

THE MEADOW

A journal of Philosophy, Religion, Mysticism and allied arts



The meadow is the prolific power of life, and of all-various reasons, and is the comprehension of the primary causes of life, and the cause of the variety and the procreation of forms. For meadows in this sensible region are fertile with forms and productive powers, and contain water, which is a symbol of vivific energy. But the nourishing cause of the gods is a certain intelligible union, comprehending in itself the whole perfection of the Gods, and filling them with vigour and power, that they may provide for secondary natures, and possess an immutable intelligence of such as are first.

Proclus' Theology of Plato, Bk IV, Ch. XV

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Change in the Air

This issue of *The Meadow* comes at a time of great change. In the recent past lies the crisis in worldwide banking, threatening the shaky economic structures which have propped up apparent western prosperity for the last few centuries; we are today witnessing the decline in the integrity and power of some democratic governments through the replacement of principle with pragmatism, and the avarice and corruptibility of some politicians. Ahead lie disquieting prospects such as continuing West/Middle Eastern tensions, declining oil and water resources, the possibly catastrophic effects of climate change and the acquisition of nuclear arms by States most politely described as unreliable.

As if in response to this increasingly volatile situation, teachers have appeared in the West - as indeed they have been appearing throughout human history – offering a consistent message which one of them summarised in four words: “Wake up, or perish.”

It takes a certain courage to face the possibility of mankind’s extinction. The presence of human beings on the earth has come to seem like a permanent certainty, something immune from threat. Yet a little reflection shows that this is a blinkered attitude; humanity had a beginning – a very recent beginning in terms of known history – and everything that has a beginning must have an end. What is born must also die, be it an individual, a species or an entire race.

Only what is not born does not die. And a central theme of all true teachings down the ages is this: that the ultimate reality of any human being is not its physical body, nor its accretions of possessions, nor its life story, emotions, opinions and beliefs - nor even its powers of thinking and knowing and creating; the ultimate reality is being itself, awareness itself, light itself.

What is true of individuals must be even more true of the whole of which those individuals are a part. If each individual human is a soul using a physical body as its vehicle, might it not also be true that humanity as a whole is a soul using the body of humanity as its vehicle. Just as a colony of ants is best understood by seeing it as a single organism, may not humanity be best understood by seeing it as a whole with this one difference, that each human soul is self-moved, which each individual ant is not.

In Alcibiades I, Plato examines the question – what kind of creature are we? Are we bodies? Are we souls? Are we a mixture of the two? The conclusion of that dialogue – that we are in truth soul and soul only – is reflected throughout all the writings of Plato and of the Neo-Platonists as well.

Proclus wrote in his commentary on that dialogue: “*The most peculiar and firm principle of all the dialogues of Plato, and of the whole theory of that Philosopher, is the knowledge of our own nature; for, this being established as an hypothesis, we shall be able accurately to learn the good which is adapted to us, and the evil which opposes this good.*”¹ (ed. emphasis)

If we think that our nature is essentially material we will be bound to believe that our best good is to be found in material things. This attitude has been growing in acceptance for hundreds of years, and today we could say that it is the attitude which dominates the worlds of science, of politics and of law. “We are material beings pursuing material goods for material fulfilment” – this is how it is, broadly speaking. The consequences of this belief are now becoming apparent; it underlies all the ills and difficulties we face, and it becomes increasingly clear that no lasting solution can be found on the level of that underlying mistake.

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Works of Plato 1, TTS IX, p. 99.

Philosophy tells us that we are not a body, but a soul; and that the good of the soul is entirely different from the good of the body it rides on. It also tells us that the lesser cannot satisfy the greater, and that we would do well to look to the well-being of the soul first and let material considerations take their proper place which is of course entirely valid but is also secondary and consequent.

It might also tell us that if, through unwise choices, mankind has rendered the form of its present embodiment unsustainable, then that form may be discarded and another form taken on. (This is something we might examine further in future issues of *The Meadow*.)

Philosophy – real philosophy – is always asking what is truly real, what is the truth of our nature, and where is our real good to be found. Any individual soul turning in that direction and opening mind and heart to the realities it will discover, cannot fail to gradually transform its own nature and, in the process, affect not only its immediate surroundings but also the nature of humanity as a whole to some extent. This is not only the best use of our energies, as Proclus says; it is also perhaps the only effective action we can take, as miniscule parts of the great whole, to bring real improvement to the present state of humanity. Clearly, this is no overnight solution; but neither are we living with an overnight problem. It has been slowly overwhelming us for many centuries and the reversal of the process may take just as long.

*“With worthy men”, writes Proclus, “there is much of that which is within our power; for they use all things, modifying even those that are out of our power (i.e. things external to the soul) on account of virtue, and always adorning the present circumstance.”*²

All the pieces in this issue of *The Meadow* bear directly or indirectly on this great endeavour of the soul.

Jeremy Best

Demeter’s Lament

Tim Addey

“Oh foolish mankind, who do not know when good or evil approach.”

This paper examines the interrelationship between the myths re-enacted in the Mysteries and philosophy: in particular the myth of Persephone and Demeter and the philosophy which is now known as Platonic. I will show how the two are based upon a single truth – that the self of each human being is immortal, but to a greater or lesser degree unaware of its immortal nature and powers. I will then examine how each approaches a remedy for this state of affairs: the one primarily addressing the vivific side of our soul, the other the gnostic side.

I will argue that, just as someone who listens to the story of Persephone and Demeter without a philosophic understanding will miss its most important message, so someone who reads Plato without a mythic understanding will miss his most important and subtle message.

I will also put forward the idea that both Platonic dialogue and mystery enactment must be judged on their power to move the listening self into the story, so that the initiate and the philosopher subsume their identity to those of the characters of the myth or dialogue – and not just that of the leading protagonist, but in truth, all the characters. In this way, I will argue, we raise ourselves to the Gods, rather than attempting to lower the Gods to our limited understanding of what they should be.

* * *

The mysteries of Eleusis, celebrated a day’s procession from the city of Athens, were, like other mystery celebrations of the ancient world, guarded by strong vows of secrecy – we know only hazy details of them from hints in pagan writings and largely antagonistic and unsympathetic descriptions in Christian writings. Nevertheless we do know that the myth of Persephone and Demeter was central to the initiations of the sanctuary and that the re-enactment of the story was used to move the participant to a deeper level of understanding regarding his or her life.

Our experience today, when the great archetypal myths are told well, still echoes, I think, the kind of experience the initiates of antiquity underwent, even though the reverence for the divinities named in the action has been virtually exorcised by many centuries of Christianity and Scientism. The vast amount of time, effort and money the human race expends on film, theatre, books of fiction, opera, and all the other arts which are used to retell variations of those stories which in the words of Sallustius “never did happen but always do” manifest the value we place on the experience of following the trials and triumphs set within such tales. There are good story-tellers and bad story-tellers in each of these arts, but when we come across a good story told well, the result is always the same – at the end of the telling we feel different about ourselves and our world. Outwardly nothing may be obvious, but inwardly we have grown in some significant way.

To return to the myth of Persephone and Demeter as an exquisite example of this universal effect with which Plato would have been very familiar: we can see three distinct phases to the story, which we might call innocence and descent; search and initiation; discovery and ascent. In the first phase the innocent Persephone plucks a flower which allows Hades to arise from the dark underworld and abduct the maiden; in the second phase her mother Demeter searches for her and in her mourning for her lost daughter withdraws her powers of growth and fruition from the outer world and in their place teaches the royal house of Eleusis her Mysteries; in the third phase there is a struggle between the

apparently conflicting wants of the gods which results in an agreement that Persephone should be brought out of the underworld guided by Hermes, but that as a result of her consumption of the seeds of a Pomegranate, the sometimes maiden, sometimes spouse of Hades, should spend a proportion of her time in the upper world of light and the rest in the darker kingdom below.

Whether the story was told in the flickering light of a night fire, or in the sacred precincts of Eleusis, the listener will have identified with the terrified Persephone, with the distraught Demeter, with the crafty seed-bearing Hades, and with the two rejoicing and reunited Goddesses as Hermes brought the long-lost daughter into the light again. This sense of identification lies at the heart of every contract between story teller and listener in which the former agrees to relate an absurd fiction and the listener agrees to believe it, ignoring all the impossibilities which surround the plot. The reward that the contract offers is an increment of enlightenment – sometimes great, sometimes small.

Now Plato was not a philosopher who was careless of his audience: he too sought to change the reader of his dialogues and the student who heard him in the quiet of the academy. His ideal, as stated in the *Phaedrus*,³ is for the philosopher to “plant and sow discourses” in the soul of the student so that the wisdom thus cultivated is living and fertile – this, he explicitly writes, brings immortal benefits and renders its possessor “blessed in the highest degree.” A phrase, indeed, which should bring to mind the closing lines of the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* which says,⁴ “Blessed is he among men upon earth who has seen these mysteries; but he who is uninitiated and who has no part in them, never has lot of like good things once he is dead, down in the darkness and gloom.”

If the aim of Plato’s philosophy is akin to that of the initiatory retelling of myth, we might expect its method to have similarities. And this, I suggest, is exactly what a careful inspection shows us in almost every Socratic dialogue: where the myth has innocence and descent, Plato has ignorance, a blind reliance upon *doxa* or unexamined opinion, and the sudden realization that what had been taken as the solid ground of truth has been exposed as a yawning chasm of darkness by Socrates’ initial questions. Just as Persephone has taken hold of the flower with both hands for the promise of the joy which it holds only to find terror, so the seemingly easy rewards of an exchange of words with Socrates finds Meno, or Alcibiades, or Theaetetus or some other innocent, suddenly abducted into the dark and winding paths of a kingdom from which there seems to be no escape.

Where the myth has the search of Demeter, with its questions to Helios, the long torch-lit hunt aided by Hecate for the daughter, the withdrawal of powers from the outer world and the beginnings of initiations, the Dialogues have the dialectical hunt guided by Socrates. Here the seeker of truth is encouraged to turn away from the appearances of things in order to find what things are in reality. The Homeric Hymn describes the abduction of Persephone and her eventual ascent in a few lines but this middle part of the story, the search during which Demeter gives up the comforts of eating, drinking wine, bathing and Olympic ease, provides the main body of the work. So it is with the Platonic dialogue: the middle section requires the hard work of disciplined thought, an arduous and lengthy exploration during which we are initiated into the lesser mysteries of reasoned truth.

Where the myth has discovery and the ascent of Persephone, in which the complexity of her situation is resolved so that she may embrace the whole of reality from Olympic heights to deepest Underworld, so the dialogues take us to the point at which we see the apparently conflicting elements of the philosophical problem in a greater whole. The full light of the upper world fills Persephone’s eyes, just as the full light of philosophic truth is revealed in a final – often mythic – vision.

³ 276e ff.

⁴ Hymn to Demeter II, 480

This threefold pattern can also be seen in the three degrees of initiation at Eleusis: telete – muesis – epopteia. The Telete is the novice who responds to the call of the mysteries and is purified by a descent into the sea with a small sacrificial pig. Muesis is the first proper initiation into the mysteries: the word itself means “a closing of the eyes” which we must take to mean a turning of the mind from outward concerns towards an examination of inward meanings. Epopteia is the final initiation: the word means vision. The stage of telete is akin to the descending Persephone who has responded to the lure of the flower and likewise the early stage of a Socratic dialogue where a character responds to the enticement of philosophy, and is purified of that worst of all ignorances – the ignorance of one’s own ignorance. Muesis, the closing of the eyes to outward things, is akin to the search of Demeter when the outward activities of earthly growth are abandoned and the Goddess hunting diligently for her daughter finally retires to the inner recess of her temple in Eleusis and reveals her initiations to her first priests. It is also akin to the middle part of the Socratic dialogues where the hunt for stable truth truly begins. Epopteia is akin to the reunification of the mother and daughter in the light of the upper world in which Persephone is enabled to relate her entire cycle – a relation, she says, that is “without error” for she then sees herself and her situation clearly. This stage is also akin to the final stage of the dialogues in which the clarity of the philosophic mind is obtained and the truth pursued is revealed.

Perhaps the best example of this interplay between myth, initiation and philosophic advance is the *Symposium* which is not only sprinkled with clear references to the mystery celebration at Eleusis, but also has the most obvious dramatic presentation of all the dialogues, with the possible exception of the *Phaedo*.

The references to the mystery celebrations are clear enough to us even today – to Plato’s immediate students who would have had direct experience of the initiations they would have been unmistakable, and indicated how seriously Plato wanted to draw the parallels between them and the philosophy he was presenting. I will run through a few of these references:

Firstly, in the central passage of the dialogue, in which the words of Diotima to Socrates are being passed on, she explicitly calls her teachings “mysteries” in this passage: “In the mysteries of Love thus far perhaps, Socrates, you may be initiated and advanced. But to be perfected, and to attain the intuition of what is secret and inmost, introductory to which is all the rest, if undertaken and performed with a mind rightly disposed, I doubt whether you may be able.” (210a) The word translated in this passage as ‘initiated’ is ‘myētheiēs’ which is related to the second degree of the Eleusinian mysteries, and where Taylor has ‘inmost’ [mystery] the Greek word used by Plato is ‘epoptika,’ which is related to the word ‘epoptēs’: Steven McGuire provides good evidence that Epoptēs was used in the specifically initiatory sense only with regard to the mysteries of Eleusis.⁵ By the way, all true initiation is a test – and tests can result in success or failure: initiation is, therefore, always accompanied by doubt, which is why Diotima rightly ensures that before Socrates faces the second and inmost initiation, doubt is expressed.

Secondly, as the speech of Alcibiades reaches its visionary climax (which I will show later has the place of the epoptic vision in the dialogue) he breaks off his narration of his dealings with Socrates and says, “But let the servants, or any other profane and rustic person that may be present, close their ears with mighty gates.” Which is a distinct reference to the practice of clearing the Sanctuary of Eleusis of those not authorised to participate in the mystery rites with the words “Far off, far off, even ye profane” as well as to the inscription at the entrance to the Eleusinian grove⁶ “not to enter into the adyta of the temple, if they are uninitiated in the highest of the mysteries.”

⁵ See his articles (especially note 4) at:

www.artsci.lsu.edu/voegelin/EVS/2005%20Papers/Steven%20McGuire.htm

⁶ See Proclus’ *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* (5)

Thirdly, there are obvious parallels between those who acted as *mystagogoi* (leaders of initiation) during the rites at Eleusis and Diotima and Socrates – the former within the speech of Socrates, the latter throughout the dialogue as a whole.

Francis Cornford certainly notices the embrace of the language of the Eleusinian mysteries at the point at which Diotima reaches her description of the absolute Beauty, in his *Principium Sapientiae*⁷ – “Plato here borrows from the Eleusinian mysteries the language of the Sacred Marriage and of the final revelation . . .”

Finally, the part that Dionysus played in the rites is somewhat unclear although the evidence is that he had a significant role – he seems to be identified with Hades, at least by Heraclitus⁸ - and the whole of the *Symposium* is soaked in the spirit of the God, who is patron of drama, of wine, of liberation.

The sanctuary and rites of Eleusis were known as those of the two Goddesses, and, of course, there were two separate celebrations of the mysteries: we should not be surprised, therefore, to find Plato presenting the threefold pattern we have discussed in a twofold fashion. The first unfolding of paradigm of purification, teaching, vision (or *telete*, *muesis*, *epopteia*) is to be found within the speech of Socrates as follows:

The *telete* or cathartic stage can be seen in Socrates’ questioning of Agathon which purifies him and the other participants of the symposium from the error which has emerged previously – the false idea that Love is the highest and most beautiful god. You will see that by the end of this questioning Agathon says – and we must take it that he speaks for the rest of the company – that he is unable to challenge Socrates. This reduction to a passivity recalls the abduction of Persephone, whose response to the appearance of Hades is a shrill call which, in the words of the Homeric hymn⁹ “no one, either of the deathless gods or of mortal man heard.” The clever theorizing of the previous six speeches are revealed as no more related to the solidity of truth than the seemingly solid earth of the flowery meadow which yawned wide to allow the Lord of Many to ride out to gather up the petrified virgin into his awful chariot.

The *Muesis* stage is represented by the first part of Socrates report of Diotima’s teaching – here the inner reality of the ways of love are explored carefully with the emphasis upon the rational and dialectical which is to replace the *doxa* of appearances. An initiation presents the mythic account of the birth of Love from the union of Resource and Poverty in the Gardens of Zeus after the celebration of the birthday of Aphrodite before Diotima moves on to reveal that love is ultimately the desire for the never-ending possession of Beauty. This stage is, as we have now come to expect, by far the longest part of the three stages.

The final stage of *epopteia* is represented by the second part of Socrates’ recollection of what Diotima had shown him. It is in this smaller section that we are brought to the final vision of the Beautiful – “the gaining a sight of which the aim of all his preceding studies and labours had been directed.” The culmination of the mysteries reveals that all the purifications and labours within the *muesis* stage are entirely so that we are receptive to the divine vision of *epopteia*. In this stage the words of Diotima move away from the rational, gradually transforming into the ecstatic and inspired words of a

⁷ *Principium Sapientiae: The Origins of Greek Philosophical Thought*, (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1971) p. 86.

⁸ “For if it were not to Dionysus that they made the procession and sung the hymn to the shameful parts, the deed would be most shameless; but Hades and Dionysus, for whom they rave and celebrate *Lenaen* rites, are the same.” Frag. 15.

⁹ Homeric Hymn to Demeter, II, 22.

prophetess filled with the God. In her revelation we see the ascent of the soul, for, says Diotima,¹⁰ the lover of this true beauty “begetting true virtue, and bringing her up till she is grown mature, he would become a favourite of the Gods; and at length would be, if any man ever be, himself one of the immortals.”

Thus in what many consider to be the central speech of the dialogue we find the myth and initiatory pattern. However, I contend that this is the logos-bound presentation – and that there is a more profound presentation which is to be found in the drama, as follows:

The first part of the dialogue sets the time, place and circumstances of the dialogue – it is a celebration of the victory of Agathon in the contest of plays dedicated to Dionysus, some ten days after the celebration of the Lesser Mysteries. This celebration is not the participants’ first – the previous evening a much less sober party had been thrown and it is now suggested that a more moderate approach be adopted and that to amuse there should be speeches made in honour and praise of Love. The initial proposal came from Phaedrus (who is to speak first) and it is eagerly adopted by Agathon (who is to be the last speaker before Socrates): both characters are shown by Plato to be enthusiastic for philosophy but rather naïve. It is they who play the part of Persephone who takes hold of the joyous but fatal flower with both hands – just as it is the part of the whole company to eschew hard drinking in order to restore themselves somewhat after their previous night’s revels. There is then, an agreement to purify at least from the excesses of partying: this is the dramatic form of telete or innocence and descent phase, and it is signalled as completed when the piping girls are dismissed in order allow the participants to hear the logos of the coming speeches.

Plato has thus ensured that the spirit of muesis is conjured: perception is moved from outward sounds to more inward ones. I suggest that the whole of the following six speeches are embraced by muesis – or, in myth terms, search and initiation. The first five speeches are various theses which the teaching of Diotima through the mouth of Socrates considers and rejects through reason and inspired insight. Gradually the naïve concepts concerning love are turned into true thoughts by means of dialectic questioning and initiatory revelations. Again this stage takes up the greater part of the dialogue, and takes us as far as words can, the final description of absolute beauty being characterised as much by negations as by affirmations. The second part of Socrates’ speech presses hard against the boundaries of what can be spoken in philosophical terms and, so to speak, begs for the revelation of truth in terms beyond speech.

Now comes the genius of Plato: the pipe, which was the instrument of the mysteries,¹¹ sounds just as Socrates completes the ordinary philosophic examination of Love and his desire for never-ending beauty. Remember the company had dismissed the flute girls as they started the muesis phase, but now a wine-filled Alcibiades breaks in (with, it seems, a retinue including pipers) and carries out a series of actions which bring a kind of Dionysian chaos to the proceedings. We have passed therefore, from the rational preparatory stages of the mysteries to the highest super-rational culmination – epopteia. At the beginning of the evening the company had agreed that the deliverer of the best speech should be judged by Dionysus himself: and one of the actions that Alcibiades carries out is to crown Socrates with some of the *tainiai* (ribbons) he had originally given to Agathon as the winner of the Dionysia. Thus the man most overwhelmed by the wine of Dionysus spontaneously carries out the judgment of the God – for Alcibiades was certainly not present to hear the original agreement. The words, too, that he uses when he sees Socrates are significant: “O Heracles! what is this? Are you again sitting here to ensnare me? as it is usual with you to appear suddenly where I

¹⁰ 212a.

¹¹ As asserted by Proclus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, 198. “Motive instruments are adapted to enthusiastic energy: and hence, in the mysteries and mystic sacrifices, the pipe is useful; for the motive power of it is employed for the purpose of exciting the dianoëtic power to a divine nature.”

least expected to find you.” Heracles was the most famous initiate of Eleusis, and the character of the epoptic vision is always suddenness – thus Diotima has described the arrival of the vision of the Beautiful to the initiate as in the following words, “suddenly he will discover, bursting into view, a beauty astonishingly beautiful . . .” The vision is sudden, of course, because it is not a thing of gradual rational steps but must either be before the inner eye or not.

The purpose then of the seemingly incongruous entry and drunken speech of Alcibiades is to crown the man who has, if ever any mortal has, “become a favourite of the Gods . . . and immortal.” The first six speeches have sought to praise love, each speaker in his own way, but the last speech is clearly one in praise of Socrates. What does this tell us? That Socrates himself has become so thoroughly identified with Love that there is no longer an object-subject relationship between the two but the mysteries of love and the mystical philosophy he has pursued have completed their work upon him. As Sallustius tells us,¹² “the object of the mysteries is to conjoin us with the world and with the gods.” We are now very obviously in the epopteia stage of the drama, and the discovery and ascent of the mythic journey is upon us. What is especially noticeable about the history of Persephone is that she is both above upon the Olympic heights and below as the co-ruler of Hades – in other words she is essentially in the eternal world of causes, but simultaneously energising in the world of effects, as symbolised by the realm of Hades, the Lord of Many. So it is with the ramble of Alcibiades that Socrates is shown to be master of both the profoundest contemplative understanding, and of the most demanding of earthly duties.

Only Alcibiades could have made this speech: it is his simplicity which allows him to speak the unspeakable – the significance of it is rarely understood, and many commentators ignore it, and claim that there are only six speeches. One thing is certain, however: the last person to understand what Alcibiades is really saying is Alcibiades himself – for he is speaking under the mania of Dionysus.

If this interplay between myth, the mysteries, and Platonic dialogues is accepted, then there is a case for re-examining our understanding of Plato in the more subtle light of initiatory myths. Perhaps two general points and two specific examples will suffice for this paper.

The first concerns what can and cannot be spoken in philosophy. We can see from both the mystery cults and from myth that there is either an explicit or implicit recognition that there are truths which cannot be expressed in words and which require a super-discursive approach. In the case of Eleusis, there was a strict rule of secrecy – extraordinarily well observed since many thousands went through the initiation every year for many centuries, and yet despite being the mystery centre of the most literate city of the ancient world, almost nothing is known with any degree of certainty about the actual teachings, practices or revelations of the sanctuary. As the Homeric Hymn says, Demeter taught “awful mysteries which no one may in any way transgress or pry into or utter, for deep awe of the Gods checks the voice.” We can, of course, take this to mean merely that the mysteries could be described were it not for the strict and seriously kept vows of silence imposed on those who had participated in them – but we must also concede that an equally valid interpretation is that the mysteries were intrinsically beyond the power of human speech to reveal: as Aristotle says,¹³ “the celebrants of the mysteries have not a lesson to learn, but an experience to undergo.” Experiences are, ultimately, never fully told but only communicated by another undergoing the same or similar experience; and if the experience is of divinity, then only those who have followed the path through initiation to epopteia can share in its unutterable truth. Myth too implies an experience of truth which is beyond rational description – the listener must move with the characters within its story if it is to be more than a sum of its spoken parts and yield the living truth at its heart. If Plato saw his philosophy as similar in kind to myth, then we must accept that we must move with the characters

¹² Sallust, *On the Gods and the World*, IV.

¹³ At least as reported by Synesius, *Dio* 1135,6.

within the dialogue in order to find what the divine philosopher has not written down – and although a purely discursive understanding allows us to grasp the parts and their relationship, yet far beyond this is what Plato urges us towards. There are things in philosophy, myth, and mystical initiations which if told in ordinary language and to those who have not been through the correct preparation will seem ridiculous or trivial. We may note, for example, that Socrates says in the *Phaedo*,¹⁴ “Those who are conversant with philosophy in a proper manner, seem to have concealed from others that the whole of their study is nothing else than how to die and be dead.” And, further, that Simmias on hearing this suggests that non-philosophers hearing such an assertion would indeed consider philosophers better off dead. It is, by the way, at the end of this passage that Socrates praises the founders of the mysteries who in an obscure manner have said “that whoever descended into Hades uninitiated, and without being a partaker of the mysteries, should be plunged into mire; but that whoever arrived there, purified and initiated, should dwell with the Gods. For, as it is said by those who write about the mysteries, ‘The thyrsus-bearers numerous are seen, But few the Bacchuses have always been.’ These few are, in my opinion, no other than those who philosophize rightly . . .”

We may also see that not only does Socrates consider the written word an unsatisfactory vessel for the most profound philosophical truths – explicitly stated in the *Phaedrus* and the *Second* and *Seventh Epistles*,¹⁵ but that when he moves towards the very highest truth concerning the One he makes it clear that this cannot be encompassed even by the best of speakers. For, in the *Republic*,¹⁶ immediately before Socrates uses the divided line to show how truth and the perception of truth is of a fourfold nature, there is a discussion on the nature of the Good: Socrates says that it is above essence but that what it is exactly is beyond their powers to discuss, and that, dismissing such an enquiry, he is only willing to describe “the offspring” of the Good – which are ideas. When pressed to reveal more of the nature of the father of these offspring, he replies, “I could wish, both that I were able to give that explanation, and you to receive it, and not as now the offspring only.” We see after this passage, that Socrates relates his famous story of the cave and its prisoner, who escaping the illusions of the cave’s shadow eventually is able to look directly at the sun, which Plato has already established as standing symbolically for the Good. The former prisoner having attained this vision is drawn back into the cave in order to pass on the message of this possibility to others – only to find that he is rejected and even subject to threats of death should he continue to talk such nonsense.

For Plato then, whether we are talking about the multitude, or those who have progressed in philosophic training, there is an area of experience which is beyond definition or description: a point which, in the words of Plotinus, the alone calls to the alone. Ultimately, then, philosophy itself is not something to be learnt, but something which must be experienced.

To move onto a couple of minor examples before looking at my last general point, once we have seen that Plato weaves into his writings references to myth, various puzzling concepts within the Dialogues become somewhat more comprehensible. So, firstly, in the *Republic* there is a curious suggestion that the founders of the republic being built in the minds of the speakers should have what is sometimes called the “royal lie” – that is to say that all classes within the republic (not, you will note just the less well educated masses, but also the highly educated governors) should be told that although it appears they have been born from separate mothers and individually educated and furnished with the various instruments of their professions and trades, this is not so, and that this is merely a dream. They will be told that in reality they were not only born from the earth who is therefore their mother but also formed and educated by her, and given their armour and other utensils by her. I think you will see, now that we have considered Plato’s close relationship with the myth of Demeter, that rather than being an advocate of state propaganda – which is how some read this piece – he is again drawing us

¹⁴ 64a

¹⁵ *Phaedrus* 274b ff, Eps. II 341c and VII, 342c

¹⁶ Rep. IV, 506b – 509c.

back to the idea that we are all Persephones. Demeter, whose name means literally “earth mother” or according to the Plato’s *Cratylus* “bestowing mother”, is she who brings forth all living things, she who educated the Eleusinians in the ways of the mysteries, and who taught all humankind the secrets of agriculture, the instruments of which played an important part in the mystery celebrations. The underlying reality is that in comparison to our joint universal experience of birth from the all-bestowing mother as well as our experience of descent and dark confusion in the world of material effects, the particular twists and turns of a single mundane life are but dreams. And that until we see ourselves from the greater perspective of souls undergoing the mythic cycle of innocence and descent, search and initiation, discovery and ascent, we will continue in our dreamlike state. Plato, by his otherwise inexplicable suggestion, asks us to consider the universal reality before the particular actuality of our lives – or, in the words of the Eleusinian mysteries, “I have fasted, drank the Kykeon, taken from the big basket, ritually worked upon it, placed it in the little basket, from whence I returned it to the big basket.”¹⁷

Secondly, we may also see that Socrates’ condemnation of Homer and other tellers of poetic myth should not be taken at face value – he certainly does not want the young and uneducated to be misled by the literal interpretation of the powerful corpus of Greek myth which seems to suggest that the gods are less than perfect. But once he has finished purging the republic of these dangerous stories he then says,¹⁸ “But if there were a necessity to tell them, they should be heard in secrecy, by as few as possible; after they had sacrificed not a hog, but some great and wonderful sacrifice, that thus the fewest possible might chance to hear them.” And we have seen that the initial sacrifice offered before undergoing the two inner initiations was a pig. Once we see the symbolic meaning of this passage in the *Republic*, myth which seems to be despised by Plato, turns out to be the very thing which will bring about the progress of the wise and initiated.

I’d like to conclude with a final general point about myth and philosophy, and how each strengthens the other. First, a quote from the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, which is from the moment at which Demeter’s attempt to give the princeling Demophoon (who is under her care in her disguise as a old nurse) is thwarted by the misguided intervention of his mother:

“Witless are you mortals and dull to foresee your lot, whether of good or evil, that comes upon you. For now in your heedlessness you have wrought folly past healing; for – be witness the oath of the gods, the relentless water of Styx – I would have made your dear son deathless and unageing all his days and would have bestowed on him ever-lasting honour, but now he can in no way escape death and the fates.”

Here, then, is the Hymn’s despair over the human condition – Demeter’s lament for mortals who act from the appearance of things rather than see the reality which lies behind such appearances. It is, of course, the lament of a mother who has lost her child to Hades, the kingdom of “worked out effects”, and who longs for the return of her much-loved child – a child who is striving, according to the

¹⁷ I suggest that one way of seeing this ritual password is that the fasting refers to our falling away from the intelligible nutrition of ideas; that the drinking of kykeon is that which forces us into material manifestation (rather like the waters of Lethe in the myth of Er in the final passage of the *Republic*). Kykeon is a drink of mixed barley and pennyroyal, and barley was the basic nutrition of the arable-based cultures of ancient Europe, but also produced a change in consciousness when infected by fungus; and pennyroyal is a mild abortifacient. The taking from the large basket (the universal) and the working of intelligible ideas (into precipitated matter) before placing the results into the small basket (our individuated lives) is our story, which finds its conclusion in the conversion of the particular back into the universal through the consciousness which follows philosophic and mystical initiation.

¹⁸ At 378a

commentary of Damascius,¹⁹ to “elevate herself to the causes of her being in Demeter.” What immediately follows this lament is the founding of the mysteries, which are to serve those creatures in the universe which are both intellectual and yet involved with materiality – creatures who are lovers of wisdom and beauty as Diotima points out. The lament and the instituting of the mysteries are at the heart of the path of the soul.

Now in the culmination of the *Republic*, which is actually about the constitution of the human soul, Socrates moves from a largely dialectic mode into the mythic mode of discourse, with the story of Er who is taken on a journey in which he sees the experiences of souls in between earthly lives. Before reincarnating, souls are shown many possible lives and required to make a choice: some rush and take hold of a life which is apparently attractive, but on closer examination is discovered to be full of unhappiness and suffering. Others choose carefully and with wisdom: at this point in the story, Socrates breaks off from the narrative to comment²⁰ -

“There then, as appears, friend Glauco, is the whole danger of man. And hence this of all things is most to be studied, in what manner every one of us, omitting other disciplines, shall become an inquirer and learner in this study, if, by any means, he be able to learn and find out who will make him expert and intelligent to discern a good life, and a bad; and to choose every where, and at all times, the best of what is possible, considering all the things now mentioned, both compounded and separated from one another, what they are with respect to the virtue of life. And to understand what good or evil beauty operates when mixed with poverty, or riches, and with this or the other habit of soul; and what is effected by noble and ignoble descent, by privacy, and by public station, by strength and weakness, docility and indocility, and every thing else of the kind which naturally pertains to the soul, and likewise of what is acquired, when blended one with another; so as to be able from all these things to compute, and, having an eye to the nature of the soul, to comprehend both the worse and the better life, pronouncing that to be the worse which shall lead the soul to become more unjust, and that to be the better life which shall lead it to become more just, and to dismiss every other consideration. For we have seen, that in life, and in death, this is the best choice. But it is necessary that a man should have this opinion firm as an adamant in him, when he departs to Hades, that there also he may be unmoved by riches, or any such evils, and may not, falling into tyrannies, and other such practices, do many and incurable mischiefs, and himself suffer still greater: but may know how to choose always the middle life, as to these things, and to shun the extremes on either hand, both in this life as far as is possible, and in the whole of hereafter. For thus man becomes most happy.”

Thus commenting in the middle of the story, about a choice in a middle station between earthly lives, Socrates has shown what it is to be a creature of a middle position between the Olympus of Intellect and the Hades of the time-bound life. The aim, then, of the mysteries and their myths, and the philosophy of the Platonic tradition is to bring about the final discovery and ascent. Like the settlement of the Gods, in which it is agreed that Persephone shall embrace both lives, giving due measure to the upper and lower worlds, so the Platonic answer is to raise the eyes of the soul to the eternal vision, but continue to play her part in the ordering and beautification of the manifested universe. As Socrates says, at the end of his story of Er,²¹ “But if the company will be persuaded by me; considering the soul to be immortal, and able to bear all evil, and all good, we shall always persevere in the road which leads above; and shall by all means pursue justice in conjunction with prudence, in order that we may be friends both to ourselves, and to the Gods, both whilst we remain here, and when we receive its rewards, like victors assembled together; and we shall, both here, and in that journey of a thousand years which we have described, enjoy a happy life.”

¹⁹ *Commentary on the Phaedo*, I, 130.

²⁰ Rep. 618c ff

²¹ Rep. 621c.

That Dionysian Delight

Leila Johnston

When first I plucked the Fruit of Vine,
Its cool juice mingled magically;
Then Saki brought his Ruby Wine,
I drained the Cup and smiled and glowed;
Ere this amber draught had met my lips,
I sprinkled part of it for Three:
Asclepius, Dionysius, Bacchus, All,
And after needed nothing me.

To Selene

Martha Lyn

Hail, Blessed Luminary, 'neath Thy zone
The realms of Nature Thee for Ruler own.
Th'inconstancy of change Thou dost control,
That first, and middle, last, attain the Goal,
And reach fruition 'neath Thy guardian eye.
When Souls, attaining, soar into the Sky
On winged beams of Light, they find their Home,
And join the starry hosts in Heaven's dome,
Dispelling Lethe's bonds. In ordered harmony
They whirl in constant spheres, serene on high.

For by Thy energy the things of Night
Give way to high command, "Let there be Light".
Continue, unremitting, us to raise
To sing in heavenly spheres, The ONE to praise.

Three translations of the Golden Verses of the Pythagoreans

The Pythagoreans bequeathed to humanity a complete rule of life which sets out, in 71 short verses, a truly philosophical and mystical path, leading straight to the Divine.

Hierocles of Alexandria, a leading neoplatonic philosopher in that city during the 5th Century CE, wrote a very full commentary on the Verses which begins: *“Philosophy is the purification and perfection of human nature; its purification, because it delivers it from the temerity and from the folly that proceed from matter, and because it disengages its affections from the mortal body; and its perfection, because it makes it recover its original felicity, by restoring it to the likeness of God.”*

Three translations of the Verses are presented here in parallel:

1. N Rowe, working from the French of André Dacier in 1707. This was published, with a shortened version of Hierocles' commentary, by the Theosophical Publishing House in 1906.
2. The Shrine of Wisdom editors do not say what text they work from. Their translation, with commentary, is published as Manual No 11, The Shrine of Wisdom, 1929.
3. Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie (1871-1940) included his translation in his book *The Complete Pythagoras*. This is available as a download:
<http://arcaneadvisors.com/archives/Pythagoras/TheCompletePythagoras.pdf>

Also strongly recommended is a more recent translation from the Greek by Professor Hermann S Schibli, Visiting Professor of Classics at the Universität Passau, Germany. His book *Hierocles of Alexandria* includes the Golden Verses as well as Hierocles' commentary on the Verses and much else besides. *Hierocles of Alexandria*, OUP 2002, ISBN 0-19-924921-0.

<u>Rowe 1707</u>	<u>Shrine of Wisdom 1929</u>	<u>Kenneth S Guthrie 1921</u>
1. In the first place honour the Immortal Gods, as they are established and ordained by the Law	Pay honour first to the Immortal Gods, as Order hath establishedè Their Choirs.	First honour the immortal Gods, as the law demands.
2. Honour the Oath with all manner of Religion.	Reverence the Oath.	Then reverence thy oath,
3. In the next place honour the Heroes who are full of goodness and of light.	The Heroes great and good revere thou next	and then the illustrious heroes
4. Honour likewise the Terrestrial Demons by rendering them the worship lawfully due to them.	and earth's good geniuses, paying to them such honours as are due.	Then venerate the divinities under the earth, due rites performing,

<p>5. Honour likewise thy father and thy mother, and thy nearest relations.</p>	<p>Honour thy parents and thy nearest kin;</p>	<p>Then honour your parents, and all of your kindred;</p>
<p>6. Of all the rest of mankind, make him thy friend, who distinguishes himself by his virtue.</p>	<p>Of others make the virtuous thy friend:</p>	<p>Among others make the most virtuous your friend;</p>
<p>7, 8, 9. Always give ear to his mild exhortations, and take example from his virtuous and useful actions. And avoid, as much as possible, to hate thy friend for a slight fault. Now, power is a near neighbour to necessity.</p>	<p>Yield to his gentle words, his timely acts; nor for a petty fault take back thy love. Bear what thou canst: pow'r cometh at man's need.</p>	<p>Love to make use of soft speeches, but deeds that are useful; Alienate not the beloved comrade for trifling offences, Bear all you can, what you can, and you should [are near to each other]</p>
<p>9 & 10. Know that all these things are as I have told thee; but accustom thyself to surmount and vanquish these passions :- First, gluttony, sloth, luxury and anger.</p>	<p>Know this for truth, and learn to conquer these: Thy belly first; sloth, luxury and rage.</p>	<p>Take all this to heart: you must gain control of your habits;: First over stomach, then sleep and then luxury, and anger</p>
<p>11 & 12. Never commit any shameful actions, neither with others, nor in private with thyself. And, above all things, respect thyself.</p>	<p>Do nothing base with others or alone, and, above all things, thine own self respect.</p>	<p>What brings you shame, do not unto others nor by yourself; highest of duties is honour of self.</p>
<p>13,14, 15, 16. In the next place, observe justice in thy actions and in thy words. And accustom not thyself to behave thyself in anything without rule and without reason. But always make this reflection, that it is ordained by Destiny for all men to die. And that the goods of fortune are uncertain, and that as they may be acquired, they may likewise be lost.</p>	<p>Next practise justice in thy word and deed and learn to act unreasonably in naught; but know that all must die.</p>	<p>Let Justice be practised in words as in deeds; Then make the habit, never inconsiderately to act; Neither forget that death is appointed to all;</p>
<p>17, 18, 19, 20. Concerning all the calamities that men suffer by Divine Fortune, Support with patience thy lot, be it what it will, and never repine at it. But endeavour what thou canst to</p>	<p>Wealth comes and goes.</p>	<p>That possessions gladly here gathered, there must be left;</p>
<p>17, 18, 19, 20. Concerning all the calamities that men suffer by Divine Fortune, Support with patience thy lot, be it what it will, and never repine at it. But endeavour what thou canst to</p>	<p>Of ills the Goddess Fortune gives to man Bear meekly thou thy lot, nor grieve at it; but cure it as thou canst.</p>	<p>Whatever sorrow the fate of the gods may here send us, Bear whatever may strike you, with patience un murmuring. To relieve it, as far as you can, is permitted;</p>

<p>remedy it, And consider that Fate does not send the greatest portion of these misfortunes to good men.</p>	<p>Remember this: Fate gives the least of evil to the good.</p>	<p>but reflect: Not much evil has Fate given to the good.</p>
<p>21, 22, 23: There are among men several sorts of reasonings, good and bad. Admire them not too easily and reject them not neither, but if any falsehoods be advanced, give way with mildness, and arm thyself with patience.</p>	<p>Many the reasonings that on men's ears fall; good and bad. Admire not all of such nor shun them neither. If one speaketh false, be calm.</p>	<p>The speech of people is various, now good, now evil; So let them not frighten you, nor keep you from your purpose. If false calumnies come near your ear, support it in patience;</p>
<p>24, 25, 26. Observe well, on every occasion, what I am going to tell thee: Let no man either by his words, or by his actions, ever seduce thee, Nor entice thee to say or to do what is not profitable for thee.</p>	<p>And practise ever this that now I say. Let no man's word or deed seduce thee to do or say aught not to thy best good.</p>	<p>Yet that which I am now declaring, fulfil it full faithfully: Let no one with speech or with deeds e'er deceive you; To do or to say what is not the best,</p>
<p>27, 28, 29. Consult and deliberate before thou act, that thou may'st not commit foolish actions. For it is the part of a miserable man to speak and act without reflection. But do that which will not afflict thee afterwards, nor oblige thee to repentance.</p>	<p>First think, then act; lest foolish be thy deed. Unhappy he who thoughtless acts and speaks: But that which after vexes not do thou.</p>	<p>Think, ere you act, that nothing stupid result; To act inconsiderately is part of a fool; Yet whatever later will not bring you repentance, that you should carry through,</p>
<p>30, 31. Never do anything which thou dost not understand; but learn all things thou oughtest to know, and by that means thou wilt lead a very pleasant life.</p>	<p>Do naught thou dost not understand; but learn that which is right, and sweet will be thy life.</p>	<p>Do nothing beyond what you know; yet learn what you may need; thus shall your life grow happy.</p>
<p>32, 33, 34. In no wise neglect the health of thy body; but give it drink and meat in due measure, and also the exercise of which it has need. Now, by measure, I mean what will not incommode thee.</p>	<p>Nor shouldest thou thy body's health neglect, but give it food and drink and exercise in measure; that is, to cause it no distress.</p>	<p>Neither grow anxious about the health of the body; Keep measure in eating and drinking, and every exercise of the body; By measure, I mean what later will not induce pain;</p>
<p>35, 36, 37, 38. Accustom thyself to a way of living that is neat and decent, without luxury. Avoid all things that will occasion envy. And be not</p>	<p>Decent, without vain show, thy way of life: Look well to this, that none thou envious make by unmeet</p>	<p>Follow clean habits of life, but not the luxurious; Avoid what envy arouses. At the wrong time, never be</p>

<p>expensive out of season, like one who knows not what is decent and honourable.</p>	<p>expense, like one who lacks good taste.</p>	<p>prodigal, as if you did not know what was proper;</p>
<p>But be neither covetous nor niggardly. A due measure is excellent in all things!</p>	<p>Nor niggard be: in all the mean is best.</p>	<p>Nor show yourself stingy; that which is medium is ever the best.</p>
<p>39. Do only the things that cannot hurt thee, and deliberate before thou do'st them.</p>	<p>Do that which cannot harm thee. Think, then act.</p>	
<p>40, 41, 42, 43, 44. Never suffer sleep to close thy eye-lids after thy going to bed, till thou hast examined by thy Reason all thy actions of the day.</p>	<p>When first thou dost from soothing sleep arise, hasten about thy day's intended work; nor suffer sleep to fall on thy soft lids till thrice thou has each act of the day recalled:</p>	<p>Never let slumber approach thy wearied eyelids ere thrice you reviewed what this day you did:</p>
<p>Wherein have I done amiss? What have I done? What have I omitted that I ought to have done?</p>	<p>How have I sinned? What done? What duty missed?</p>	<p>Wherein have I sinned? What did I? What duty is neglected?</p>
<p>If in this examination thou find that thou hast done amiss, reprimand thyself severely for it; and if thou hast done any good, rejoice.</p>	<p>Go through them first to last; and, if they seem evil, reproach thyself; if good, rejoice.</p>	<p>All from the first to the last review; and, if you have erred, grieve in your spirit, rejoicing for all that was good.</p>
<p>45, 46, 47, 48. Practise thoroughly all these things; meditate on them well; thou oughtest to love them with all thy heart. It is they that will put thee in the way of Divine Virtue.</p>	<p>Toil at and practise this; this must thou love; This to the Path of Heavenly Virtue leads.</p>	<p>With zeal and industry, this, then repeat; and learn to repeat it with joy. Thus wilt thou tread on the paths of heavenly virtue.</p>
<p>I swear it by him who has transmitted into our soul the Sacred Quaternion, the Source of Nature, whose course is eternal.</p>	<p>By Him Who gave the Tetractys to our soul, Fount of Eternal Nature, this I swear.</p>	<p>Surely, I swear it by him who into our souls placed the Four (elements), [yes, by him who imparted to our soul the <i>tetraktys</i>,] him who is spring of Nature eternal--</p>
<p>48, 49. But never begin to set thy hand to the work, Till thou hast prayed the Gods to accomplish what thou art going to begin.</p>	<p>Begin thy work, having first prayed the Gods to accomplish it.</p>	<p>Now start your task! After you have implored the blessing of the Gods</p>
<p>49, 50, 51. When thou hast made this habit familiar to thee, thou wilt know the constitution of the Immortal Gods and of men; even how far the different Beings extend, and what contains and binds them together.</p>	<p>Thou, having mastered this, that essence of Gods and mortal men shalt know, which all things permeates, which all obey.</p>	<p>If this you hold fast, soon will you recognize of Gods and of mortal men the peculiar existence, how everything passes and returns.</p>

52, 53. Thou shalt likewise know, according to Justice, that the nature of this Universe is in all things alike.

So that thou shalt not hope what thou ought'st not to hope; and nothing in this world shall be hid from thee.

54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60.

Thou wilt likewise know that men draw upon themselves their own misfortunes, voluntarily and of their own free choice.

Wretches that they are! They neither see nor understand that their good is near them. There are very few of them who know how to deliver themselves out of their misfortunes.

Such is the Fate that blinds mankind and takes away his senses. Like huge cylinders they roll to and fro, always oppressed with ills without number;

For fatal contention, that is innate in them, and that pursues them everywhere, tosses them up and down, nor do they perceive it.

Instead of provoking and stirring it up, they ought by yielding to avoid it.

61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66.

Great Jupiter, Father of men, you would deliver them from all the evils that oppress them, if you would show them what is the Demon of whom they make use.

But take courage, the race of man is divine. Sacred nature reveals to them the most hidden mysteries.

If she impart to thee her secrets, thou wilt easily perform all the things which I have ordained thee. And healing thy soul, will deliver it from all these evils, from all these afflictions.

And thou shalt know that Law hath stablishéd the inner nature of all things alike;

So shalt thou hope not for what may not be, nor aught, that may, escape thee.

Thou shalt know self-chosen are the woes that fall on men – how wretched, for they see not good so near, nor hearken to its voice – few only know the Pathway of Deliverance from ill.

Such fate doth blind mankind, who, up and down, with countless woes are carried by its wheel.

For bitter inborn strife companions them and does them secret harm.

Provoke it not, O men, but yield, and yielding, find escape.

O Father Zeus, 'twould free from countless ills didst Thou but show what Genius works in each!

But courage! Men are children of the Gods, and Sacred Nature all things hid reveals.

And if the Mysteries have part in thee, thou shalt prevail in all I bade thee do, and, thoroughly cured, shalt save thy soul from toil.

Then will you see what is true, that Nature in all is most equal,

So that you hope not for what has no hope, nor that aught should escape you.

Men shall you find whose sorrows themselves have created, wretches, who see not the God who is so near, near; Nothing they hear; few know how to help themselves in misfortune.

That is the fate, that blinds humanity, in circling circles, Hither and yon, they run, in endless sorrows;

For they are followed by a grim companion, disunion within themselves, unnoticed;

ne'er rouse him, and fly from before him!

Father Zeus, O free them all from sufferings so great, or show unto each the Genius, who is their Guide!

Yet, do not fear, for the mortals are divine by [.....] To whom holy Nature everything will reveal and demonstrate;

Whereof if you have received, so keep what I teach you; for I will heal you, and you shall remain insured from manifold evil.

<p>67, 68, 69. But abstain thou from the meats which we have forbidden in the Purifications, and in the Deliverance of the Soul; make a just distinction of them, and examine all things well, leaving thyself always to be guided and directed by the understanding that comes from above, and that ought to hold the reins.</p> <p>70, 71. And when after having divested thyself of thy mortal body, thou arrivest at the most pure Æther, thou shalt be a God, immortal, incorruptible, and death shall have no more dominion over thee.</p>	<p>Eat not the foods proscribed, but use discretion in lustral rites and the freeing of thy soul:</p> <p>Ponder all things, and stablish high thy mind, that best of charioteers.</p> <p>And if at length, leaving behind thy body, thou dost come to the free Upper Air, then shalt thou be deathless, divine, a mortal man no more.</p>	<p>Avoid foods forbidden, reflect, that this contributes to cleanliness and redemption of your soul;</p> <p>This all, Oh consider; Let reason, the gift divine, be thy highest guide;.</p> <p>Then should you be separated from the body, and soar into the spiritual æther, then will you be imperishable, a divinity, no longer a human!</p>
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In future editions of *The Meadow*, we shall present extracts from Hierocles' commentary on these verses, with some further reflections on their relevance to present day life and the help they offer to aspiring philosophers in current conditions.

Incidentally, all three versions of the Verses are readily available on the internet via www.abebooks.co.uk or any similar search site. Ed.

A Vision of the True Earth

Jill Line

In the *Phaedo* Socrates first describes the summit of the mundane world as it is seen by the gods - or by those souls who have reached far beyond the ordinary life. The earth is spherical, he says, suspended in the middle of the heavens and balanced there in perfect harmony. From a distance it may be seen as a twelve-sided dodecahedron of various colours, including purple, gold and white. Trees, flowers and fruits grow to perfection according to the nature of earth. The gemstones found in the mountains are pure of colour, uncorrupted by the filth and disease of our own world. Air is to them as water is to us and aether is to air; animals and men dwell on land or on islands surrounded by air as we are by the sea. The seasons are gentle, there is no disease and its inhabitants live long and happy lives. They surpass us in wisdom and keenness of the senses, they need little sleep and their deaths are blissful. They associate with the gods who dwell in reality in their temples and groves. Everything is seen as it truly is. It is the ideal earth - the idea of earth itself.

Platonically, an idea is a single unit – and from this oneness all manifestations of that idea proceed into creation. For instance Beauty may be seen in a myriad of forms but ultimately there is only one beautiful form – Beauty herself. Therefore the whole world and its cosmos is in essence one idea – the idea of the world itself. This is what is in the Creator's mind at the beginning of creation and from this one idea springs the multiplicity of all earthly forms.

The true vision of the earth, says Socrates, is the abode of those who have spent their previous lives in purity and moderation. However the major part of the human race inhabits the hollows of the earth - places of water, mists and air - the 'dregs of this pure earth' where, as he says, everything is 'corrupted and gnawed'.ⁱ We are ignorant that we dwell in a shadow-land, believing it to be real. It is as if we live in the sea and perceive sun and stars through the water, imagining that to be the sky. But if we were to swim like fishes to the surface we might see our world as it really is. If the nature of a human being were sufficient for such an elevated survey, Socrates said, 'he would know that the heavens which he there beheld were the true heavens and that he perceived the true light and the true earth'.ⁱⁱ

Socrates' fable explains how one's perception of the universe varies according to the level of one's development. Most of us live in the hollows of the earth - the mundane world. Sometimes, maybe, we have glimpses of the purer higher world but mostly we live believing the world we inhabit to be the reality. Socrates ends by explaining that although it is only a fable, our souls are indeed immortal and we should hazard the truth of it. We should do all we can to participate of virtue and prudence in the present life so as to gain our proper habitation in the next - 'for the danger is beautiful and it is necessary to allure ourselves with things of this kind'.ⁱⁱⁱ

Plotinus, a Platonist who lived several hundred years after Plato, had a similar vision. He describes three sorts of men: the first sees no further than the world of the senses and is content to remain there, while another who realises that there is a higher world strives heavenward for a time before he gives up. The third is the man who will reach the true world that Socrates described:

But there is a third kind of god-like men who, by their greater power and the sharpness of their eyes as if by a special keen-sightedness, see the glory above and are raised to it as if above the clouds and the mist of this lower world and remain there, overlooking all things here below and delighting in the true region which is their own, like a man who has come home after long wandering to his own well-ordered country.^{iv}

While Socrates clearly relishes describing the appearance of these worlds, it is not so much the worlds themselves but how they are perceived that is important. As the vision of those who have chosen to follow a spiritual path becomes clearer so their perception of reality changes and they begin to see the earth in its full glory. Although human souls cannot live permanently on the true earth until after they have died, they may be granted a glimpse of it from time to time - doubtless to encourage their endeavours. For in order to describe it Socrates must have had a vision of this world himself - one that he knows he will inhabit after the death of his mortal body.

Beneath the hollows of the mundane world inhabited by most human beings lie many caverns and chasms through which flow great quantities of water - hot and cold - and rivers of mud and of fire. Of all these rivers there are four in particular that weave through and around the earth - they are the great underground streams that lead - at varying depths - to Hades.

The greatest and outermost - whose element is water - is Ocean. It flows circularly around the world and takes with it those souls who will ascend to higher worlds. Acheron - having the element air - flows in a contrary direction to Ocean - under the earth - towards the Acherusian marsh through which most of the dead souls pass. It was given the name - *Αχερων* - meaning river of woe. (Sadness for the souls it carries or for those they have left behind?) Here they remain for a greater or lesser length of time - according to their need - before returning to the mundane world.

The other two lead down to the deepest chasms of Tartarus. Pyriphlegethon (*Πυριφλεγέθων* - meaning fire-blazing, from *πυρι* meaning 'fire' and *φλεγέθω* - 'to burn') hurls itself deep down into the earth - burning with elemental fire - passing the Acherusian marsh but not mingling with its waters. The souls it carries are punished through fire. The fourth river is the Cocytus (*Κωκυτος* meaning 'shrieking or wailing') or Styx (*Στυχ* - meaning the hateful, from *στυγεω* - 'to hate, abhor, abominate'). Endowed with the element earth, it falls into a wild and dreadful place to mingle its waters with the Stygian marsh. Then, flowing in the opposite direction to the third river, it passes the Acherusian marsh before hurling itself into Tartarus where the souls it bears are punished through cold. I find it interesting that the idea of hell fire passed into Christianity although cold as the worst punishment of all did not. However Dante, who was both a Christian and a Platonist, used the image of Satan frozen in a block of ice in the last and deepest circle of his *Inferno*.

Damascius (Com II, 145) states that the depth of each river indicates the position of the souls it carries. While the two lower rivers carry souls who need punishment for their lives, most souls pass through Acheron before returning to the world. It is only 'those who have lived most excellently with respect to piety' that are carried by the waters of Ocean and move to the purer worlds above.

This labyrinthine underworld brings to mind the labyrinth in which Theseus killed the Minotaur - of which we are reminded at the start of the dialogue with the reference to the festival celebrating this event. In this Theseus represents the living soul that descends into embodiment in matter and finally overcoming the ravaging beast of sensual desires returns, as Plotinus describes it, to 'his own well ordered country'.

The scene for the dialogue is thus set with the implied outward and return journey of the life of a soul in a material body. It ends with a description of another labyrinth - an apparent reflection of the first - but this time it is in death and the soul passes through without a body. With no body the soul is helpless - relying on its guardian daemon to lead it to its rightful place from whence - unless it is condemned to the everlasting punishments of Tartarus - it will be led in time to another life and another body.

Tartarus - says Olympiodorus - is the extremity of the universe and subsists opposite to Olympus. But Tartarus is a god - the watchful guardian of that which is last in every order. The god appears in three forms - in each case it conceals that which it has generated. In its celestial form it is that within which heaven, Uranus, conceals its offspring - keeping Saturn/Cronos hidden. In its Saturnian form it is that in which its offspring, Zeus, is concealed and in its Jovian form - that of Zeus the demiurge - it conceals the world of generation from which the souls of the dead, while they are in Tartarus, are excluded. Thus any generation or growth - of body or mind - is impossible as long as the soul remains in Hades.

In life Ariadne's thread - the golden thread of philosophy - will lead the good and righteous soul to higher worlds. In death its daemon leads the righteous soul along the river of the Ocean away from Tartarus to its true country on the summit of the earth - or to even higher worlds.

'Those who shall appear to have lived most excellently,' says Socrates, 'with respect to piety - these are they, who being liberated and dismissed from these places on the earth, as from the abodes of a prison, shall arrive at the pure habitation on high, and dwell on the aetherial earth. And among these, those who are sufficiently purified by philosophy, shall live without bodies, through the whole of the succeeding time, and shall arrive at habitations yet more beautiful than these' (114b-c). Socrates appears to have knowledge of these too - for he adds that they are neither easy to describe nor is the present time sufficient for such an undertaking.

In order to make any spiritual progress the soul needs a body and so when the body dies the most it can do in Hades is to allow itself to be led by its daemon to its allotted place. For most souls that is to where they may make atonement for their sins and in due course the passage of Time will return them to other bodies in which they may begin another journey towards a better death and a better life. Although the souls of the dead can apparently appear in the forms of their previous lives, seen by those mythical living men such as Orpheus, Odysseus and Aeneas who descend into Hades, it is in appearance only - purely for the purpose of recognition by a living being - for they have no physical substance.

In his myth of the true earth Socrates spoke of the twelve-sided dodecahedron that were seen to cover the mundane world. Damascius, a later leader of the Platonic Academy who wrote a commentary on the *Phaedo*,^v noted that while each of the elements making up the mundane world has a form, the earth being a cube, water an icosahedron, air an octahedron and fire a pyramid, when it is seen from the super-mundane world all the elements appear in the form of a dodecahedron. This is another stage of perception and is preparatory to the whole earth being seen as a sphere. It is the view from the world of Intellect where the forms themselves are seen and from where, says Socrates, the soul participates in the spherical itself and perceives all the elements as One. It is from this perception of unity that the true earth is revealed. Aristotle identified the Earth with the goddess Hestia, from 'est' meaning 'to be' or that which 'is'. To see the goddess Hestia as she truly is, is to rest in the essence of being. This is the divine vision of real being.

The *Phaedo* is a wonderful exposition of the human soul. After *Phaedo's* introduction in which he refers to the myth of Theseus that we know represents the descent and re-ascent of the soul, Socrates proves to his followers that the soul is immortal. By ending with his vision of the true earth, he gives encouragement to all those following the path of philosophy. He admits that it is but a fable he has told and that 'to affirm that these things subsist exactly as I have described them is not the province of a man endued with intellect ... but since our soul appears immortal ... it deserves to be hazarded by him who believes in its reality ... for the danger is beautiful, and it is necessary to allure ourselves with things of this kind'.^{vi} With gentle encouragement Socrates tells us that if we can ornament our souls with the virtues of temperance and justice, fortitude, liberty and truth, we may be ready when the time comes to follow him to Hades and from thence to a better life.

But this is also a fable for the living and all these levels of perception are available to us in our present life. We may not live continuously at such a high level of being but from time to time the soul may be granted a glimpse of these worlds and when it truly perceives, knows and understands it will enter its own vision of the true earth and there take up its abode. Socrates' own knowledge that it is waiting to receive him in the next life is absolute and one may conjecture that his soul will reach still further into the worlds of the gods and beyond.

Two thousand years later Ficino, like Socrates, was urging his own followers to reach the same vision of the true earth:

Seek yourself beyond the world. To do so and to come to yourself you must fly beyond the world and look back on it. For you are beyond the world while you yourself comprehend it. But you believe yourself to be in the abyss of the world simply because you do not discern yourself flying through the heavens, but see your shadow, the body, in the abyss.^{vii}

Many others have written of their vision of the true earth. It has been called Atlantis and the Garden of Eden, Arcadia and the Celestial City, while Blake's vision was of 'Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land' and Shakespeare's of a 'precious stone set in a silver sea'. But although these represent the world in its perfection, they still subsist within time. As Socrates hinted, the eternal resting place of the soul lies beyond.

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ⁱ*Phaedo 110a*

ⁱⁱ*Ibid. 109e*

ⁱⁱⁱ*Ibid. 114d*

^{iv}*Plotinus Enn. V, 9,1*

^v*Damascius, Commentary II, 132.*

^{vi}*Ibid, 114d*

^{vii}*Marsilio Ficino, Letters, Vol 1, Shephard-Walwyn 1975, lette.110*

Ten Haiku

THE ONE

The King of all things,
Absolutely Transcendent,
Will not be many.

THE BOUND

Embracing all things,
It gifts limit to all things:
We stay as we are.

THE INFINITE

The sheer wondrous void.
Her mystery sends forth a
Limitless power.

LOVE

Longing for beauty,
Love fires the lover and
Hastens Unity.

JUSTICE

Right distribution:
Rendering each its measure.
Nothing in excess.

DIALECTIC

Orbiting the real,
Examining idiom,
Soul reaches for Truth.

SOUL

Eternal essence.
The self-motive principle,
Does not desert life.

WISDOM

Knowledge energised.
Intelligence of gods shapes
A life full of truth.

Kieran Kelly

OUR FATHER

Souls are pure daughters;
The father of the kosmos
Is our father too.

FIRST LIGHT

Sacred and divine,
One ineffable splendour
Shines, Truth from the Good.

Guy Wyndham-Jones

The Music of the Spheres

Leila Johnston

*The ultimate end of all education is insight into
the harmonious order (cosmos) of the whole world.¹*

The Coptic Connection

A valuable contribution to music heritage was made by the Egyptian musicologist Ragheb Moftah. Up to the end of his long life, Moftah, who recently died at the age of 103, worked to preserve, document and record the ancient ritual and liturgy of the Coptic (Egyptian) Orthodox Church. No one can better describe this music than Moftah himself. In his introduction to a cassette recording of music for Holy Week, he says:

"The service of this ritual is interspersed with a number of hymns of great antiquity and of great magnificence in which vocal music reaches the heights of pathos in its spiritual effect. Other parts of the Holy Week service are set to plain tunes, simple in their structure but matchless in their penetration and their power to bring man into the depth of devotion, thereby filling him with celestial ecstasy."

The Coptic Church calendar, as well as commemorating all the religious events, occasions and saints' days, follows the seasons and the farming activities of the Nile Valley inhabitants, who worked to the same rhythms, using the same farming methods for millennia. Despite the ecologically damaging High Dam built last century, which prevents the life-giving Nile flood, Copts still chant seasonal prayers asking God to bless the annual flood, the seed-scattering winds, and the harvest; echoing the supplications of the ancients. It came as no surprise then, when Moftah expressed his conviction that the Church's liturgical music, hymns and prayers had originated in the temples of ancient Egypt.

Coptic music is characterized by its vocal extensions and improvised embellishments. Two hallelujahs, for example, can take half an hour to sing. As the music was not written down until the 20th century² but passed on aurally from one cantor to the next from the fourth century onwards, it may be assumed that the singers added their own improvisations. The English composer and professor in London's Royal Music Academy, Ernest Newlandsmith, following years of research in collaboration with Moftah, presented his conclusion in 1931. In a published lecture he confirms that beneath the "debris of Arabic ornamentation... the true Egyptian idiom has emerged." He adds, "The music is not Arabic; it is not Turkish; and it is not Greek - often as these elements appear. It seems indeed impossible to doubt but that it is ancient Egyptian. Moreover, it is great music; grand, pathetic, noble and deeply spiritual."³

Another indication comes from the Egyptian languages. Moftah, proud of his Pharaonic as well as his Coptic heritage, insisted that the liturgy should always be sung in the Coptic language, which stems from the late Pharaonic demotic. He derided the recent practice of substituting Arabic - now the mother tongue of Egypt's Copt minority. Arabic, he said, lacks some of the letters and phonetics essential to the music, whereas Coptic complements it perfectly. Moftah had good reason for his purist attitude. According to the Alexandrian philosopher Philo (1st century), the early Christians had borrowed Ancient Egyptian music. The ancient Egyptian priests prayed using the seven vowels, which were retained in the Greek and Coptic languages. The priests venerated these vowels, believing them to have been derived from the sounds of the seven sacred planets in distant antiquity. For them,

the hieroglyphics were 'divine words'. As the language of the ordinary people declined, it was the responsibility of the priests to preserve the original phonetic sounds of the words.

"[The language] always remained for them [the priests] a sonorous echo of the basic energy which sustains the universe, a *cosmic force*."⁴

The priests guarded all such esoteric knowledge with secrecy and it was mainly the Greeks who recorded certain aspects of the priestly science on the occasions that elements of it were divulged. In Hellenistic philosophy, the seven strings of the lyre were thought to relate to the planets of the ancient cosmic system: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. It is worth noting here the remark of the theosophist H P Blavatsky: "The seven planets were not limited to this number because the ancients knew of no others, but simply because they were the primitive or primordial *houses* of the seven *Logoi* (the Divine, Creative words)."⁵ An ancient Egyptian hymn, moreover, contains the following invocation:

"The seven sounding tones praise Thee, the Great God, the ceaseless working Father of the whole universe."⁶

In another hymn, the Deity describes Himself thus: "I am the great indestructible lyre of the whole world, attuning the songs of the heavens"⁷.

The lyre, at the same time, represented Man in both his physical and psychical aspects.

Tuning in to the Planets

Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher of the 6th century BC, was one of the Greeks admitted into the inner priestly circles of Egypt. Following 22 years of study in Egypt,⁸ Pythagoras founded a school in Croton, Magna Graecia, where he taught his students that the seven notes of the musical scale came from the sounds of the planets. The Pythagoreans believed that the motions of the seven planets produced the sounds and harmonies known as 'the music of the spheres'. Generally speaking, however, as Manly P Hall writes, Man fails to hear these divine melodies because he is unregenerate, bound up in the illusion of material existence, of temporality. "When he liberates himself from the bondage of the lower world with its sense limitations, the music of the spheres will again be audible as it was in the Golden Age."⁹

Knowledge of 'the seven heavens' and their harmonies was retained in the sacred science of the hermetic tradition, to which the Pythagoreans clearly belonged. The messenger of the gods Hermes Trismegistus was the Greek equivalent of the older Egyptian deity Thoth; and it is said of Hermes that, "he bequeathed to posterity numbers, astronomy, astrology and music"¹⁰ among many other accomplishments. Adherence to this tradition continued in early Christianity. Irenaeus in particular is noteworthy for his outline of the body of ancient knowledge, fearful of its distortion and subsequent loss, despite the fact that the new religion, where Christ replaced Horus and Dionysius, was founded upon it. Irenaeus describes how the heavenly spheres, each assigned a Greek vowel from Alpha to Omega, produce a perfect harmony that ascends in praise to the throne of the Creator.¹¹

Furthermore, 20th century space research indicates that the ancients were not mistaken. The sun continuously generates charged particles that form 'solar winds', which flow out and are modified as they come into contact with the planets. As there is no sound in space, the winds only become potentially audible when they meet the earth's magnetic field, which moves outward in circular movements, and again modifies the flow of this energy. The vibrations, or frequencies of the solar winds arriving from each planet, or directly from the Sun, vary according to the size and

characteristics of the planet and its distance from the earth. Each planet, therefore, produces a different sound.

The twin spacecraft Voyager 1 and 2, launched by NASA in 1977, charted these solar winds as they passed by Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune (of which only Jupiter and Saturn formed part of the ancient solar system, however). A computerized synthesizer transformed these space pictures into sound. The listener hears and feels the distinctive sounds of these planets as the ebb and flow of tremendous forces; awe-inspiring, overwhelming, soaring and surging like the waves of a vast ocean, each with its own tone.

In addition, the rhythmic ebb and flow of such cosmic forces appears to have been the inspiration behind one of the world's first literary forms, the poetic couplets known as the 'parallelism of members'.¹² This literary style is first seen in the Great Pyramid Texts in the fourth millennium BC "The sky weeps for thee, the earth trembles for thee" is an example of one such couplet, referring to the death of Osiris. The parallelism style displays the symmetry typical of pharaonic art and architecture as well as in the pairing of opposites evident, for example, in groupings of deities. This parallelism is seen throughout ancient Egyptian literature and reappears in the Old Testament Psalms. More recently, the English author Virginia Woolf adopted the form in her sublime novel entitled, appropriately, *The Waves*. Parallelism meets its musical counterpart in the antiphonal (call and response) manner of singing that also began in the sacred music of antiquity. Today, the Orthodox priests still chant in the antiphonal style.

Music for a Harmonious Life

"It was the Egyptians too who originated and taught the Greeks to use ceremonial meetings, processions and liturgies."¹³

Pythagoras, by applying mathematics to music, sought to create perfect harmonies that echoed the orchestrations of the heavens. These harmonies were the fixed proportions of the diatonic scale, which reflected the ratios and proportions that Pythagoras observed in the seven planets.¹⁴ The contemplation of such compositions, according to the Pythagoreans, enabled individuals to live harmoniously within themselves and in unison with their communities. This concept was already apparent in ancient Egypt where music played an integral role in daily life as well as in the temples. The ancient Egyptians and Greeks alike taught their children through song. In addition, there were songs for battle and songs for work.

Ancient Egyptian culture and religion continually strived to retain its connection with the Divine order and harmony seen in the goddess *Maat*, who personified this principle.¹⁵ The composition of songs, both sacred and secular, if such a distinction existed, was always the preserve of the priests. The words and rhythms were as carefully chosen as the melodies (musical modes) and no deviation from the prescribed rules was allowed. Rhythms close to the heartbeat were thought to be the most beneficial, reflecting simple geometric forms like the cross. In fact, it is known today that rhythms counter to the heartbeat cause palpitations.

Plato, who according to Strabo, spent 13 years under the tutorship of Egyptian priests, culminating in his initiation into the Greater Mysteries inside the Great Pyramid,¹⁶ advocated the censorship of music in Greece, to allow only the most ennobling words, musical modes and rhythms, "for the whole life of man stands in need of harmony."¹⁷

In the sixth century AD, Pope Gregory introduced Gregorian chant into the Roman Catholic Church, borrowing four musical modes from ancient Greece. Gregory's polyphonic plainsong retained the antiphonal style of the Greek modes together with the fixed harmonic proportions. The structure of

the chants is symmetrical, each one beginning and ending on the same note. The symmetry, metre, and antiphonal style are all indications of a source of greater antiquity than the Greek musical modes.

Later, the 16th century Italian composer Palestrina brought the style to his own model of crisp perfection, and the German Henrick Shutz (1585-1672) enriched the ecclesiastical music of his own Church tradition with the Italian choral style. Shutz, thereby, paved the way for Bach, who discovered new harmonic possibilities within the ancient modes. Bach's magnificent oeuvre owes its glints of gold, it seems, as much to the patterns of the universe as to his own original genius. Gregorian chant influenced the classical music of all Europe to a greater or lesser degree. The metrical psalms, moreover, which were composed in metre for public worship and are still sung in Scotland today, owe something to the ancient modes.

The Art of Healing

Ancient Egyptian priests also utilised the creative quality of sound in healing, a practice they shared with physicians. The Greeks, including Asclepius and Pythagoras¹⁸, later adopted this practice. Before treatment, the physician or an assistant would shake the sistrum (a type of metal rattle originating in ancient Egypt) to a specific rhythm around the patient's body in order to release the negative forces, which were often understood as 'evil spirits'. Having cleared the field, so to speak, the physician or priest would then observe the patient's aura. This ability to see the aura is not surprising when it is considered that both priests and physicians were renowned for their asceticism and wisdom. The definition of a true physician, given by the 16th century German physician Paracelsus, as a philosopher, astronomer, astrologer and alchemist combined, applied originally to the classical era. Man was seen as a microcosm or miniature, of the macrocosm, the cosmos.

By scrutinizing the seven layers of the aura, the physician was able to identify the part of the body that was malfunctioning, as each layer of the aura corresponds to one of the seven *chakras*, a term used in India. According to yoga philosophy, which has preserved such ancient Vedic tradition, the *chakras* are subtle force centres that control and vitalize the human body, and are thought to directly affect the endocrine system, which regulates the hormone secreting glands, as well as the blood and nervous system. Like the strings of the lyre, each *chakra* vibrates with its own particular 'sound', as the Pythagoreans noted when they compared the body to a musical instrument, strung to a certain pitch. When functioning normally, each of the seven *chakras* should resonate with the same frequency as the musical note and vowel sound associated with it. The root *chakra*, situated near the base of the spine, vibrates to the first note of the scale 'do' and the vowel *oo*; up through the next five *chakras* to the seventh one at the crown of the head, which vibrates to the musical note 'ti' and the vowel *ee*. Each *chakra* also corresponds to a planet and colour. The physician sang the appropriate note and vowel for the malfunctioning *chakra*, or alternatively plucked the strings of the lyre, so that the vibratory waves passed through the air and adjusted the *chakra* to its correct resonance, in much the same way as a musician tunes his instrument. Here again, we see evidence of the statement "as it is below, so it is above."

1 Plato *The Republic* (Cornford translation)

2 *The Coptic Orthodox Liturgy of St. Basil with Complete Musical Transcription* (American University in Cairo Press (1998)

3 *The Ancient Music of the Coptic Church*, Ernest Newlandsmith (A published lecture delivered at the University of Oxford with transcribed samples of original melodies on May 21, 1931). Newlandsmith also transcribed the church music in seven unpublished volumes.

4 *The Priests of Ancient Egypt* Serge Sauneron (1960)

5 *The Secret Doctrine* H P Blavatsky (1888)

6,7 Both hymn extracts are quoted from Nauman's *History of Music* (1886)

8 Iamblicus *Life of Pythagoras*

9 *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* by Manly P Hall (founder of the Philosophical Research Society in Los Angeles, California (1928)

10 Cyril of Alexandria, quoted in *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*, G R S. Mead (1906)

11 Irenaeus *Against Heresies*

12 *The Dawn of Conscience* J H Breasted (1933)

13 Herodotus *The Histories* Book II

14 Censorius *De die natali*

15 *The Egyptian Mysteries* Arthur Versluis (1988)

16 *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* by Manly P Hall (1928) contains the following paragraph from a manuscript by Thomas Taylor: "Plato was initiated into the 'Greater Mysteries' at the age of 49. The initiation took place in one of the subterranean halls of the Great Pyramid in Egypt. The ISIAC TABLE formed the altar, before which the Divine Plato stood and received that which was always his, but which the ceremony of the Mysteries enkindled and brought from its dormant state. With this ascent, after three days in the Great Hall, he was received by the Hierophant of the Pyramid (the Hierophant was seen only by those who had passed the three days, the three degrees, the three dimensions) and given verbally the Highest Esoteric Teachings, each accompanied with its appropriate Symbol. After a further three months' sojourn in the halls of the Pyramid, the Initiate Plato was sent out into the world to do the work of the Great Order, as Pythagoras and Orpheus had been before him."

17 Plato's *Protagoras*

18 see 8



From an old print, courtesy of Carl Oscar Borg.

THE PTOLEMAIC SCHEME OF THE UNIVERSE.

In ridiculing the geocentric system of astronomy expounded by Claudius Ptolemy, modern astronomers have overlooked the philosophic key to the Ptolemaic system. The universe of Ptolemy is a diagrammatic representation of the relationships existing between the various divine and elemental parts of every creature, and is not concerned with astronomy as that science is now comprehended. In the above figure, special attention is called to the three circles of zodiacs surrounding the orbits of the planets. These zodiacs represent the threefold spiritual constitution of the universe. The orbits of the planets are the Governors of the World and the four elemental spheres in the center represent the physical constitution of both man and the universe. Ptolemy's scheme of the universe is simply a cross section of the universal aura, the planets and elements to which he refers having no relation to those recognized by modern astronomers.

Artemis

Martha Lyn

In the dead of night
Artemis, skilful archer, hunts,
Her quiver full of shafts of light,
Plucked from moonbeams
In the dead of night.

Wake, sleeper, wake.
The full moon rises, silvers the land.
Run to your window in cold sweat of fear
Artemis is near.
Her sliver-thin hounds stalk their prey,
And self-shadows clear.

Whether you hide, frozen with fear -
Whether you fly, wrapped in the wind -
Whether you flow, towed by the tide -
Or, fist frantic, hammer the granite gate
Earth-stone opening to the stars,
Till you dissolve in seas of space -
Hurtle through aether's flood of forms
That lock existence into time,

Nought avails.

Those restless relentless hounds of hers
Can range beyond the circling planets,
Who sing their siren notes in orbit -
Can flush you out from clouds of stars,
That composed cacophany, the milky way.

Wherever you flee,
Her slender, silver arrows of light
Pierce your mind.

At last you will see
You can really go
Where you long to be.

When Artemis hunts,
She targets you
To set you free.