize the philosophical teachings received by the initiate. During the course of initiation the candidate passed through two gates. The first led downward into the lower worlds and symbolized his birth into ignorance. The second led upward into a room brilliantly lighted by unseen lamps, in which was the statue of Ceres and which symbolized the upper world, or the abode of Light and Truth. Strabo states that the great temple of Eleusis would hold between twenty and thirty thousand people. The caves dedicated by Zarathustra also had these two doors, symbolizing the avenues of birth and death.

The following paragraph from Porphyry gives a fairly adequate conception of Eleusinian symbolism: "God being a luminous principle, residing in the midst of the most subtile fire, remains for ever invisible to the eyes of those who do not elevate themselves above material life: on this account, the sight of transparent bodies, such as crystal, Parian marble, and even ivory, recalls the idea of divine light; as the sight of gold excites an idea of its purity, for gold cannot be sullied. Some have thought by a black stone was signified the invisibility of the divine essence. To express supreme reason, the Divinity was represented under the human form--and beautiful, for God is the source of beauty; of different ages, and in various attitudes, sitting or upright; of one or the other sex, as a virgin or a young man, a husband or a bride, that all the shades and gradations might be marked. Every thing luminous was subsequently attributed to the gods; the sphere, and all that is spherical, to the universe, to the sun and the moon--sometimes to Fortune and to Hope. The circle, and all circular figures, to eternity--to the celestial movements; to the circles and zones of the heavens. The section of circles, to the phases of the moon; and pyramids and obelisks, to the igneous principle, and through that to the gods of Heaven. A cone expresses the sun, a cylinder the earth; the phallus and triangle (a symbol of the matrix) designate generation." (From *Essay on the Mysteries of Eleusis* by M. Ouvaroff.)

The Eleusinian Mysteries, according to Heckethorn, survived all others and did not cease to exist as an institution until nearly four hundred years after Christ, when they were finally suppressed by Theodosius (styled the Great), who cruelly destroyed all who did not accept the Christian faith. Of this greatest of all philosophical institutions Cicero said that it **taught men not only how to live but also how to die.** –STOAA:30-32



Ceres (Demeter)



Plutus and Demeter

...in those rites of initiation with which such symbols were associated (as in the mysteries of Eleusis), the initiate, returning in contemplation to the goddess mother of the mysteries, became detached reflectively from the fate of his mortal frame (symbolically, the son, who dies), and identified with the principle that is ever reborn, the Being of all beings (the serpent father): whereupon, in the world where only sorrow and death had been seen, the rapture was recognized as an everlasting becoming. –The Masks of God, v.3, p.15



THE PROCESSION OF THE MYSTIC LITURGY

In the execution of the Bacchic Mysteries, the city of Samothrace played a great part. The legends of the Thracians, who had finally returned to the world of great religion. The Bacchic Mysteries were given during the years, and the city of Samothrace, which was a small island in the Aegean, was the seat of the Mysteries.

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THE ORPHIC MYSTERIES

Orpheus, the Thracian bard, the great initiator of the Greeks, ceased to be known as a man and was celebrated as a divinity several centuries before the Christian Era. "As to Orpheus himself * * *," writes Thomas Taylor, "scarcely a vestige of his life is to be found amongst the immense ruins of time. For who has ever been able to affirm any thing with certainty of his origin, his age, his country, and condition? This alone may be depended on, from general assent, that there formerly lived a person named Orpheus, who was the founder of theology among the Greeks; the institutor of their lives and morals; the first of prophets, and the prince of poets; himself the offspring of a Muse; who taught the Greeks their sacred rites and mysteries, and from whose wisdom, as from a perennial and abundant fountain, the divine muse of Homer and the sublime theology of Pythagoras and Plato flowed." (See *The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*.)

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ORPHEUS



G R S MEAD

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BY

G. R. S. MEAD, B.A., M.R.A.S.

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1896



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In Greece he was called Orpheus, and thus changed his name with every nation. The number Seven being attached to and connected with each of those primitive Initiators. –SD2:529

Orpheus surrounded by animals.
Ancient Roman floor mosaic, from
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Orpheus

THE BEGINNINGS OF ORPHIC HISTORY

From the above it may be easily seen that it is hopeless, in the present state of our information, to attempt to treat the legend of Orpheus from a historical point of view, in the ordinary acceptation of the term. We only approach the historical period when we descend to the times of Homer, though indeed even then we have not entirely reached it. The *Stemma*, or line of descent, of the *Gens Orphica*, places ten generations of poets, or schools of poets, between Orpheus and Homer... –*Orpheus* by GRS Mead:26-7



Orpheus playing his harp for the wild beasts, dates from about 194 CE and is the oldest of the Edessa/Urda mosaics.

The name Orpheus itself belongs to the oldest level of Greek names: those ending in -eus (for example, Atreus). Such are pre-Homeric. Early representations show him singing, drawing animals to him by the power of his song; also as a festival singer, whose listeners— significantly— are men. Dr. Karl Kerényi plausibly suggests that the basic idea is of an initiator whose power transforms even the wildest creatures, animals and men who live in the wilderness. Such a figure would have been associated with the initiation of young men— in the wilds of nature, excluding women. There, something significant was disclosed to them in music and song that delivered them from their blood-spilling savagery and gave a deep sense to the ceremonies of transit from immaturity to adulthood. And the announcer of this mystery played the lyre, but was not a mere singer. —The Masks of God, v.3:184-5

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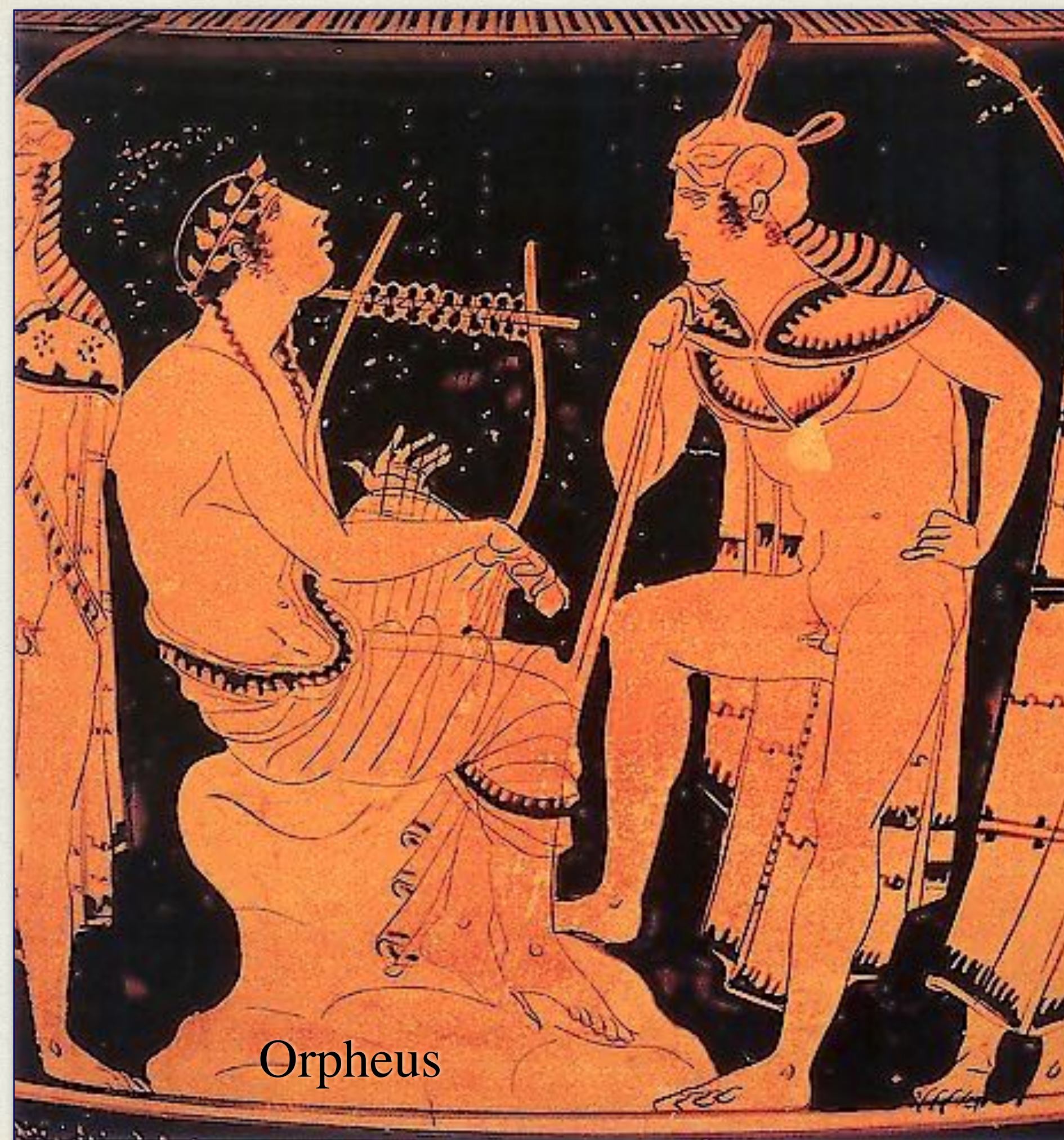
THE ORPHIC MYSTERIES

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Orpheus

In Egypt, the Mysteries had been known since the days of Menes— the Greeks received them only when Orpheus introduced them from India. Indeed, when Orpheus, the son of Apollo or Helios, received from his father the *phorminx*—the seven-stringed lyre, symbolical of the sevenfold mystery of Initiation —these Mysteries were already hoary with age in Central Asia and India. According to Herodotus it was Orpheus who brought them from India, and Orpheus is far anterior to Homer and Hesiod.

—HPB Collected Writings v.XIV:269-70

The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

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THE
MYSTICAL HYMNS
OF
ORPHEUS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK,
AND DEMONSTRATED TO BE THE
Invocations which were used in the Eleusinian Mysteries,
BY THOMAS TAYLOR.

Φθεγγόμεαι οὕτως ὅστις ἐστὶ, θυρὰς δ' ἐπιθεσθε βαβηλοὶ
Πάντες οὕτως. ORPHEUS.

New Edition.

LONDON:
BERTRAM DOBELL,
77 CHARING CROSS ROAD, W.C.
AND
REEVES AND TURNER,
WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND.
MDCCCXCVI.

“For though according to Iamblichus, the Thracian Orpheus, who is more ancient than those noble poets Homer and Hesiod, used the Doric dialect; yet the Athenian *Onomacritus*, who according to the general opinion of antiquity is the author of all the works now extant ascribed to Orpheus, might either, preserving the sentences and a great part of the words, only change the dialect, and teach the ancient Orpheus to speak Homerically, or as I may say Solonically; or might arbitrarily add or take away what he thought proper, which, as we are informed by Herodotus, was his practice with respect to the Oracles.” Gesner adds, “that it does not appear probable to him, that *Onomacritus* would dare to invent all that he wrote, since Orpheus must necessarily, at that time, have been much celebrated, and a great variety of his verses must have been in circulation.” –The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus:xl



Sun chariot from Trundholm in Zealand. Dated to the early Bronze Age (1700-1300 BC).

VIII. To The Sun.

Hear, golden Titan, whose eternal eye
With matchless sight illumines all the sky.
Native, unwearied in diffusing light,
And to all eyes the object of delight:
Lord of the Seasons, beaming light from far,
Sonorous, dancing in thy four-yok'd car.
With thy right hand the source of morning light,
And with thy left the father of the night.
Agile and vig'rous, venerable Sun,
Fiery and bright around the heav'ns you run,
Foe to the wicked, but the good man's guide,
O'er all his steps propitious you preside.
With various-sounding golden lyre 'tis thine
To fill the world with harmony divine...

—The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus:22

The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

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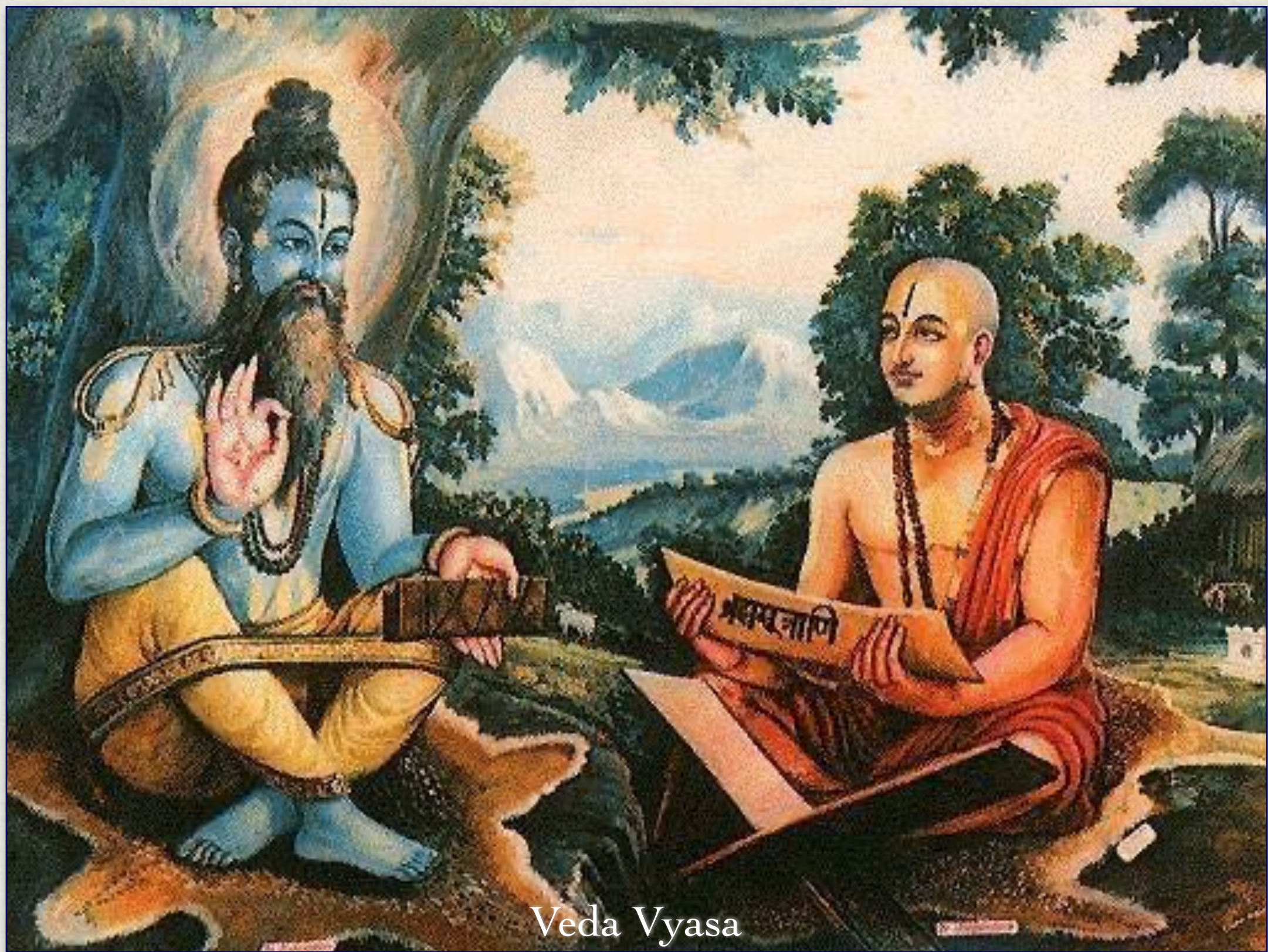
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Orpheus was to the Greeks what Veda Vyasa was to the Hindus, Enoch to the Ethiopians, and Hermes to the Egyptians. He was the great compiler of sacred scriptures; he invented nothing, he handed on. Orpheus, Veda Vyasa, Enoch, Hermes and others, are generic names. Veda Vyasa means the 'Veda arranger.' It is said that the hieroglyphical treatise on the famous Columns of Hermes or Seth, which Josephus affirms were still existing in his time, was the source of the sacred science of ancient *Khem*, and that Orpheus, Hesiod, Pythagoras and Plato took therefrom the elements of their theology. –*Orpheus* by GRS Mead:17

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Ficinus traces what the Hindus call the *Guruparampara* chain, or succession of teachers, as follows: “In things pertaining to theology there were in former times six great teachers expounding similar doctrines. The first was Zoroaster, the chief of the Magi; the second Hermes Trismegistus, the head of the Egyptian priesthood; Orpheus succeeded Hermes; Aglaophamus was initiated into the sacred mysteries of Orpheus; Pythagoras was initiated into theology by Aglaophamus; and Plato by Pythagoras. Plato summed up the whole of their wisdom in his Letters.”

Apollonius says that the “followers of Orpheus should be called magicians.” Pausanias further cites an Egyptian opinion that “Orpheus was skilled in magic,” and Dio, Maximus, Heraclides, Quintilian, and Macrobius, say that it was not the wild beasts that were charmed, so much as that men of a wild and unruly nature were brought back to a milder form of life by Orpheus. Euripides speaks of the “spell of Orpheus” which the Satyrs desired to possess. –*Orpheus* by GRS Mead:18 & 51-2

The great secrecy observed by the initiated Priests for many years, and the lofty sciences which they professed, caused them to be honored and respected throughout all Egypt, which was regarded by other nations as *the* college, *the* sanctuary, of the sciences and arts. The mystery which surrounded them excited a strong curiosity. Orpheus metamorphosed himself, so to say, into an Egyptian. He was initiated into Theology and Physics. And he so completely made the ideas and reasonings of his teachers his own, that his Hymns rather bespeak an Egyptian Priest than a Grecian Poet: and he was the first who carried into Greece the Egyptian fables. –*Morals and Dogma*:386-7

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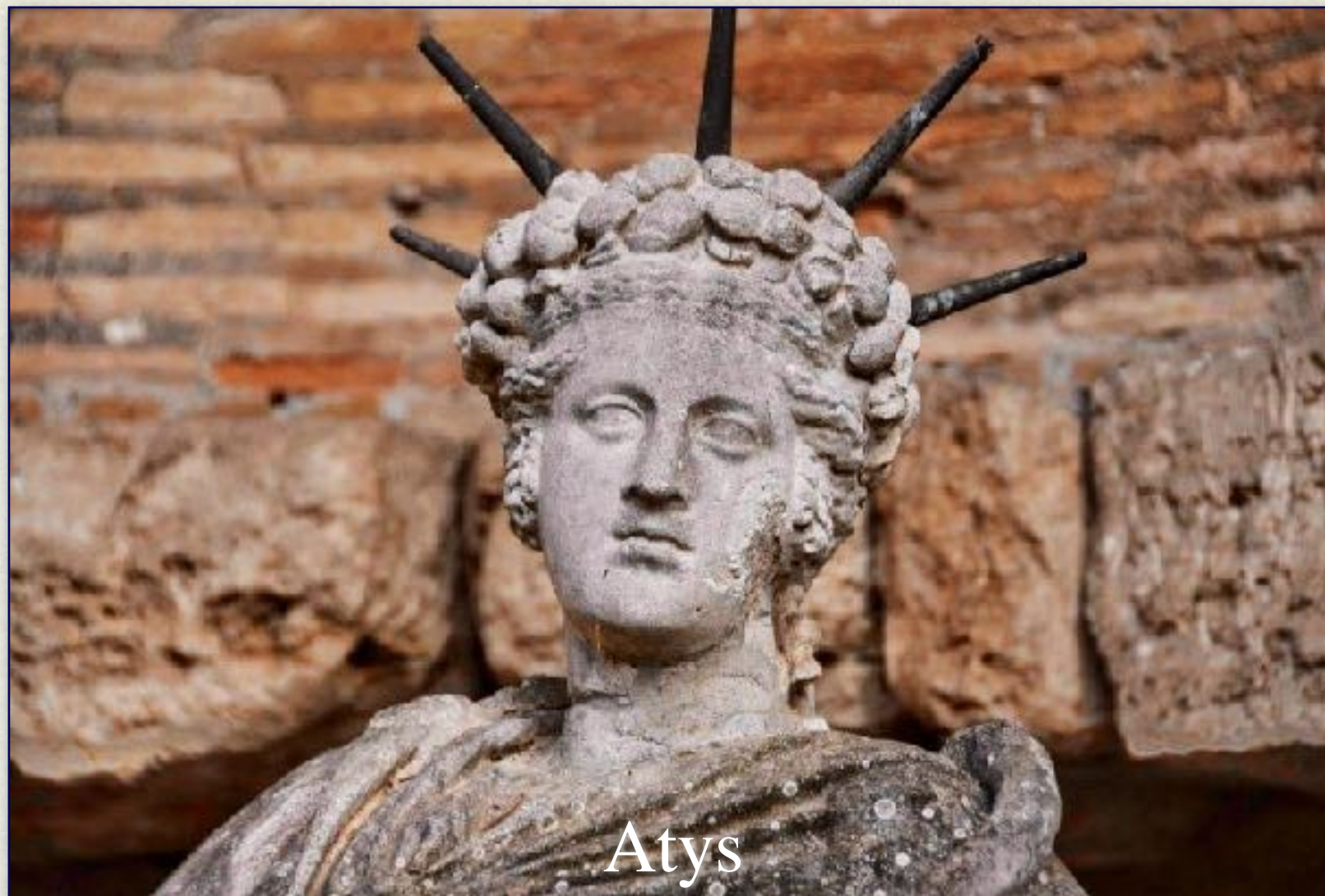
The Cabiric Mysteries of Samothrace.



The little island of Samothrace was long the depositary of certain august Mysteries, and many went thither from all parts of Greece to be initiated. It was said to have been settled by the ancient Pelasgi, early Asiatic colonists in Greece. The Gods adored in the Mysteries of this island were termed CABIRI, an oriental word, from Cabar, great. Varro calls the Gods of Samothrace, Potent Gods. In Arabic, Venus is called Cabar. Varro says that the Great Deities whose Mysteries were practised there, were Heaven and Earth. These were but symbols of the Active and Passive Powers or Principles of universal generation. The two Twins, Castor and Pollux, or the Dioscuri, were also called the Gods of Samothrace; and the Scholiast of Apollonius, citing Mnaseas, gives the names of Ceres, Proserpine, Pluto, and Mercury, as the four Cabiric Divinities worshipped at Samothrace, as Axieros, Axiocersa, Axiocersus, and Casmillus. Mercury was, there as everywhere, the minister and messenger of the Gods; and the young servitors of the altars and the children employed in the Temples were called Mercuries or Casmilli, as they were in Tuscany, by the Etrusci and Pelasgi, who worshipped the Great Gods.

Tarquin the Etruscan was an Initiate of the Mysteries of Samothrace; and Etruria had its Cabiri as Samothrace had. For the worship of the Cabiri spread from that island into Etruria, Phrygia, and Asia Minor: and it probably came from Phoenicia into Samothrace: for the Cabiri are mentioned by Sanchoniathon; and the word Cabar belongs to the Hebrew, Phoenician, and Arabic languages.

The Dioscuri, tutelary Deities of Navigation, with Venus, were invoked in the Mysteries of Samothrace. The constellation Auriga, or Phaëton, was also honored there with imposing ceremonies. Upon the Argonautic expedition, Orpheus, an Initiate of these Mysteries, a storm arising, counselled his companions to put into Samothrace. They did so, the storm ceased, and they were initiated into the Mysteries there, and sailed again with the assurance of a fortunate voyage, under the auspices of the Dioscuri, patrons of sailors and navigation.



Atys

But much more than that was promised the Initiates. The Hierophants of Samothrace made something infinitely greater to be the object of their initiations; to wit, the consecration of men to the Deity, by pledging them to virtue; and the assurance of those rewards which the justice of the Gods reserves for Initiates after death. This, above all else, made these ceremonies august, and inspired everywhere so great a respect for them, and so great a desire to be admitted to them. [It was this] that originally caused the island to be styled Sacred, [and to be] respected by all nations. The Romans, when masters of the world, left it its liberty and laws. It was an asylum for the unfortunate, and a sanctuary inviolable.

Children of tender age were initiated there, and invested with the sacred-robe, the purple cincture, and the crown of olive, and seated upon a throne, like other Initiates. In the ceremonies was represented the death of the youngest of the Cabiri, slain by his brothers, who fled into Etruria, carrying with them the chest or ark that contained his genitals: and there the Phallus and the sacred ark were adored. Herodotus says that the Samothracian Initiates understood the object and origin of this reverence paid the Phallus, and why it was exhibited in the Mysteries. Clemens of Alexandria says that the Cabiri taught the Tuscans to revere it. It was consecrated at Heliopolis in Syria, where the Mysteries of a Divinity having many points of resemblance with Atys and Cybele were represented. The Pelasgi connected it with Mercury; and it appears on the monuments of Mithras; always and everywhere a symbol of the life-giving power of the Sun at the Vernal Equinox. –Morals and Dogma:450-1



Samothrace

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The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

Part Three

THE ORPHIC MYSTERIES

Orpheus, the Thracian bard, the great initiator of the Greeks, ceased to be known as a man and was celebrated as a divinity several centuries before the Christian Era. "As to Orpheus himself * * *, " writes Thomas Taylor, "scarcely a vestige of his life is to be found amongst the immense ruins of time. For who has ever been able to affirm anything with certainty of his origin, his age, his country, and condition? This alone may be depended on, from general assent, that there formerly lived a person named Orpheus, who was the founder of theology among the Greeks; the institutor of their lives and morals; the first of prophets, and the prince of poets; himself the offspring of a Muse; who taught the Greeks their sacred rites and mysteries, and from whose wisdom, as from a perennial and abundant fountain, the divine muse of Homer and the sublime theology of Pythagoras and Plato flowed." (See *The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*.)

Orpheus was founder of the Grecian mythological system which he used as the medium for the promulgation of his philosophical doctrines. The origin of his philosophy is uncertain. He may have got it from the Brahmins, there being legends to the effect that he was a Hindu, his name possibly being derived from ὀρφανῖος, meaning "dark." Orpheus was initiated into the Egyptian Mysteries, from which he secured extensive knowledge of magic, astrology, sorcery, and medicine. The Mysteries of the Cabiri at Samothrace were also conferred upon him, and these undoubtedly contributed to his knowledge of medicine and music.

The romance of Orpheus and Eurydice is one of the tragic episodes of Greek mythology and apparently constitutes the outstanding feature of the Orphic Rite. Eurydice, in her attempt to escape from a villain seeking to seduce her, died from the venom of a poisonous serpent which stung her in the heel. Orpheus, penetrating to the very heart of the underworld, so charmed Pluto and Persephone with the beauty of his music that they agreed to permit Eurydice to return to life if Orpheus could lead her back to the sphere of the living without once looking round to see if she were following. So great was his fear, however, that she would stray from him that he turned his head, and Eurydice with a heartbroken cry was swept back into the land of death.

Orpheus wandered the earth for a while disconsolate, and there are several conflicting accounts of the manner of his death. Some declare that he was slain by a bolt of lightning; others, that failing to save his beloved Eurydice, he committed suicide. The generally accepted version of his death, however, is that he was torn to pieces by Ciconian women whose advances he had spurned. In the tenth book of Plato's *Republic* it is declared that, because of his sad fate at the hands of women, the soul that had once been Orpheus, upon being destined to live again in the physical world, chose rather to return in the body of a swan than be born of woman. The head of Orpheus, after being torn from his body, was cast with his lyre into the river Hebrus, down which it floated to the sea, where, wedging in a cleft in a rock, it gave oracles for many years. The lyre, after being stolen from its shrine and working the destruction of the thief, was picked up by the gods and fashioned into a constellation. –STOAA:31-32



Orpheus and Eurydice
By Edward Poynter

Eurydice is one of the earliest forms of the Virgin of the World. She represents the human soul as differentiated from Orpheus, the higher spiritual nature. This differentiation is clearly revealed in the Bible by two simple statements, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. But the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

The Orphics conceived of the soul as a radiant maiden in love with her own spirit. The spirit was the lover and the soul was the beloved. Thus the bards and poets used the symbolism of romantic literature to conceal the love story of the spirit and the soul. Orpheus, wandering alone in the mountains and crying for his lost Eurydice is the immortal spirit of man grieving for the soul torn from him by the sting of the serpent of the mind, which has been carried away into the dark realms of Hades, the state of materiality. The Orphic legend is a form of the Eleusinian ritual in which Persephone, the world soul, is kidnapped by Hades, the body principle, and is held prisoner in form during the span of material life.

We must realize that Orphism was basically a mystic cult, and mysticism emphasizes the power of love as being greater than the power of reason. The premise is that the human being may experience emotionally that which he cannot analyze intellectually; in fact, nearly all emotions are destroyed by analysis. They are intangible, inspirational reflexes, and are destroyed by the very process of definition. The mystical experience is an intense sublimation of emotional force. It is emotion turned toward the experiencing of universal truth. This discovery of the self in other things, and of all things in the self, and the resulting tender regard for life and all that lives, is the spiritual love of the mystics. They learn to know things by loving things. This love is a sharing of themselves, a sacrament of divine passion climaxing in a complete adoration of God and the loss of the personal self in the impersonal Self. –MPH’s Horizon Magazine, Fall 1946

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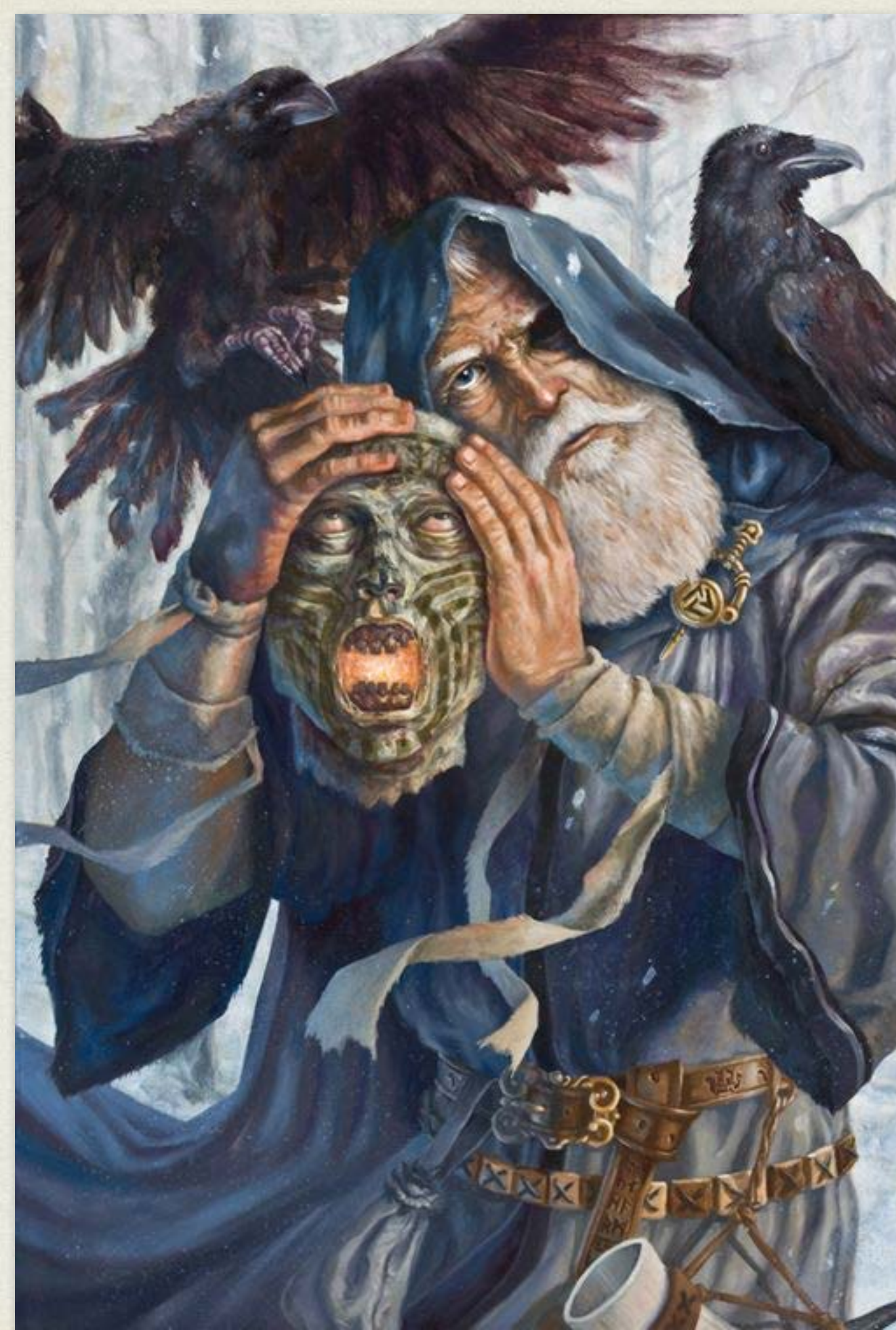
Martha Mayer Erlebacher,
Untitled Study
(for The Death of Orpheus)

Bacchantic bands of Ciconian women roamed these mountains, performing the orgies of the god Bacchus. They gathered about Orpheus, inviting him to join in their frenzies. When he refused they grew angry and attacked him with javelins and arrows, but the sweet singer was protected from all harm by the magic of his song. Then the Bacchantes hit upon their evil subterfuge. They raised their voices in shrill discordant cries until they drowned out the gentle music of the Divine Bard. His protection thus overcome, he was torn limb from limb by the frantic Bacchantes. This is symbolical of the manner in which the universal principle of harmony is destroyed by the discordances of materialism and the false doctrines arising from souls intoxicated with the delusion of materialism. –MPH's Horizon Magazine, Fall 1946

The head of Orpheus, like that of Bacchus, was rescued and placed in a temple together with his lute. This head represents the secret doctrine which did not die, although its sanctuaries were violated by fanatics. It is said that the head of Orpheus was made to speak by Pythagoras. This intimates that the school of Pythagoras restored the secret teaching of the Orphics. –MPH's Horizon Magazine, Winter 1949



Odin Drinks from Mimir's Well
by Padraic Column



The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

Part Three

THE ORPHIC MYSTERIES

Orpheus has long been sung as the patron of music. On his seven-stringed lyre he played such perfect harmonies that the gods themselves were moved to acclaim his power. When he touched the strings of his instrument the birds and beasts gathered about him, and as he wandered through the forests his enchanting melodies caused even the ancient trees with mighty effort to draw their gnarled roots from out the earth and follow him. Orpheus is one of the many Immortals who have sacrificed themselves that mankind might have the wisdom of the gods. By the symbolism of his music he communicated the divine secrets to humanity, and several authors have declared that the gods, though loving him, feared that he would overthrow their kingdom, and therefore reluctantly encompassed his destruction.

As time passed on the historical Orpheus became hopelessly confounded with the doctrine he represented and eventually became the symbol of the Greek school of the ancient wisdom. Thus Orpheus was declared to be the son of Apollo, the divine and perfect truth, and Calliope, the Muse of harmony and rhythm. In other words, Orpheus is the secret doctrine (Apollo) revealed through music (Calliope). Eurydice is humanity dead from the sting of the serpent of false knowledge and imprisoned in the underworld of ignorance. In this allegory Orpheus signifies theology, which wins her from the king of the dead but fails to accomplish her resurrection because it falsely estimates and mistrusts the innate understanding within the human soul. The Ciconian women who tore Orpheus limb from limb symbolize the various contending theological factions which destroy the body of Truth. They cannot accomplish this, however, until their discordant cries drown out the harmony drawn by Orpheus from his magic lyre. The head of Orpheus signifies the esoteric doctrines of his cult. These doctrines continue to live and speak even after his body (the cult) has been destroyed. The lyre is the secret teaching of Orpheus; the seven strings are the seven divine truths which are the keys to universal knowledge. The differing accounts of his death represent the various means used to destroy the secret teachings: wisdom can die in many ways at the same time. The allegory of Orpheus incarnating in the white swan merely signifies that the spiritual truths he promulgated will continue and will be taught by the illumined initiates of all future ages. The swan is the symbol of the initiates of the Mysteries; it is a symbol also of the divine power which is the progenitor of the world. –STOAA:32

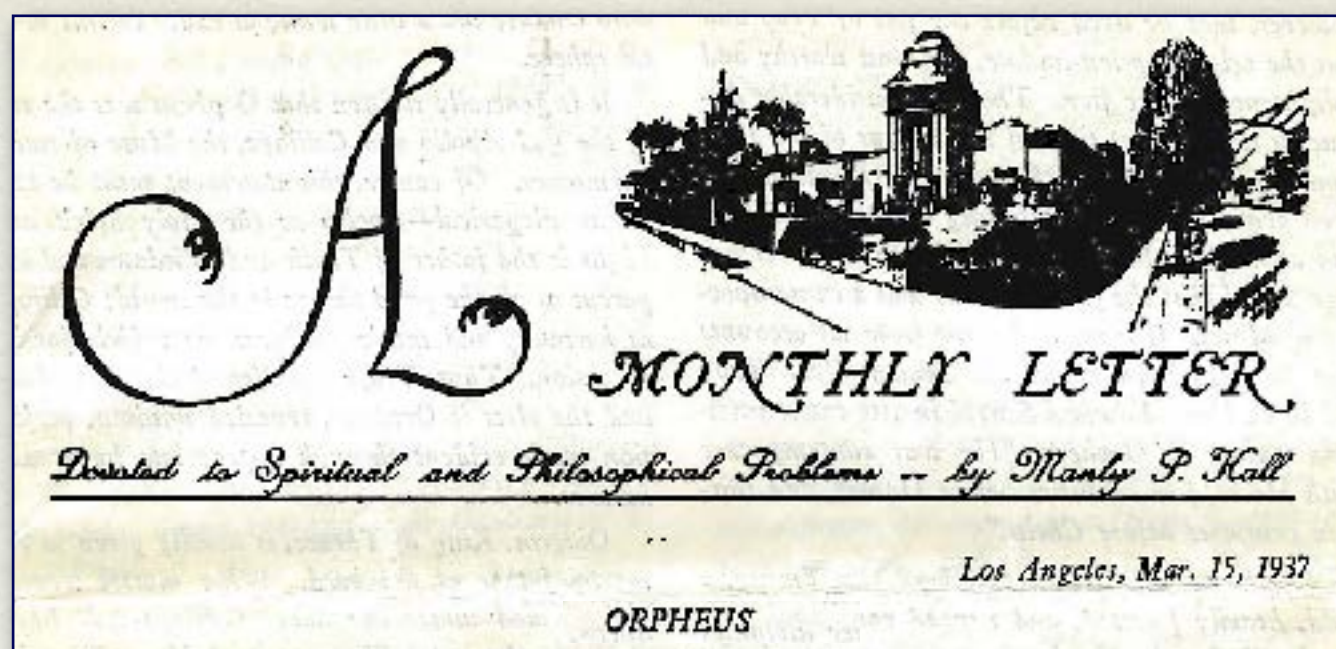
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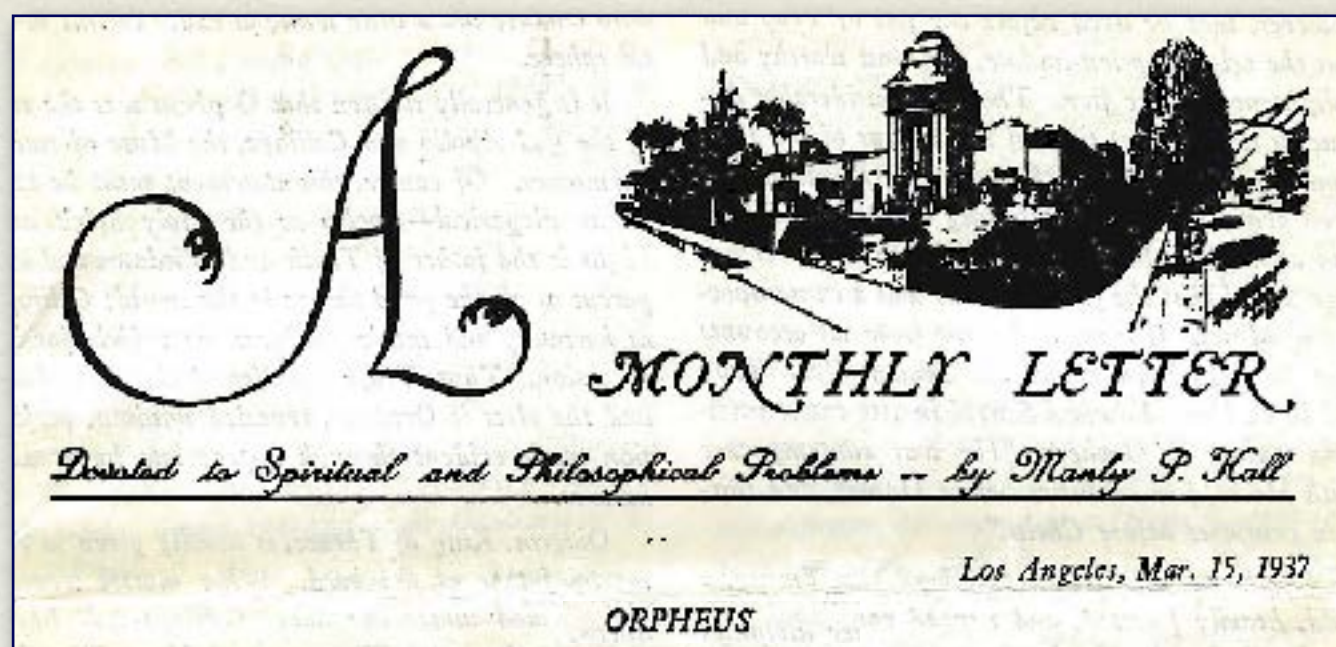


Orpheus spent his days in the mountains. The wooded highlands of Thrace echoed with the music of his lyre. Not alone did he charm men with his song, but all nature succumbed to the magic of his spell. The trees stilled the rustle of their leaves, the birds gathered silently on over-shadowing boughs while animals came from their lairs, and even the fish in the pools gathered close to the verdant banks listening to the magic of his song. Thus it came about that Orpheus received the title of *The Sweet Singer*, and it was reported of him that even the stony heart of the rock was softened by his blessed harmonies.

Orpheus is supposed to have been one of the Argonauts in quest of the Golden Fleece. The ship Argo, moved by the Orphic lyre, glided gently through the sea. Later, the divine music parts the Kyanean rocks, breaks the spell of the sirens, and wakes the sleepers of Lemnos. According to Euripides, Orpheus was the harper who compels the rocks to follow him...

The particular symbol of the Orphic cult was the *phorminx*, the lyre of seven strings, which according to H. P. Blavatsky “is the seven-fold mystery of initiation.” It was from the Orphic lyre that Pythagoras derived his inspiration to investigate the music of the spheres. If the seven strings of the *phorminx* be understood as representing the seven parts of man and the seven divisions of the human soul, then the whole study of harmonics becomes symbolical of inward adjustment. Man, perfecting his own nature, becomes the master musician, drawing divine melodies from the chords of his own being. Chording is combining— it is bringing harmonic values together according to law and rule. Living is likewise a science of combining.

After the death of Orpheus, his lyre was suspended in the Temple of Apollo, where it remained a great time universally admired. At last there came to the temple *Neanthus*, the son of *Pittacus*, who, learning of the magical powers of the Orphic lyre, sought to gain possession of it. He bribed one of the priests to substitute a replica for the original instrument and departed from the city, concealing the enchanted lyre under his robes. Arriving at a safe distance, he stopped in a forest, attempting to play the sacred melodies. However, his untutored fingers produced only discord, and he was torn to pieces by wild dogs, who gathered, enraged at his inharmonic sounds. By this the Greek fablists implied that when the mystical theology comes into the hands of the profane and is perverted, the evil destroys itself and him who perpetrates it. —MPH Monthly Letter 3/37:pages 2-3 and 7



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