

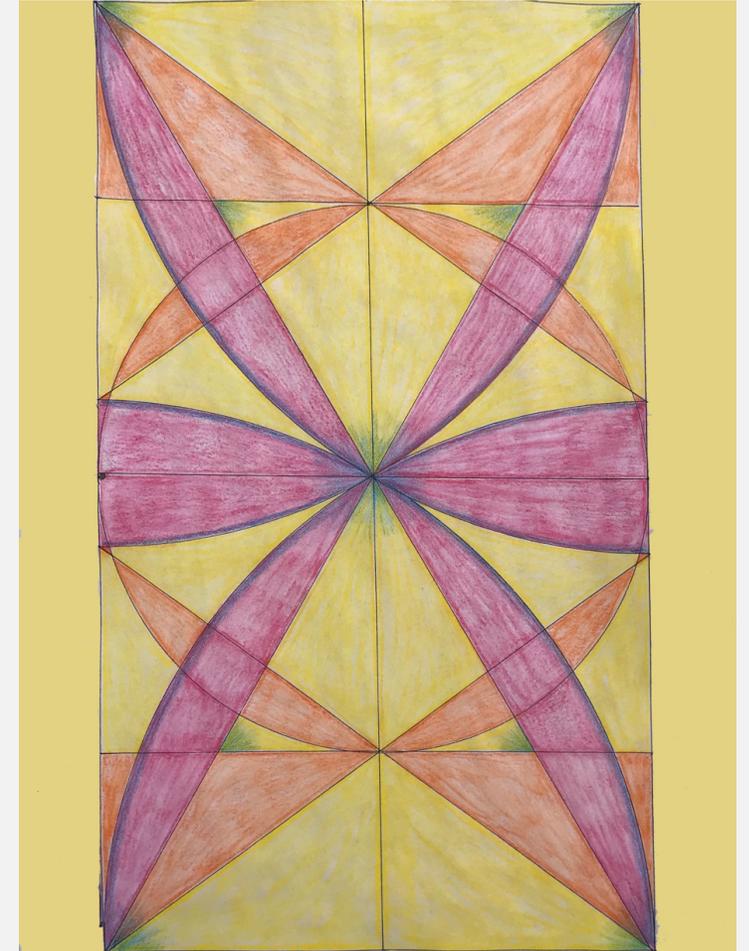
THE GOLDEN CHAIN: AN ANTHOLOGY OF PYTHAGOREAN AND PLATONIC PHILOSOPHY

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SUMMARY OF REPORT SECTIONS

- Part 1: Traditional Accounts on the Life and Teachings of Pythagoras
 - Diogenes Laertius: The Life of Pythagoras
 - Porphyry: The Life of Pythagoras
 - Iamblichus: On the Pythagorean Life
- Part 2: Pythagorean and Neopythagorean Tradition
- Part 3: Plato: Philosophy as the Regrowth of Wings
- Part 4: Neoplatonic Hermeneutics and the Way to God



PLATO, PYTHAGORAS, AND THE GOLDEN CHAIN

- Plato adopts and adapts Pythagorean ideas
 - Traveled to Sicily and southern Italy and studied with Pythagoreans
 - Liked the Pythagoreans' ideas on the soul's immortality
 - Indebted to Orphism, influenced by Egyptian and Indian influences
- The Golden Chain – The Heritage of Platonism and Neoplatonism
 - The heritage of wisdom
 - Wisdom is secured from the highest realms of the universe, from the gods and the One
 - Saw Pythagoras and Plato as sources of knowledge, key links in the chain
 - The Golden Chain stretches from Heaven to Earth, unbroken vertical connection with first principles
 - Also known as the Hermaic chain: the chain of theophany, manifestation, the ladder of ascent and descent
- What those in the Golden Chain agree on:
 - Transcendence of God
 - Theory of Ideas, eternal divine archetypes
 - Immortality of the Soul
- Neoplatonism has influence on Hellenic and traditional Christian, Jewish, and Islamic thought
 - The ancients tapped this wisdom, kept it alive and passed it those who keep the flame of truth burning
 - The positivist heirs of the Enlightenment ignore metaphysics, hieratic imagination, and theurgy in Plato



PHILOSOPHY AS A WAY OF LIFE

- A Philosopher is a lover of wisdom
 - Philosophy is a divine task aimed at the transformation of the soul
 - Search for meaning of ideas, symbols and images, metaphysical and natural causes
 - The philosopher:
 - The Philosopher lived a spiritual and contemplative way of life
 - Combine philosophy and spiritual practice to attain illumination or direct vision (*epopteia*) of truth and union (*henosis*) with divine principles
 - Task of ancient philosophers was to contemplate the cosmic order and its beauty and live in harmony with it
 - Close to archetypal principals (*archai*) of cosmic manifestation
 - Semi-divine figure
- Philosophy, Spiritual exercises and Rites
 - In accord with cosmogonical myths and rites
 - Concrete existence conducted by initiates



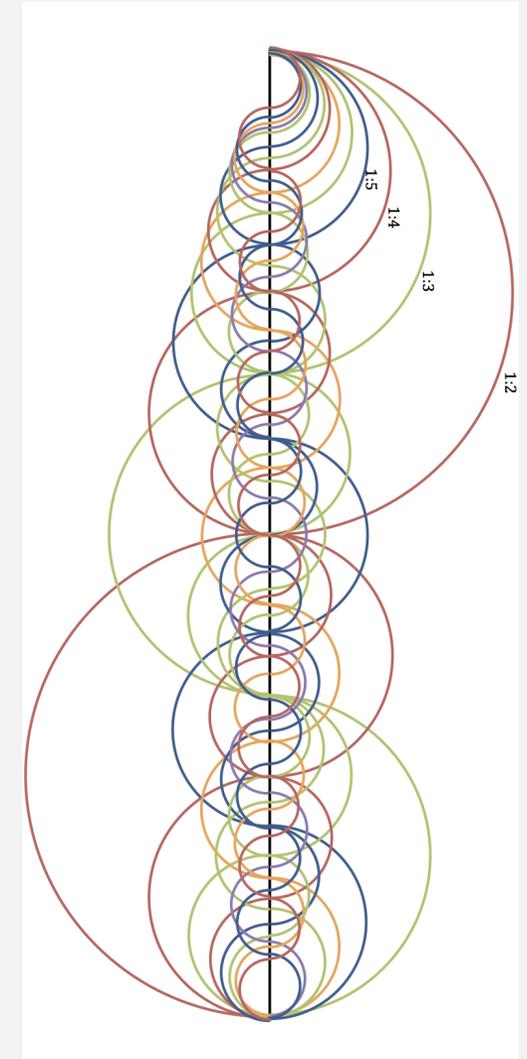
The Philosopher as Hierophant: *Henosis* and Happiness

- Philosopher as telestic hierophant
 - Rites: Participates in the truest rites (*teletai*)
 - Initiation: Philosophy as a mystery into which one might be initiated
- Noetic vision - awaken the divine light within and touch the divine Intellect in the Cosmos
 - *Henosis* with the divine Forms – knowledge of the gods
 - Knowledge of the gods is virtue and wisdom and true happiness
- *Apotheosis* – divinization accomplished by philosophical purification and theurgical steps or *anagoge* (*anagogos* – to lead up)
 - Orphic texts promise apotheosis and immortality for the initiated soul
 - *Psuche* in Phaedrus restores her wings - raises back to the divine homeland
 - The winged Egyptian *Ba* is turned into spiritual light (akh) just as Osiris is transformed into Ra



The Anagogic Ascent

- *Anagogos* – to lead up
- Anagogical ascent to Unity
 - Summation of knowledge
 - Spiritual meaning which unifies all levels into profound unity
- Proportion as ascent
 - Proportion and meaning
 - One truth leads you to the next higher truth
 - The doctrine of participation: all truths participate in truth higher up in the order
 - Hierarchy within the divine order is implied
- Metaphorical or allegorical anagogy
- *Theodidaktos* –
 - Instructed by the Divine
 - The Divine teaches through number and proportion



NEAR EASTERN INFLUENCES ON NEOPLATONISM

- Common wisdom of Chaldean, Egyptian, Phoenician, Jewish, and Indian sages
 - Orphic tradition grew out of Oriental and Chaldean wisdoms
 - Indian Gymnosophists – true philosophers concerned with divine wisdom and living a life of righteousness
- Pythagorean table of opposites was rooted in Assyrian and Babylonian cosmic mythology
- Proclus describes the Orphic and Pythagorean approach as inspired, symbolic, anagogic (leading up) and revelatory whereas Socrates is rational, ethical, and demonstrative
- Plato's Phaedrus – where the mission of superior souls is to recall corrupted souls to the divine



PART 1: THE LIFE OF PYTHAGORAS

What is philosophy?

philos = loving

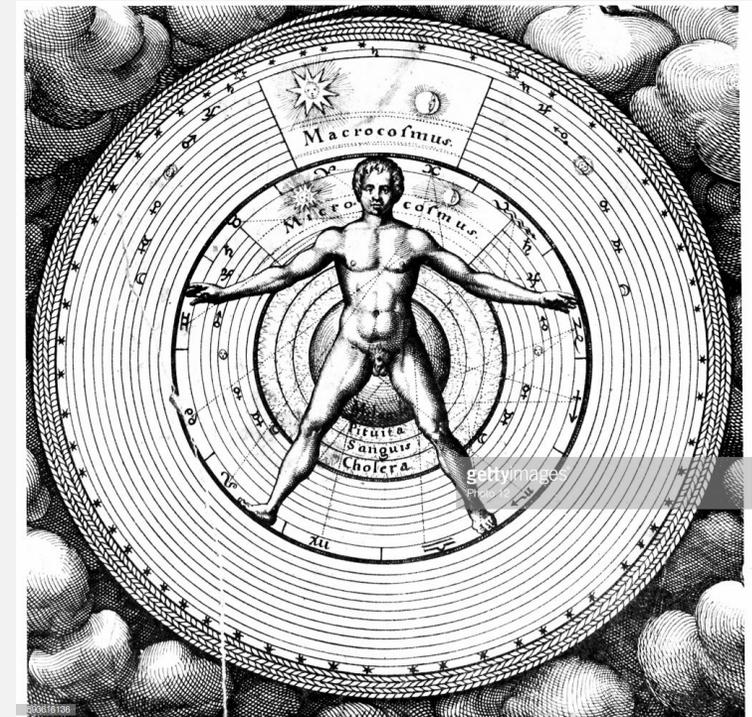
sophia = wisdom

Pythagoras of Samos (d. c. 500 BC)

- Born 570 BC
- His role as philosopher and spiritual guide was crucial to the rise of the Hellenic intellectual tradition
- Before him, sages were known as the *sophoi* but Pythagoras started to refer to himself as a *philosophos*
- Maintained the Truth, Goodness, and Beauty of an orderly hierarchical cosmos
- Introduced two basic archetypes of theophany - Limit (*peras*) and Unlimited (*apeiron*)
- The mathematical sciences prepared the human soul for higher pursuit – a bridge from the material world to the immaterial divine Intellectual

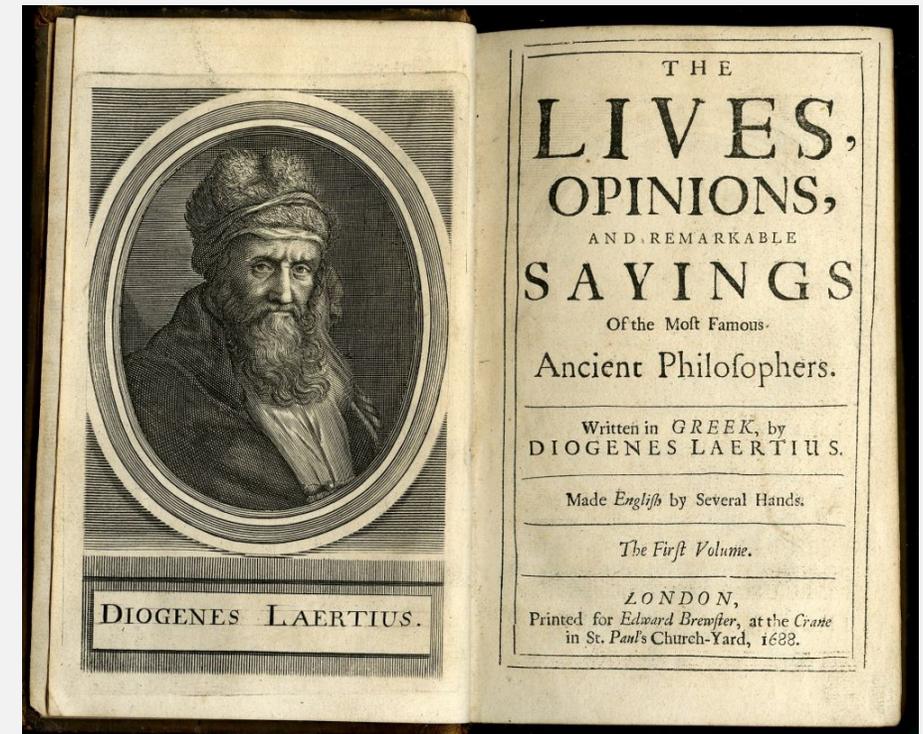
BASICS OF PYTHAGOREAN THINKING

- Monad is the origin (*arche*) of all things
- Heaven is known as *kosmos* because it is perfect and adorned with infinite beauty and living beings
- Man is a *microcosm*
- *Know yourself* – discover your own power and learn the nature of the world
- Organs of knowledge:
 - Sense – the body
 - Imagination – in the soul
 - Art
 - Opinion
 - Deliberation – planning deeds
 - Science
 - Wisdom – knowledge of first causes
 - Mind – principle and foundation of all good things



DIOGENES LAERTIUS: THE LIFE OF PYTHAGORAS

- Diogenes Laertius said of Pythagoras:
 - 3rd century CE
 - Devoted to learning and sacred mysteries
 - Associated with the Chaldeans and the Magi
 - Went to Crete and Egypt
 - Returned to Samos
 - Had a dignified appearance and was seen to have a golden thigh



PORPHYRY: THE LIFE OF PYTHAGORAS

- Porphyry, the Phoenician, lived 232-305 CE
 - Disciple of Plotinus
 - Regarded Pythagoras as essentially a Platonist philosopher
- Pythagoras visited Egypt and Babylon
 - Egyptians excelled in geometry, Phoenicians in numbers and proportions
 - Chaldeans - astronomical theorems, divine rites and worship
- Personal Habits
 - Diet of honey, millet, herbs, dried raisins, seeds –diet from Demeter
 - Had constancy of expression on his countenance
- Pythagoras spoke in metaphors
 - Sound caused by striking brass – the voice of a daemon enclosed within
 - Certain truths were declared mystically or symbolically



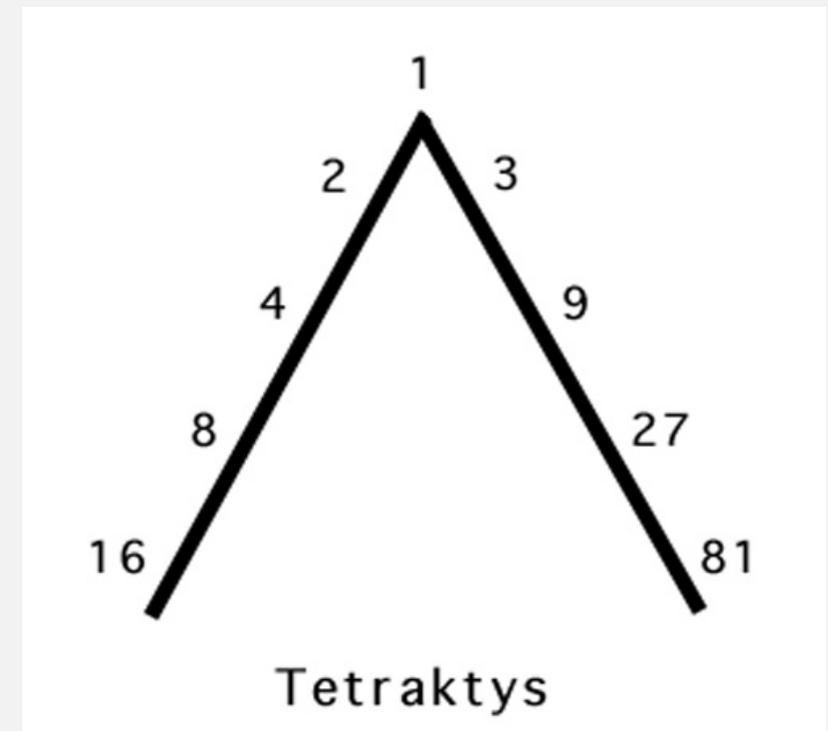
PYTHAGORAS AND MATHEMATICS

- Disciples were *mathematikoi* and *akousmatikoi* –
 - The *mathematikoi* learned the fuller version and elaborate reasons of science
 - The *akousmatikoi* only learned the summarized instructions, without detailed explanations
- Mathematical disciplines intermediate between the physical and incorporeal realm – divert the mind from the corporeal
- Numbers / geometry helps express incorporeal ideas that cannot be expressed in words
 - One – unity, identity, equality, friendship, sympathy, sameness, participation in the First Cause
 - Dyad – diversity, inequality, divisibility
 - Decad – the nature of the universe is defined according to the proportions of numbers – 10 is a Perfect Number



THE IMPORTANCE OF NUMBER

- The Quadrivium - well-rounded approach to learning and understanding
- Number pervades the Quadrivium
 - In Arithmetic
 - In Geometry or Space
 - In Music or Harmony
 - In Astronomy or Space and Time
- Numbers and Cosmic Order
 - Without Number, we could not get a clear notion about things in themselves or their relations
 - Number instills proportion and establishes harmonic relations among things
- Numbers as powerful Symbols containing powerful lessons
- Unity as the summation of all things



IAMBlichus – ON THE PYTHAGOREAN LIFE

- Iamblichus
 - One of the most eminent Neoplatonists, disciple of Porphyry
 - Belonged to Chaldean tradition of *hieratike technē*
“sacred art” or theurgy
- Iamblichus greatly admired Pythagoras
 - Wise people are in the habit of invoking the divinities at the beginning of any philosophic consideration.
 - Under divine guidance we approach the subject with a quiet mind
 - “No one will deny that the soul of Pythagoras was sent to mankind from Apollo’s domain”
 - Like Orpheus, with dominion over savage animals, Pythagoras had an alluring powerful voice
- Pythagoras’ Studies
 - Pythagoras studied with Anaximander and Thales of Miletus.
 - Sailed to Sidon and studied of the mysteries of Byblos and Tyre in Phoenicia.
 - 22 years in Egypt with priests and studying astronomy, geometry and the mysteries of the Gods.
 - In Babylon - associated with the Magi, the perfect worship of the Gods, arithmetic and music



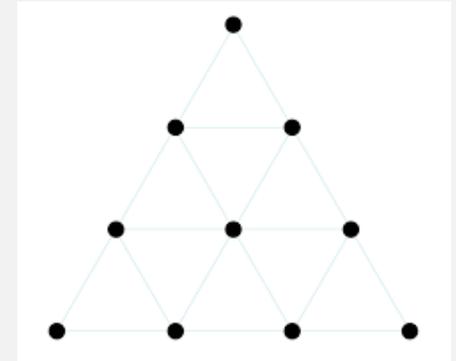
PHILOSOPHY AND MUSIC (ACCORDING TO IAMBLICHUS)

- Philosophy or Love of Wisdom
 - Pythagoras was the first to call himself a philosopher
 - The order of nature is derived from participation in the first and intelligible essence, Number and *logoi* “reasons” or productive principles pervade the universe
- Music and Pythagoras
 - The first erudition is through music’s melodies and rhythms – he arranged certain “preparations” and “touchings” where he mingled certain diatonic, chromatic and enharmonic melodies through which he was able to direct the negative or “atempered” emotions of sorrow, rage, pity, fear, covetousness, pride
 - Music as poultices
 - Music contributes greatly to health
 - Studied how the auditory contributes to understanding – universal harmony – extended powers of hearing, fixing the intellect on the sublime symphonies of the world



PYTHAGOREAN DISCIPLINE AND INITIATION

- Pythagorean Discipline and Initiation
 - Labor - discipline and studies should imply some sort of labor
 - Observation - Initiate observed for 3 years to see if he was studious and had the proper disposition
 - Silence - Candidate observed silence for 5 years, continence of speech and subjugation of the tongue
 - Purification - All these disciplines purify and heal the soul, resuscitating and saving its divine part
 - Secrecy - Revealing the Pythagorean doctrines to the profane was unacceptable
- Symbols and Teachings
 - Necessary use of symbols in instruction
 - Uttered symbolically oracular sentences e.g., “The beginning is the half of the whole.”
 - Used single words “kosmos”, philosophia, or Tetraktys!
- Value of Memory
 - Memory was greatly honored, abundantly exercised, and given much attention
 - Made it a point to exercise their memories systematically
- Pythagoras in southern Italy, Magna Graecia, proliferated philosophy, poetry, rhetorical arts.



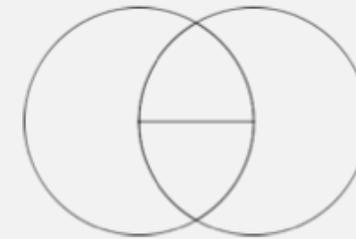
THE GOLDEN VERSES AND PYTHAGOREAN SENTENCES

- Golden Verses
 - Attributed to the Master
 - Principles of daily life aimed at the divinization of the soul
 - Example: Gain control of your habits; over stomach, sleep, luxury and anger.
- Pythagorean Sentences of Sextus, the Pythagorean
 - The tradition of wise “sentences” or *gnomai* – pithy sayings of metaphysical and ethical doctrine which serve as instruction, advice, and exhortation
 - Popular among Neopythagoreans, Middle Platonists and early Christians like Origen
 - “Consider lost all the time in which you do not think of divinity.”
 - “A good intellect is the choir of divinity.”
 - “Accustom your soul to conceive of something great of itself.”
 - “Only through ignorance of his soul is a man saddened by fear of death.”
 - “If you know him by whom you were made, you would know yourself.”
 - “To use many words in speaking of God obscures the subject.”
 - “A temple should be adorned with gifts but the soul with disciplines.”



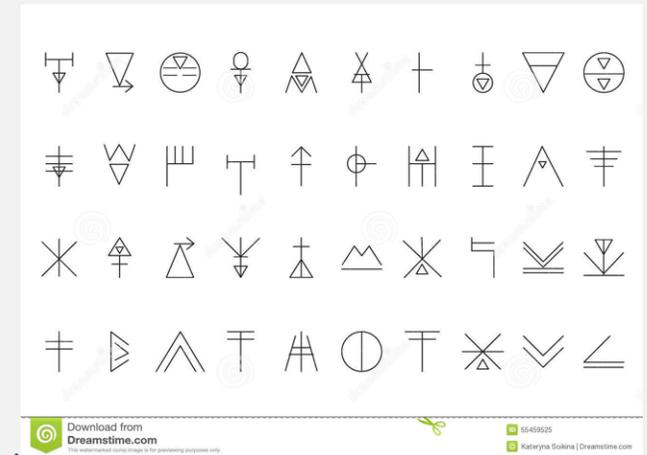
PHILOLAUS OF TARENTUM – PHILOLAIC FRAGMENTS

- Philolaus associated with:
 - First to record Pythagorean teachings in writing
 - Influenced Speusippus and the Old Academy's attempts to modernize Pythagorean doctrine and harmonize it with current Platonism
 - The idea of a central fire or fiery hearth as the center of the universe - The fire of Hestia, in the center, where it maintains order
- The Decad and the Monad
 - Number – proportion and order
 - The Decad:
 - The Decad contains the principles and guides for all life – it insinuates itself everywhere
 - Through the Decad, we understand beings and their relationships.
 - The principles of the Decad lead us to understand the Unlimited
 - The Decad is the source of memory, which is why the Monad is called Mnemosyne
 - Monad = Unity – The Cause before the Cause
 - By Limit, every series of things approaches Unity. Through the Unlimited, the lower series is produced. Before duality is the cause before the cause.



THE SYMBOLISM OF TRIGONS AND TETRAGONS

- The Triangle or Trigon
 - Represents principle of generation of begotten things and the elements
 - The formation of the elements is triangular as all elements have three dimensions
 - The elements are filled with the infinity characteristic of matter [consider a stone]
 - Philolaus devotes the angles of the triangle to the four divinities
 - Kronos - things humid and cold
 - Ares – things fiery
 - Hades – everything terrestrial
 - Dionysus – wet and warm things – represented by wine
- The Tetragon or Quadrilateral
 - Bears the divine impress and expresses perfect order
 - Consecrated to life and creation - Dedicated to those divinities which procreate life -
 - The angles of the tetragon are consecrated to 3 goddesses, Rhea, Demeter, and Hestia
- The product of 3 and 4 is 12, the Dodecad, dedicated to the sovereign principle of Zeus

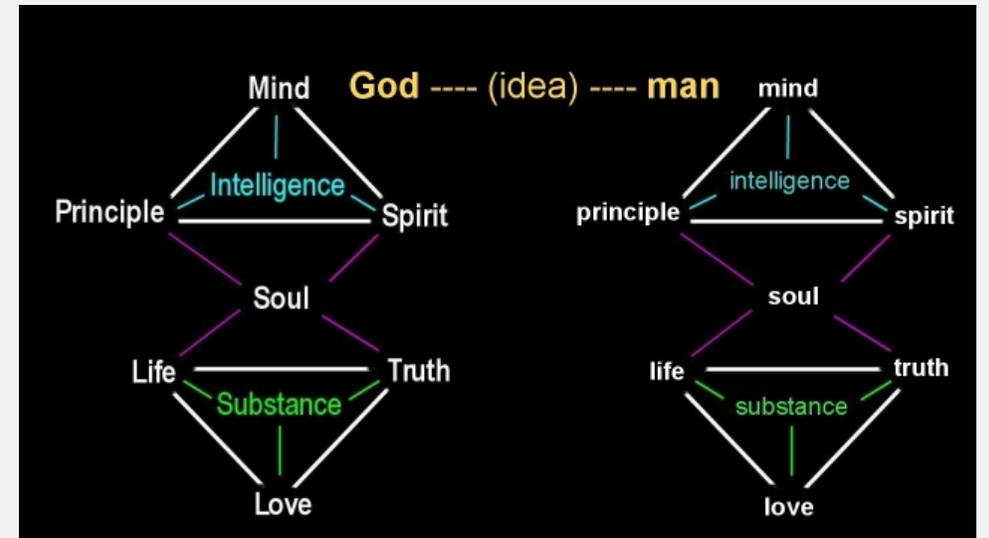


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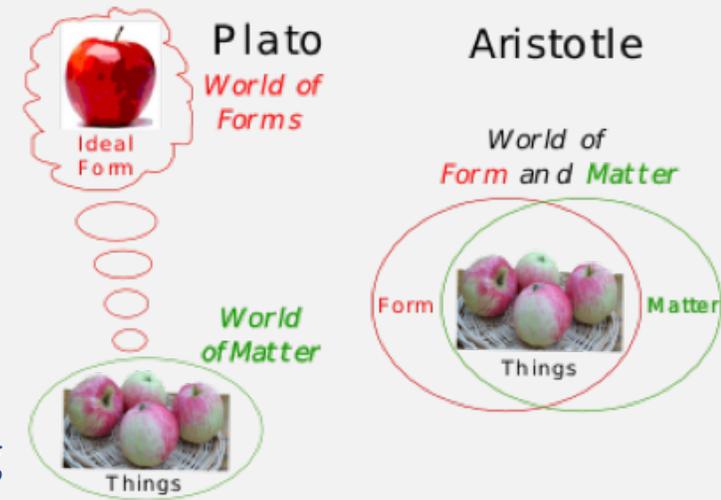
PYTHAGOREAN PSEUDEPIGRAPHA – ARCHYTAS OF TARENTUM

- Magistrate of Tarentum with contributions to harmonic theory and Pythagorean mathematics
- 3 Principles: God, Substance, and Form
 - The form is the cause of the essence
 - Substance is the substrate which receives the form
 - Neither can exist alone, therefore there must exist another cause which moves the substance of things and forms them. The most suitable name for this is God.
- Since the mover contains forces that are self-contrary, the contraries are in need of a principle harmonizing and unifying them. These contraries exist in the substance of things. They necessarily receive their efficacious virtues and proportions from numbers. Numbers are manifested in geometric forms.
- The intelligence that is above all intelligence is called God.



FORM AND MATTER - PYTHAGOREAN PSEUDEPIGRAPHIA – TIMAEUS OF LOCRI

- Form is unproduced, unmoved, stationary, of the nature of the Same, and perceptible by mind
- Matter is the recipient of impressions, is a mother and a nurse, procreative of a third kind of being, that which remolds and perfects productions from form
- Matter is called by the twin names of Place and Space
- Matter and Form – Male and Female
 - Form – analogous to a male power and father
 - Matter – analogous to a female power and mother
- Matter receives Form – the Deity, being good, sees that the meeting of form and matter is organized, that bodies are proportionately related
- Desirous of making a very good production, he made Matter a divinity



THE ELEMENTS AND TRIANGLES: TIMAEUS OF LOCRI:

- The offspring of matter and form are the elements:
 - Earth
 - Water
 - Air
 - Fire
 - Through these elements, the deity put together this world, conjoined by proportion, which constrains all subjects
- Every body is composed of surfaces whose elements are triangles
 - Right triangle – half of a square – forms a cube – most steady and stationary form - the principle constitution of the Earth – Earth is like a square – it is difficult to move and it is inconvertible
 - Scalene triangle – half of an Equilateral triangle 30/60/90 - this is the element of Fire, Air, and Water
 - *Tetrahedron = Fire = composed of 6 30/60/90 triangles – has 4 faces – the easiest to be moved*
 - *Octahedron – element of Air*
 - *Icosahedron – Water –*
 - Dodecahedron – the image of the universe – nearest to a sphere



HUMAN VIRTUE AND PERFECTION: WISDOM OF PYTHAGOREAN PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

- Pythagorean Pseudepigrapha and Wisdom – Euryphamus
- Human life resembles a lyre and requires 3 things:
 - apparatus
 - tuning
 - musical skill
- The life of man reaches its perfection through virtue and prosperity.
- A man is perfect if he becomes a good man.
- The virtue of everything is the climax and perfection of the nature of the thing.
- Our intellect is that which enables us to behold God. Without intellect, we cannot see God. Therefore, to behold God is to perfect the nature of being Human – *gnothi sauton*



PLATO: PHILOSOPHY AS THE REGROWTH OF WINGS

- Plato – 428-348 BCE, founder of the Academy at Athens at age 40
 - One of the most important Pythagorean thinkers in Greece
 - Exercised great artistry in the expression of his ideas
 - Inspiration to many forms of mysticism
 - Enlightenment philosophy seeks to artificially separate the philosophy of Plato from its Egyptian and Orphic roots
- Philosophy is a practice for and of death – a discipline of immortality aimed at the purification and separation of the soul
 - Soul is the immortal *psuche* and *paideia* is learning to live with the highest metaphysical truth and virtue by imitating God
 - Through an association with the good, the beautiful, and the orderly (*kosmios*) the philosopher attains to divinity.



PLATO: BEING AND BECOMING

- Roots of Platonic Cosmogony
 - The theory of Ideas - traced to ancient Egyptian and Sumerian cosmogonies and ancient sages
 - Plato transformed the original vision or tradition (*paradosis*) of the ancient sages, such as Parmenides, who saw themselves as priests of Apollo
- Being vs. Becoming
 - The world of Being - the noetic world, the realm of the *eide*, unchanging forms
 - Forms are archetypes, paradigms, or universals
 - *Kosmos noetos* – forever existent realm of Ideas
 - The world of Becoming – shifting phenomena of the world
 - imperfect imitations or copies of the Forms
 - World in which no certain scientific knowledge is possible
- The Myth of Phaedrus
 - Eternal forms crash into the world of becoming.
 - Thereafter, we are unable to contemplate the Ideas directly.



PLATO: DESCENT AND ASCENT OF THE SOUL

- World Soul and Human Soul contain the same cosmological principles
- Because of its broken wings, the human soul had to leave the divine procession and descend to the world of *genesis*. The task of the philosopher is to regrow his wings, to contemplate the Forms or realities themselves, not just the sensible world of remote images or shadows
 - Look right at the sun! Not just at the shadows.
- The philosopher's journey has many stages and is led by many symbols and sacred images to blissful contemplation of the Form of Beauty itself.
 - *Epopteia* – the final vision or revelation
 - Theurgic ascent
- Eros - paradigm of Eros in the ascent to the realm of Eternal ideas – Eros, like the philosopher is attached to both worlds and can move in both directions
- In Plato's *Symposium*, Priestess Diotima describes the ascent in terms borrowed from the Eleusinian mysteries.



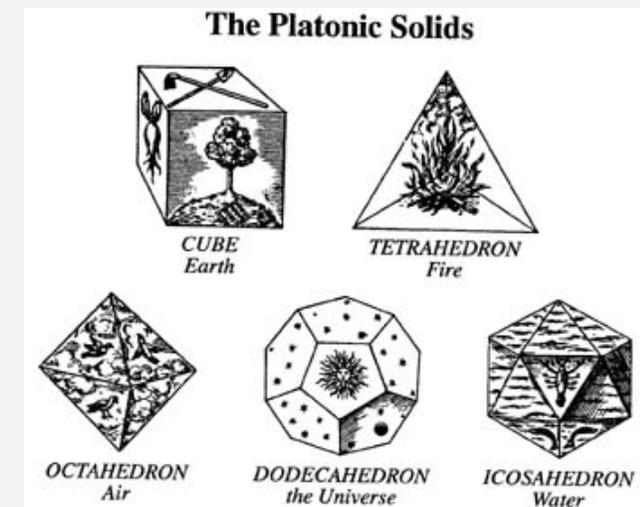
PLATO: THE FIRST CAUSE AND HUMANS AS THE DIVINE IMAGE

- All that is created must have some cause for without a cause nothing can be created.
 - Therefore, the World must be created by a Cause
 - The creator is Good and desired that all things should be as like himself as they can be, that all things should be good
 - Order is better than disorder
- Humans as the image of eternal gods
 - Man is endowed with soul and intelligence by the providence of God
 - All animals have intelligence but only one is composed of a kindred nature with God



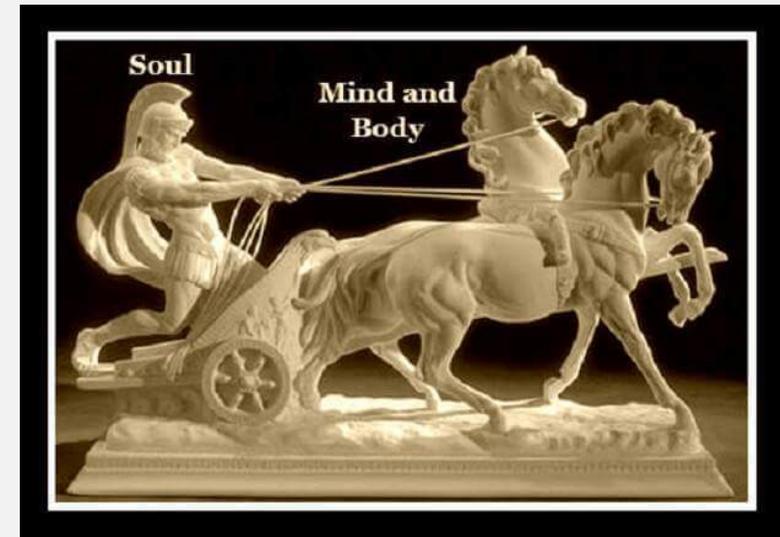
TIMAEUS, GEOMETRY AND NUMBER

- The Divine reality never changes or moves. That which is immovably the same forever cannot become older or younger.
- Since it was not possible to bestow eternity upon the created beings, the Creator made Being a moving image of eternity.
- At the moment the heavens and the universe are created, time is also created.
- Number and the laws of the Universe
 - The universe Imitates eternity and revolves according to a law of number
 - The heavens (sun, moon, and planets) were created in order to distinguish and preserve the numbers of time
 - God lighted a fire, the sun, so that animals might participate in number
 - Gods
 - Birds
 - Watery species
 - Land creatures
- Intervals 1,2,4,8 and 1,3,9,27 linked by the ratios 3:2, 4:3, 9:8



PHAEDRUS AND THE MYTH OF THE CHARIOTEER

- All Soul is immortal
 - Life has soul. Soul is immortal.
 - Any body that derives motion from within itself is animate or besouled
- The task of the charioteer is difficult and troublesome – for though he seeks to carry the chariot to the region where the gods dwell, we are of both the bad and the good, the mortal and the immortal
 - Beware the steed of wickedness - it pulls towards corruption and evil
 - Reason is the charioteer, the soul's pilot
 - When the soul beholds truth and knowledge of being, she descends again from the heavens and comes back home
 - We have wings to fly to the land of truth – But many have their wings broken, they are burdened with a load of forgetfulness and wrongdoing. Because of that burden, they shed her wings and fall back to earth.
 - But the soul that seeks wisdom and beauty, and lives the philosophical life, regains her wings with each incarnation.



PHAEDO: PHILOSOPHY AND PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL

- The body provides us with innumerable distractions; if we are ever to have pure knowledge of anything, we must get rid of the body and contemplate things with the soul itself
- Pure knowledge is only possible after death when the soul is independent of the body
- Keep ourselves uncontaminated of the follies of the body. Self-control and not being carried away by desires. Courage and self-control
- True philosophers make dying their profession.
- Those distressed at the idea of dying are not lovers of wisdom
- He who enters the next world uninitiated and unenlightened shall lie in the mire but he who is purified and enlightened shall dwell among the gods



NEOPLATONIC HERMENEUTICS AND THE WAY TO GOD

- Neoplatonism and Plotinus are synonymous (204-270 CE)
 - Creative exegesis of Plato and Aristotle and Pythagoras, Parmenides, Orphic poems, Chaldean Oracles
 - Less interested in Plato's political theories than his metaphysics
 - Enlarged version of Parmenides and Timaeus
- Focused on the Doctrine of Noetic Forms (*eide*)
 - Each level of reality reflects and imitates the one above
 - Each level of manifested reality is ontologically good and immanently sacred as an image or *eikon* of its prior
 - Because it is an image, it is regarded as an inferior shadow
 - The cause is more perfect than the effect
 - See The Allegory of the Cave
 - Transcendental principle
 - That which proceeds from the principle (*proodos*)
 - That which returns back to the principle (*epistrophe*)
 - Contemplation of the noetic cosmos or realm of Ideas and mystical union cannot be separated
- Metaphysics, hermeneutics, and theurgy all form a complex unity of dialectical analysis, symbolical interpretation, and elevation (*anagoge*)



NEOPLATONIC HOT SPOTS AND KEY FIGURES

- Syria, Phoenicia, Egypt, and Anatolia
 - Plotinus from Upper Egypt
 - Porphyry was a Phoenician from Tyre (232-305 CE)
 - Iamblichus (245-325 CE) was Syirian of Arab origin
 - Damascius (462-537 CE) – last official successor of the Academy in Athens before it was closed by Justinian.
 - After this, many Neoplatonists left for Persia or Mesopotamia
 - Crucial role played by these intellectual refugees in the transmission of Hellenic theology and theurgy
- Role of Theurgy
 - Though some thought philosophy was the best way to approach the divine realm, Iamblichus was convinced that liturgy and theurgic ascent were most effective and were quite separate from philosophical exposition



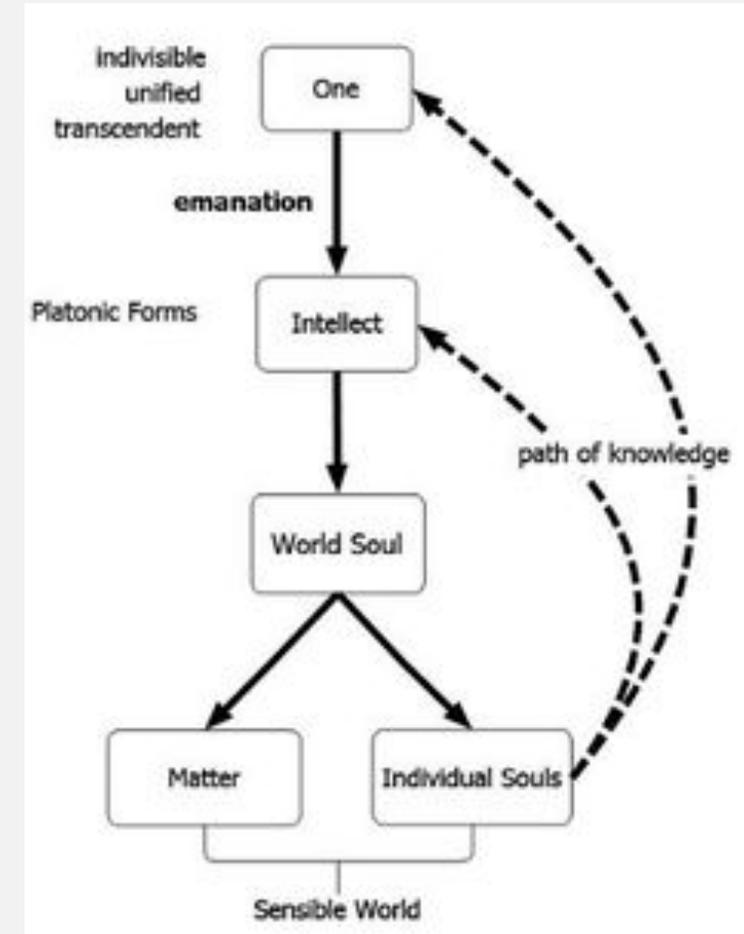
IAMBlichus AND PROCLUS: SUMMARY

- Iamblichus allotted mathematics a central role in the highest form of worship
 - Sacred mathematics
 - Used allegorical exegesis of Plato and Chaldean theurgy
- Proclus also put theurgy above philosophy
 - All Hellenic theology is derived from secret doctrines of Pythagoras and Orpheus
 - Achieve unity (*henosis*) through:
 - Dialectical exercises
 - Allegorical interpretations
 - Contemplations
 - Piety
 - Asceticism
 - Supreme instances of theophany were ineffable but unspeakable symbols perfect all levels of manifestation
 - Gods can be known directly by interpreting signs and studying order in the visible cosmos and within the soul



PORPHYRY

- Plotinus – founder of Neoplatonism
 - Wrote the Life of Plotinus and modeled him as the ideal philosopher and virtuous sage
 - Augustine said Plato lived again within Plotinus
 - Focus on contemplation and dialectal ascent to the noetic cosmos
 - Porphyry, his student, divided the treatises of Plotinus into 6 groups of nine “Enneads”
 - Promoted Plotinus’ relationship with magic and gave him a god-like status
- The philosopher lifts himself by the ways of meditation Plato teaches in the Banquet (Diotima’s speech in the Symposium)



PLOTINUS' ENNEADS BY PORPHYRY

- The achieved Sage is in a higher phase of the Soul
- The failure to possess the Intellectual principles of the Divine are due to the disturbance caused by birth
 - [Interesting to see that they consider life as a “disturbance” caused by birth]
 - Life is a hypostasis of Soul
 - The World Soul or Cosmic Soul are distributed or “hypostasized” into our souls – World Soul enters bodily forms and multiplies itself by division among them
- Soul is tractable – it is always looking for the appropriate vessel
 - [Geometry as *temenos* or sacred space – shrine or receptacle for the divine]
 - Soul seeks to reproduce itself – each act of mediation and representation is linked to the Divine Being in whose likeness it was made
- Souls of men leap down from the Supreme yet are not cut off from their origin.
 - Concept of Descent or “giving downwards”
 - The universal broods closely over the particular
 - The Supreme does not reach out to us but we reach towards the Supreme.
 - The Divine Intellect rests eternally above but communicates to things here through the channel of the Soul
 - The Divine puts on a body or plunges from heaven – Divine Light illumines the soul



The Six Enneads
Plotinus

NEOPLATONIST WISDOM: PORPHYRY'S LETTER TO MARCELLA

- Reason tells us that the divine is present everywhere and in all men
- Only the mind of the wise man is sanctified as its temple
- Reason adorns for the Divine a temple in his thought
- Don't speak of God to those corrupted by false opinion
- Anger is foreign to the gods
- The Divine Law shines forth in self-control and wisdom
 - Let us become masters of ourselves
 - Fear and desire [see Buddhism] should be bridled in order to achieve a happy mind



IAMBlichus: EXHORTATION TO PHILOSOPHY

- Elaborated further on the philosophy of Plotinus and prolonged the Neopythagorean tradition
- Philosophy was the path to the divine
 - Through scientific demonstration (*mathematon*)
 - Contemplation
- Pythagoras taught us to contemplate nature and the celestial sphere
 - For the sake of knowing and contemplating was every man made by God
 - Wisdom is not useful; it is good
 - Contemplation of all things is preferred to things which are useful
 - Virtue is intellectual insight
 - Our “descent” causes mental sluggishness
 - But if we pursue the heavenly way, philosophize and live truly, busied with profound and marvelous speculations, we view the rule of the Gods and joyously gain insight
 - True philosophers study how to die
 - [Philosopher as “Übermensch”]



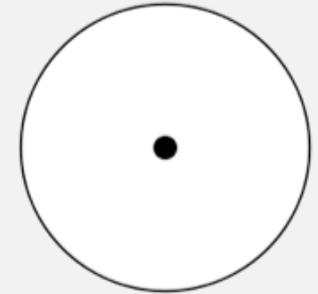
THE SOUL AND THE BODY



- The senses of the body are neither accurate nor certain
- Justice, Beauty, and Good are not perceived with the senses of the body
- Aim to release the soul from its association with the body
- Wisdom or the ability to contemplate anything clearly is a sort of “death” after we are released from the body
 - Redefine death as release and separation from the body into contemplative wisdom
 - Philosophy brings the greatest good because it liberates the soul from the body
 - Must be sought with the most intense avidity and study –
 - We must cultivate Philosophy zealously in order to be truly happy
 - None but the lover of learning may be in the company of the Gods
- He that has been purified and initiated dwells with the Gods
- There are many that bear the *thyrsus* but few that are *bacchanals* or true initiates.
- Those that follow the way of God will receive a better “allotment”
- If more people follow this path, there will be more peace and less evil in the world
- The soul of the foolish is full of holes, incapable of holding anything and retaining knowledge

IAMBlichus: ON THE MYSTERIES OF THE EGYPTIANS

- Defends the practice of *theourgia* and hieratic art, Egyptian and Chaldean in origin
- Primacy of the Sun in the heavens
 - All things in the universe receive the powers which descend from the sun
 - The sun is immutable, stable, never failing
- Naming
 - The symbolical character of divine similitude must be admitted to have a subsistence in names
 - In names we possess a knowledge of the divine essence, power and order contained in the name.
- Lonely Monad
 - Abiding in the solitude of its own unity, the Fountain of all things
 - *Eikton*, the indivisible one - Transcends all the rest
 - To be worshipped in silence alone
 - The demiurgic intellect, the curator of truth and wisdom, descends into the world of generation
 - There is a vital power, prior to the heavens,
- The soul contains within it the power to be united with the Gods, transcend the mundane order and participating in eternal life.
 - Gives itself to another order of things
 - Departs from subordinate natures



THE GOLDEN VERSES: HIEROCLES COMMENTARY

- Who was Hierocles? Taught Platonic philosophy in Alexandria
 - Argued for a harmony between Plato, Orpheus, Homer, and the Chaldean Oracles
 - True Philosophy has a soteriological mission undertaken by superior souls
 - Platonism - branch of Pythagoreanism - passed down to instruct our descendants
- The Golden Verses
 - General precepts of philosophy for both a contemplative and an active life
 - Drive away folly and laziness and apply ourselves to the knowledge of divine things
- The Divine Order contains ordered ranking:
 - Immortal Gods
 - Heroes, full of goodness and light
 - Terrestrial Daemons
- The Life of Philosophy
 - Repentance is the beginning of Philosophy, the avoiding of all foolish words and actions
 - Need to cultivate the constancy that prudent deliberation inspires
 - Use Reason as a guide for all of our actions
 - A soul disposed to God keeps divinity and the splendid brightness around it always in sight
- Mystical and sacred ceremonies ready us for the celestial voyage



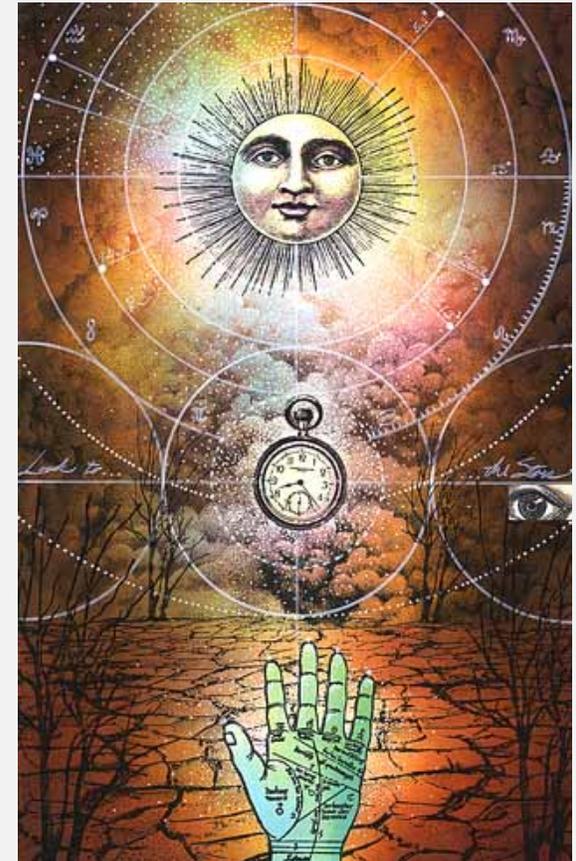
PROCLUS, THE MOST IMPORTANT PHILOSOPHER IN LATE HELLENIC NEOPLATONISM

- Born in Byzantium
- Harmonize Platonism with the Chaldean Oracles and the teachings of Orpheus
- Sequence of studying Plato under the tutelage of a master
 - Alcibiades
 - Phaedo
 - Phaedrus
 - Symposium
 - Timaeus
 - Parmenides



COMMENTARY ON ALCIBIADES BY PROCLUS – SELF-KNOWLEDGE AS THE BEGINNING OF PHILOSOPHY

- The beginning of philosophy is the knowledge of the self
 - We begin our path to wisdom with the injunction from Delphi “Know thyself”.
 - This is the condition for the ascent to the divine and the path towards purification. This is Apollo’s bidding.
 - As Socrates says in the opening of Alcibiades, the beginnings of perfection depend upon consideration of ourselves
- The work of philosophical perfection is to purge and prepare those on the path to self-knowledge.
- Mystic rites start with preliminary cleansings, sprinklings with lustral water.



PROCLUS: THE THEOLOGY OF PLATO

- The philosophy of Plato has an esoteric dimension
- Those in the divine choir that have energized the doctrines of Plato with a divinely-inspired mind.
- The psychical essence, that which pertains to the soul, is suspended from the intellectual hypostasis, is more ancient than bodies and is the cause of bodies and souls.
- Self-knowledge: when one penetrates profoundly into the knowledge of the self, one finds intellect and the order of beings.
- The best use of our energy is to be extended to a divine nature, to be seated and conjoined with that which is ineffable and beyond all things.



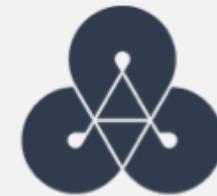
FABLES, MYTHOLOGY, AND ORPHISM

- Signify divine concerns through symbols (Orphic) and images (Pythagoric)
- The mathematical disciplines were invented by the Pythagoreans in order to effect a reminiscence of divine concerns.
- Plato used the mythological mode to conceal truth under a multitude of veils
- Concealed meanings of the fabulous narrations about the gods have a concealed meaning which is more venerable than the apparent
- Plato received the science of the divinities from Pythagoric and Orphic writings



PROCLUS COMMENTARY ON THE TIMAEUS

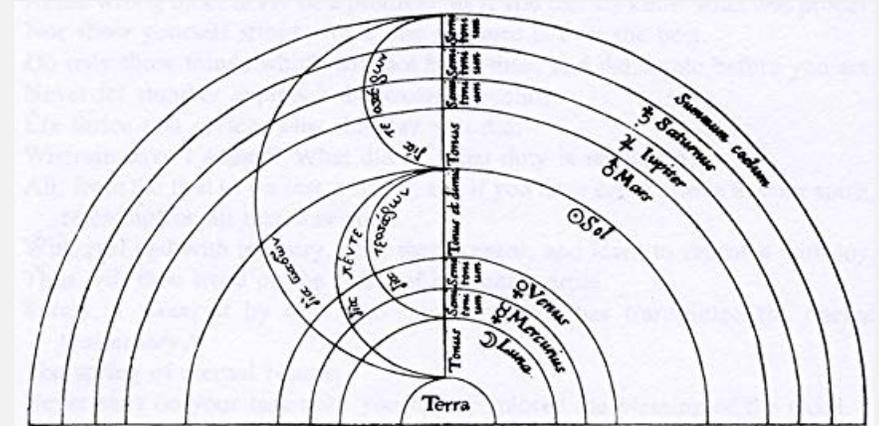
- Profound interpretation of Platonic (or Pythagorean) cosmology and views on the World Soul
- There is a demiurgic intellect over the universe. Material forms are subservient to the producing cause.
- But in mortals, there is an intellect within us which is energy, and this rational soul proceeds from the same father, the same vivific Goddess, the soul of the universe
- Pythagorean cosmology: two most basic and universal principles
 - Limit (*peras*) and Unlimited (*apeiron*)
 - Cosmos is compounded of elements in the Table of Opposites. This is a dualistic cosmology.
 - Heaven is unbegotten and is a “fifth essence”
- Pythagorean elements in Plato:
 - Elevation of the intellectual and divinely inspired
 - Everything is suspended from the intelligibles
 - The bounding wholes in numbers
 - Indicating things mystically and symbolically
 - The anagogic ascent
 - Unfolding into light
- Sensibles are in intelligibles paradigmatically and intelligibles in sensibles iconically



APEIRON

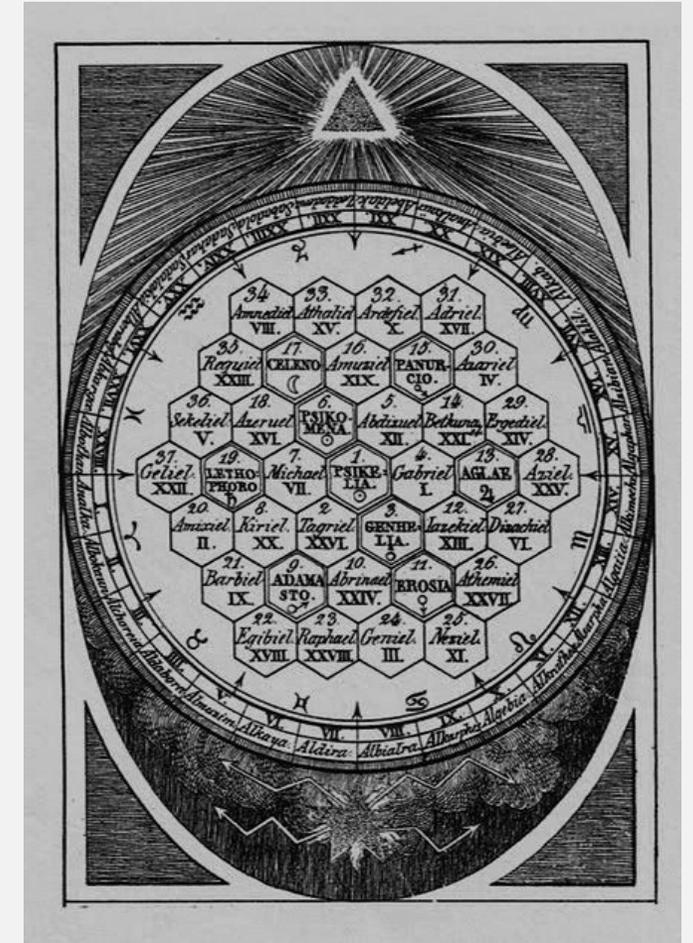
HARMONY WITH THE DIVINE ORDER

- Through purity, chastity, discipline, and order, we attract the beneficence of the Gods
- We are no longer ourselves but are absorbed by the Gods, abiding in divine light and circularly comprehended by it. This is the end of true prayer.
- Piety to the gods is the summit of virtue and is efficacious to the attainment of a happy life.
- The perfection of prayer ends in divine union and gradually accustoms the soul to divine light.
- Prayers are inserted by the Demiurgus in the essences of souls in order that they may be excited by a reminiscence of the Gods who produced them.
- Through analogy and harmony, we find union with sameness. Through analogy, the universe is completely rendered one.



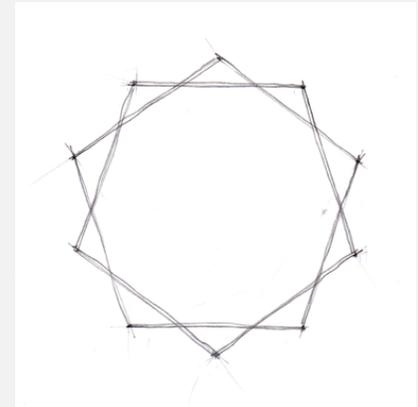
PROCLUS COMMENTARY ON THE CHALDEAN ORACLES

- Chaldean Oracles were produced in the 2nd century CE, probably in Syria
- God loves the simple, unadorned beauty of form, not a hurricane of words or a show or a parade with artificial rites.
- The body is the root of evil
- Paradigm and symbol move us closer to the divine – for everywhere, the similar is united to the similar and cognition of this similitude binds the knower to the known.
- The soul is constituted from intellectual reasons and divine symbols. In every soul is a pleroma or fullness of forms; it participates in symbols through which it is united to divine things.
- Note: akin to Jungian thought where the soul contains all forms and symbols



KNOWLEDGE OF “THE ONE”: PROCLUS ON THE PARMENIDES

- In later Neoplatonism, the true spiritual life consisted in reading, meditating and commenting on the Parmenides, viewed as the theological dialogue par excellence
- Dialectical procedures of Plato’s Parmenides are connected to the mystical ascent of the soul to the One. But in the end, even the dialectical method has to be left behind. Mystical union is only approached through silence with transcends all discursive reasoning and rational thought.
- The One does not participate in being – The one is beyond being
 - Co-exists with Being but transcends Being
 - The Monad is first. It comes before existence. It is “non-existent”
 - Hierarchic reality – The One (or ground of Being) is the cause of Being, and is before the rest. Since everything participates in its cause, it is simply referred to as The One.
- The soul is tortured by the notion of the One being “non-existent” and “beyond belief. But it mounts towards the incomprehensible, longs for its nature, embraces it, and seeks it with supreme passion
- The One transcends all analyzable knowledge and intellect.
 - But we glimpse the divine because we have the divine within us. Only by the One within ourselves do we apprehend the One
 - This is learning which is different from all other learning. We do not perceive the divine through sense perception, opinion, or scientific knowledge.



ACHIEVING “HENOSIS” OR UNITY WITH THE DIVINE

- Breathe and utter the syllable “hen”. One is the very first of names.
- We use the name One but in fact the first principle has no name.
- The one is the understanding of unity which is within ourselves
- Only the intellect is able to grasp an intelligible essence certainly and perfectly. One can replicate, for example, circles, but only intellectual knowledge comprehends the Form by simple intuition. It alone is capable of knowing the circle.



DAMASCIUS COMMENTARY ON PLATO'S PHAEDO

- Last official head of the Neoplatonic school at Athens
- When closed by Emperor Justinian in 529 CE, Damascius may have departed to escape persecution to Mesopotamia, on the banks of the Tigris, set up an academy in Harran
 - Closely associated with Near Eastern influences
- Philosopher detaches himself from pleasure and pain and luxury.
- Seeks the simpler forms of demonstration and division as preparation for the undivided activity of the intellect (see geometry as a divine discipline)
- We must strive for purity of the soul, the body, and of external things
- Initiates in philosophy are as Bacchus, they are gathered together and become whole again. The starting point is the downward journey like Dionysus undertook.

