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A Summary of Pythagorean Theology

John Opsopaus

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Epitome Theologiae Pythagoricae

a Ioanne Opsopoeo

electa composita scripta

Being a Summary and Synthesis of Pythagorean Doctrine

on Goddesses, Gods, The One, and Theurgy

from the Master Himself until the Italian Renaissance

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Note: This is a work in progress (in particular, Part IIII will be expanded). I would be most appreciative of any comments, positive or negative, from small issues of expression to major issues of content. [Please send email to Opsopaus@omphalos.org.](#)

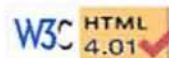


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A Summary of Pythagorean Theology

Part I: Introduction

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May Hermes, the God of Eloquence, stand by my side to aid me, and the Muses also and Apollo, the Leader of the Muses..., and may They grant that I utter only what the Gods approve that people should say and believe about Them.

-- Julian (*Oration IV*)

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History

This document presents a summary and synthesis of the theology of Pythagoreanism, a spiritual tradition that has been practiced continuously, in one form or another, for at least twenty-six centuries. But first, a little history. (Note: I will refer to all of the following philosophers and theologians as Pythagoreans or Platonists, which is what they usually called themselves, for the terms "Neo-Pythagorean" and "Neo-Platonist" are modern inventions. This history is of necessity incomplete and superficial.)

According to ancient Greek tradition, **Pythagoras** (572-497 BCE) studied with the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Chaldeans, Brahmans, and Zoroastrians, and was initiated into all their mysteries. He is supposed to have met with **Zoroaster** (Zarathustra), but, since scholars now believe that Zoroaster probably lived in the second millennium BCE, it is likely that the Greek tradition reflects a meeting between Pythagoras and Zoroastrian Magi. In any case, there are many traces of Zoroastrianism in Pythagorean doctrine. In particular, there are similarities between the central Duality of Pythagoreanism and the dual Gods of Zoroaster (Ahura-Mazda and Ahriman). However, there are also connections to **Zurvanism**, a Zoroastrian "heresy," which placed a primordial God Zurvân Akarana (Infinite Time) before the dual Gods. Pythagoras may have learned these ideas from his teacher **Pherekydes**, whose cosmology begins with Aiôn (Eternity), who engenders the Primal Duality ([see Theogony below](#)). Pherekydes' book, which is reputed to be the first book of philosophy to have been written in prose, survives in fragments and is a useful source for reconstructing the Pythagorean system.

When his wanderings were done (c.530), Pythagoras established a society of followers in Croton, Italy, where they learned Pythagorean Way of Life (*Bios Pythagoreios*) and were initiated by degrees into its mysteries. He wrote nothing down, but the poem of **Parmenides** (fl. 495), of which large fragments survive, seems to reflect Pythagorean ideas. It apparently describes a "shamanic journey" from the illusory world of duality to the One, which transcends apparent duality. Another early Pythagorean was **Empedocles** (c.495-435), who first explained the four Elements, governed by the Powers of Love and Strife; he was also a practicing Mage and initiate of the Mysteries of Hekate ([see Opsopaus, AGEDE](#)). Fragments of his work survive.

Pythagoras transmitted all his teachings orally, and **Philolaus** (c.470 - 390) is supposed to have been the first Pythagorean to present the secret teachings in a book; **Plato** (427-347) is said to have paid the equivalent of 100 pounds of silver for it as soon as it was available. Plato was the most famous Pythagorean and turned the doctrine in a more intellectual direction (which is how it is understood by many people nowadays), but soon after his death, Pythagoreans revived the old practices, and created the traditions that modern scholars call Neo-Pythagoreanism and Neo-Platonism (which I will not distinguish in this summary). Plato's *Timaeus* especially was taken as a source of Pythagorean doctrine, but all of Plato's dialogues were venerated. **Xenocrates** of Chalcedon (396-314), a later head of Plato's Academy (339-314), explored the hierarchies of the Gods and other Divine Spirits, work which I have used in this summary of Pythagorean theology.

This is perhaps the place to mention the "scriptures" of Pythagoreanism, that is, ancient texts that were supposed to have been composed by divinely inspired poet-theologians. Chief of these are the **Orphic Scriptures**, which were attributed to the legendary, semidivine poet-musician **Orpheus**, known for his soul-retrieval of Eurydice (unsuccessful only in the late, romantic telling). Pythagoreanism was closely connected to the Orphic Mysteries, and some of the Orphic scriptures are even attributed to Pythagoras. A number of the *Orphica* survive as fragments from the fifth century BCE and later. Other "scriptures" are discussed below.

Apollonius of Tyana (first century CE) was a wandering Pythagorean holy man; his miracles and other exploits were sufficiently similar to Jesus' to worry early Christian polemicists and to provoke them to try to discredit him. **Plutarch** of Chaeronea (c.46-c.125), known for his parallel *Lives* of illustrious Greeks and Romans, was High Priest at Delphi for his last 30

years. He was a very learned Pythagorean, and I have drawn liberally from his voluminous writings in this summary.

Nicomachus of Gerasa (fl. 130) is especially known for his development of Pythagorean numerology. **Numenius** of Apamea (fl. 160) compared his very dualistic concept of Pythagoreanism with the ideas of the Brahmins, Chaldean Magi, Egyptian priests, and Jewish scriptures. His system also had similarities to the *Chaldean Oracles* and *Hermetic Corpus* ([see below](#)).

Apuleius of Madaurus (born c.125) is best known as the author of the *Metamorphoses* or *Golden Ass*, but he was also a Pythagorean, an initiate of the Mysteries of Isis and Osiris, and a practicing Mage, as we know from his *Defense* (*Apologia*) against the charge of using magic to seduce a wealthy widow. In addition to the *Metamorphoses* and *Defense*, a number of his philosophical works survive. His ideas combine Hellenistic, Egyptian, and African elements.

Plotinus' (205-270) writings are collected in his *Enneads*; he is especially known for his contemplative practice, the Ascent to Union with the One, which I'll discuss in [Part V](#) of this Summary. Plotinus' writings were arranged and edited by his student **Porphyry** (234-c.305), who also wrote a *Life of Pythagoras*, *Philosophy from Oracles*, Pythagorean allegorical interpretations of Homer (*The Cave of the Nymphs*), and a polemic *Against the Christians*, amongst many other works.

Also important as Pythagorean "scriptures" are the **Chaldean Oracles**, a poem that is dated to the second or third century CE. It was given by divine inspiration to **Julian the Chaldean** and his son, **Julian the Theurgist**. The *Oracles*, which survive only in fragments, are important for what they teach us about spiritual practices such as *theurgy* ([see below](#)), which the Julians perfected; I will quote the *Oracles* from time to time. Julian the Theurgist accompanied the emperor **Marcus Aurelius** (121-180) on his military campaigns, which he aided magically, throwing thunderbolts and calling down rain. According to legend, he won a competition with Apuleius and Apollonius to end a plague in Athens, but the dates don't seem possible.

As relevant texts I should also mention the **Hermetic Corpus**, which are not strictly Pythagorean, but are closely related in viewpoint, and therefore helpful to our understanding. According to tradition (Iamblichus), both Pythagoras and Plato viewed the pillars from which the Hermetic texts were transcribed. **Gnostic** scriptures are also sometimes useful for comparison.

Iamblichus of Chalcis (c.245-c.325) has left us many works, including a *Life of Pythagoras* and *On the Mysteries*, which is a good source of Pythagorean theology and theurgy. The *Theology of Arithmetic* attributed to him incorporates some of Nicomachus' (otherwise lost) ideas on Pythagorean numerology. Iamblichus attached great importance to the *Chaldean Oracles* and set the future direction of Pythagoreanism. The **Emperor Julian** (331-363) is best known for his attempt to restore the practice of Paganism in the Roman Empire, which had been Christianized by Constantine (c.272-337). Julian followed the teachings of Iamblichus, and his initiation as a Pythagorean theurgist was in 352 under **Maximus** of Ephesus, a student of Aedesius (died c.355), who was a student of Iamblichus. Maximus was a great teacher of theurgy and magic, which Julian eagerly learned from him. Julian's religion was a synthesis of Pythagoreanism and Mithraism, which also traces its roots to Zoroastrianism.

Hypatia (365-415) was the most famous female philosopher of the ancient world; she taught Pythagoreanism in Alexandria until her martyrdom at the hands of a Christian mob, whipped into a frenzy by "Saint" Cyril (then Bishop). "Her flesh was scraped from her bones with sharp oyster shells and her quivering limbs were delivered to the flames," in Gibbon's memorable words. **Proclus** (c.411-485), who was head of the Platonic Academy, took the ideas of Iamblichus and other Pythagoreans and developed them into an elaborate system. In particular he extended the use of the Triadic Principle and the Three Phases of Emanation ([see below](#)). Many of Proclus' works survive, including his *Elements of Theology* and *Platonic Theology*, upon which I have based much of this presentation. He also wrote commentaries on the *Chaldean Oracles*.

Another famous representative of the Pythagorean Tradition, who preserved the Orphic theogonies for us, was **Damascius**, who was head of the Platonic Academy at Athens when Justinian closed all the Pagan schools in 529. Seeking a more tolerant environment, he departed with six other philosophers for the Sassanid court in Persia, but from there they dispersed. One of the Wandering Seven, **Simplicius**, went to Harran, "the City of the Moon God," which remained a bastion of Paganism into the tenth century. The Pythagorean school that he founded there continued until the eleventh century, when the Seljuk Turks arrived. Over the preceding centuries it had been a fountainhead of Pythagoreanism in the East.

One important Pythagorean was **Suhrawardī** (1152/3-1190/1), founder of the Ishrāqī (Illuminationist) Sufis. He was known as a magician and alchemist, and was executed by Saladin, who was afraid that his son might be converted to Suhrawardī's heretical beliefs. He was a follower of the ideas of Pythagoras and Empedocles, which he learned from the Hermetic and alchemical traditions transmitted through the Graeco-Egyptian world.

During 900 years following the ban on teaching Pagan philosophy, Pythagoreanism remained influential in the West, although hidden in Christian clothes. For example, another major vehicle for promulgating the Pythagorean ideas of Proclus was the fifth or sixth century CE writings attributed to **Dionysius** the Areopagite, which were very influential in Christian mystical traditions. It is unclear whether the author was a devout Christian trying to hide the Pagan source of his ideas, or a Pagan forced to hide Pythagorean doctrine under Christian disguise. **Michael Psellus** (1018-c.1081) was another Christian follower of Pythagoras and Proclus, but the Church authorities looked with some suspicion on his writings about Pythagoreanism, Hellenic philosophy, alchemy, and daimonology, and accused him of Paganism. His commentaries on the *Chaldean Oracles* were especially influential in the later Pythagorean Tradition.

An important turning point came with **George Gemistos** (c.1360-1452), who adopted the Neo-Pagan name **Plethon**. He established in Mistra, near ancient Sparta, a secret Pythagorean practice, which drew heavily from the *Chaldean Oracles*,

Proclus, and (his understanding of) Zoroastrianism. After his death, his *Book of Laws* unfortunately fell into the hands of the Christian Empress Theodora and George Scholarios (Gennadios), Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church, who destroyed most of it (only fragments have survived): "So we caused the book to be committed to the flames." Fortunately, Plethon traveled in 1439 to the Council of Florence, which was directed toward a reconciliation of the millennium-long schism of the Western and Eastern Christian Churches. There he gave lectures on "Platonic philosophy," which were heard by **Cosimo de' Medici** (1389-1464), who was so taken by them that he committed himself to establishing a Platonic Academy in Florence.

This did not happen until 1462 when Cosimo picked the young **Marsilio Ficino** (1433-1499) to organize and run the Academy, where he conducted Neo-Pagan rituals. Even though Ficino eventually reaffirmed his Christianity, he was very active in pursuing Pythagoreanism and promoting it by making the first translations into Latin of the *Chaldean Oracles*, the *Hermetic Corpus*, and many important Platonic and Pythagorean texts. However, he got into trouble with the Church on account of the magical practices he advocated in his *Three Books on Life*. Another influential Pythagorean was Ficino's student, **Pico della Mirandola** (1463-1494), who became much more discrete about his magical and cabalistic interests after they were condemned by the Pope. Nevertheless, by their promulgation of the Pythagorean Tradition, Plethon, Ficino, and Pico were instrumental in precipitating the rebirth of art, literature, and philosophy known as the Italian Renaissance.

Another important step in the Pythagorean Tradition was taken by **Thomas Taylor** (1785-1835), known as "the English Pagan," whose English translations of Pythagorean and other ancient Greek texts brought them to the attention of many people. His works influenced William Blake (1757-1827) and many other important figures of the Romantic movement. His translations and commentaries are still widely read and are important as expressions of a continuous Pythagorean Tradition stretching back at least 2600 years.

Finally, I should mention the influential archetypal psychologist **Carl Jung** (1875-1961), whose concept of collective archetypes is borrowed directly from Platonism, but confirmed by empirical psychology. Indeed, the well-known Jungian psychologist James Hillman has called Ficino the "grandfather of archetypal psychology."

Theogony

Before discussing the Goddesses and Gods of Pythagoreanism ([Parts II](#) and [III](#)), it will be helpful to begin by placing Them in context with a brief overview of Pythagorean cosmology. However, I must begin with a warning. Pythagoreans, Neo-Pythagoreans, and Neo-Platonists differ among themselves on many technical points of theology, but I will be ignoring these differences, and presenting something like a "synthesis" of the doctrines. This may seem somewhat intellectually sloppy, but in fact I think it is a mistake to over-emphasize dogmatic details in a religion that is fundamentally mystical.

We will face one of these issues right off, for the best way to understand the cosmology is through *theogony*, or the birth of the Gods. But Pythagoreans disagree as to whether this is to be understood as a historical process, which took place at some point in time, or whether it is a process of **emanation**, which is always taking place. Although I incline to the emanationist view, I will present it as a myth of origins, since I think it is easier to understand that way; in fact the two views are difficult to separate, because we must deal with the birth of Time Itself. For this reason, I will tell myths in the present tense, which you may interpret as the eternal present or the historical present, as you like.

The myth begins with a Primordial Unity, a bisexual Deity, who is sometimes called **Aiôn (Eternity)**. In fact, this ineffable Deity is outside of time and transcends all dualities (even that of being and non-being).

By self-fertilization Aiôn gives birth to, or divides into, two Gods, the First Polarity. These Gods, whom we may call **Kronos** and **Rhea**, govern the primary dualities, including Male/Female, Father/Mother, and Unity/Multiplicity. Among these dualities, Kronos and Rhea rule the Light and the Dark, and by Their cyclic alternation create Time as we know it. Kronos is the Abiding, but Rhea is the Proceeding, who by Her Power to Change causes Kronos to become **Khronos (Time)**.

Therefore, Plato (*Tim.* 37D) says that the Father creates Time as the animated Image of Eternity (Aiôn). The word here translated "Image" (*Agalma*) refers especially to divine images set up in shrines and temples for veneration. We may see in this an allusion to the theurgic practice of "animating images," that is, of invoking a God into a statue.

Kronos is the supreme simplicity of the One Mind as Rhea is the supreme simplicity of Primordial Matter (the Universal Foundation of all Existence). Therefore they are both called **Bythos (Abyss)**, for They are both impenetrably deep and obscure; but They are also both inaccessibly high, and therefore called in ancient Greek *Bathos*, which (like Latin *Altus*) means "high" as well as "deep." That is, the Greatest Height unites with the Greatest Depth, for They are One. Proclus calls Them "dissimilarly alike."

Kronos and Rhea marry, a *re-union* of the Opposites, and become the **Father and Mother of the Gods**. Since Kronos represents the Monad (the principle of Unity) and Rhea represents the Indefinite Dyad (the principle of Plurality), the union of the two engenders a Plurality of Divine Unities (*Henads*): the Gods. Thus They create the **Empyrean Realm**, the world of the Olympian Gods.

First created are the Regents of the Second Rank of Gods, **Zeus** and **Hera**; Kronos and Rhea either give birth to Them or by

Their union transform into Them; the two processes are hardly different, for Gods give birth by creating images of Themselves. Next Zeus and Hera create the **Aetherial Realm** in which dwell the immortal Celestial Beings, the Stars and Planets. Zeus and Hera are the Craftsman (**Demiurge**) and the Nurse, who together create the **Material Realm**. Zeus thinks the world-defining Ideas, which He throws like lightening bolts into the **Womb** of Hera, who nourishes them with Her Substance, thereby giving birth to our world. Thus She is the life-conferring **World Soul** (*hê tou Pantos Psychê*, "the Soul of The All"), who unites the Ideas with Matter. So much for now on the genealogy of the Gods.

Triadic Structure

One of the metaphysical principles of the Pythagoreans is called the **Triadic Principle** or the **Law of Mean Terms**. It is based on the idea that there can be no meeting between opposites, and therefore, for there to be a **Harmonia**, or Union, of the opposites, there must be a Mean Term, which has something in common with each of the Extremes. The Mean Term both connects the Extremes, but also keeps them separate by occupying the gap between them. Therefore, as we will see, Mediating powers are also Separating powers.

By means of this principle Pythagoreans have discovered many triads in the structure of Reality. For example, in the Macrocosm the Triadic Principle reveals the World Soul, who embodies the Ideas, thereby mediating between Unformed Matter and the Immaterial Forms in the mind of the Demiurge. Similarly, in the human microcosm there must be Soul, which unites Mind and Matter.

However, there is a paradox built into the Triadic Principle, for there must be a distinction between the mean and each of the extremes. Therefore, another mean is required to unite the original mean with each of the extremes. As a consequence, the advancing Pythagorean analysis of Reality discovered an ever-proliferating family of triads. This is avoided by a more profound version of the Triadic Principle, called the **Principle of Continuity**. It recognizes that there is a continuum or spectrum from one extreme to the other. The proliferating triads are simply finer divisions of the continuum. For example, between North and West we discover North West as a mean term. But applying the Triadic Principle to North and North West reveals another mean term, North North West. The triadic division would continue forever if we didn't recognize that there is a continuum of directions between North and West. The Principle of Continuity should be kept in mind as we explore the structure of Reality according to the Pythagoreans. We will see many triads, but it must be understood that they are simply convenient divisions of a continuum. This applies even to the Orders of the Gods.

One of the important triads, which defines the structure of **Emanation** at all levels of Being between One and Matter, is: **Abiding** (*Monê*) - **Proceeding** (*Proôdos*) - **Reverting** (*Epistrophê*). It explains how an Essence can emanate into more substantial forms, and yet retain its identity. The Essence, or unchanging nature, of a thing is Abiding or Remaining; it is the Male Pole. Yet it has the Power or Potential (*Dynamis*) to relate to other things, to move by a continuous flux toward greater "participation," that is, toward more substantial embodiment, the direction of greater Multiplicity; this is the Female Pole. However, this flowing forth would cause it to lose its definition, so it Reverts or "Re-turns" (turns back) toward its origin so that it can mirror its Essence. The result is an Activity or Actualization (*Energeia*) of the Potential emanating from the Essence; the Offspring constitutes the third Pole. Thus emanation is revealed to be a cyclic relationship. Notice that in terms of Process, Change (II) is the Mean between the Beginning (I) and the End (III), but that in terms of Character, the Result or Mixture (III) is the Mean between the Extremes or Opposites (I and II).

The Triadic Principle allows us to distinguish three **Orders of Creation**. In the Empyrean Realm all beings are immortal, immaterial and unchanging; it is Olympus, occupied by the Gods. The Material Realm, which we occupy, the Earth, is characterized by perpetual change; here, all beings are mortal. The Mean between the two is the Aetherial Realm, the Heavens, which is occupied by Celestial Bodies, which are immortal, but material and ever-changing (moving). Since the Moon is the Celestial Body nearest us, the Material Realm is also called the **Sublunary Realm**.

The Triadic Principle also defines the **Diakosmoi** or **Orders of Being**. Between the Primordial One and Primordial Matter there are three orders: (1) the Realm of Forms, corresponding to the Ideas in the Mind of the Demiurge, and (2) the World Soul, which mediates by bringing the Forms into (3) the orderly Material World.

By the Principle of Continuity we can see that there must be a connection between the "highest" and "lowest" realms, between the One and Matter, and connecting all things in between. These are the divine **Seirai** (**Chords, Chains, "Processions"**), which unite the Orders of Being. Thus we have connections with the Celestial Bodies and are influenced by Them, who in turn convey influences from the Gods; this is the basis of astrology. We are all connected in the "Great Chain of Being."

This is perhaps a good place to mention an important class of beings, the **Daimones** (DYE-maw-ness). In Homeric Greek the word *Daimôn* could refer to any Divine Power, from the Nymphs to the Great Gods, but in later times it came to be restricted to the **Mediating Spirits** between Gods and mortals. Daimones are thus valuable messengers between the Gods and us, and are useful assistants in our dealings with the Gods, especially in divination, magic, and theurgy. "Daimôn" is of course the origin of our word "demon," but it should be apparent that the Daimones are not at all demonic; in fact they are much more like angels. However, this is enough about Them for now; They will be considered in more detail in [Part V](#).

Most of what I have discussed so far sounds like philosophy rather than religion, but the Pythagorean tradition is grounded in a

number of spiritual practices. One of the best known is the Ascent to the One, in which the practitioner, by contemplative meditation, enters into ecstatic union with the One. This is a kind of **Theurgy** ("God-work"), by which the theurgist ascends into the God's presence by using symbols, signs, words, sounds, materials, etc. that are supported by the God's Chord, and that are provided by the God for that purpose. There are also other, lesser spiritual disciplines preparatory to Theurgy and the Ascent.

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A Summary of Pythagorean Theology

Part II: Goddesses

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The Indefinite Dyad

Pythagoreans identify the Monad with the **Male Principle** and the Dyad with the **Female Principle**, at all levels of Being. The Monad is relatively easy to understand: He is the principle of Unity and Constancy. The Dyad, however, is more complex. First, She is the Other; if there were only the Monad, there would be no Other; thus She governs **Separation**. Therefore, Syrianus (fl. 431 CE, died c.437), Proclus' teacher, identified the Monad and the Dyad with Love (*Philia*) and Strife (*Neikos*), the two principal forces in the universe according to Empedocles (for more on them, see ["Fire" in Opsopaus, AGEDE](#)). The Dyad is called the Goal, because She is that to which the Monad proceeds, and She is also called Daring and Change, for She corresponds to Procession in the triad Abiding - Proceeding - Reverting. However, because She also carries the Beginning to the End, She is the **Mediator** as well as the Separator.

The Dyad is the number Two, but the Female Principle is a transcendent form of Two called the **Indefinite Dyad**, where "Indefinite" must be understood to mean indeterminate, unlimited, boundless, and infinite, all of which are relevant to the Indefinite Dyad. First I will focus on Her property of being Unlimited or Indeterminate, which makes Her the opposite of the Monad, who is the principle of Limit, Determination, and Definition. Thus the Monad and Indefinite Dyad are the Principles of **Limit** (*Peras*) and the **Unlimited** (*Apeiria*), who operate at all levels of Being, but in a different way at each level.

At the most fundamental level, the Monad is the Primordial One and the Indefinite Dyad is **Primordial Matter**, because *Prima Materia* is the indeterminate, formless, quality-less foundation of all being; She is *Sub-stance* -- She who stands underneath. Like the One, Primordial Matter is ineffable, obscure, dark; therefore They are both called **Abyss**. Thus, the Goddess of Matter is also called Silence (*Sigê*), because Silence must precede the Word, the *in-forming* Logos, embodying the Ideas of the Craftsman ([see below](#), on the World Soul). Her role as Mediator between the Father of the Gods and the Demiurge is confirmed by the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 50):

between the Fathers is Hekate's Center borne.

(Here the Female Principle is called "Hekate," which is pronounced "heh-KAH-tay" in ancient Greek.) Primordial Matter is much deeper, more profound, than the matter studied by contemporary physics. Hers is Potential Corporeality, not a "stuff," but the unlimited Power to Be.

One of the most common names of the Female Principle is **Dynamis**, which means **Power** and **Potential**. This is the aspect of the Indefinite Dyad in which She is Unlimited, Unbounded, and Infinite, for Hers is the Infinite Potential to Be. She is Potentiality at all levels of Being, for She dares the Monad to Proceed and Become. She is more powerful than the One, which is *something*, for She is the limitless power to be *anything*; She is all possibilities.

Therefore She is also the prolific, generative source of all creation. She is Multiplying, for without Her the Monad would be just One; She leads the Monad to proceed into fruitful plurality and substantial manifestation. Thus, on the lower levels of Being She is called **Life-Giving** (*Zôogonos*), which brings us to our next topic.

The Mother of the Gods

As remarked above, the Dyad, by bringing multiplicity to the One, creates the plurality of **Unities (Henads)**, who are the Gods. Thus Rhea becomes the Mother of the Gods by substantiating multiple images of the Father, Kronos.

The ancient Pythagoreans called **Rhea** "The Ever-Flowing" (*To Aenaon*) and connected Her name with *Rheô* (to Flow) and *Rhoê* (Flux, Flow, Stream), a derivation confirmed by modern linguistics, which traces them all to the Indo-European root *sreu-* (to flow). This is because Primary Matter is fluid, for it has no determinate boundaries, within or without; Matter is ever changing, always in flux.

Another word correctly derived by the ancients from this root is *rhythmos*, which means **Rhythm**, but also recurring motion, measured motion, and time. This is because the Indefinite Dyad creates Otherness, and therefore all the oppositions governed by Kronos and Rhea: Unity/Multiplicity, Light/Dark, Male/Female, and many others. Whenever there is a tension between opposites there will arise an oscillation between them, a cyclic approach to One then the Other. Therefore, Rhea transforms measureless Eternity (*Aiôn*) into determinate **Time (Khronos)**, symbolized by the cyclic alternation of Light and Dark. (By creating Time, She also creates Space.) Further, Rhea governs all cyclic processes, on Earth and in Heaven; She creates the Universe as a **Harmonia** of opposites. (See [Opsopaus, "Lib. Oct. Mut."](#) for universal structures in the tension of opposites.)

However, Rhea Herself exists outside of Time, and thus She governs *Motionless Motion*. This is because She is concerned only with cyclic change, and therefore with the numerical ratios among the rhythms of these changes; She governs their Harmonic Relations. (In modern scientific terminology, we could say that She oversees the "frequency domain" rather than the "time domain," which is the province of Hera, Her daughter.)

The ancients also connected *rhythmos* to *arithmos* (**Number**), but modern linguists trace *arithmos* to a different Indo-European root, *ré(i)-* (to reason, count), from which we also get such words as reason, rational, ratio, rate, and rhyme. Nevertheless, the ancient connection informs us about how Pythagoreans understand Rhea's responsibility for Number. This is natural, for the Indefinite Dyad is the principle of Plurality itself, which separates one thing from another, but also of the Matter that allows one thing to be different from another, by substantiating multiple instances of a Form.

Rhea governs the levels of Being above the Intellect ([see Proclus' Seven Levels of Reality, below](#)), which explains why a total grasp of Number is beyond our intellectual abilities. (Modern mathematics addresses only an impoverished shadow of Number.) The properties of Number fall into two classes, corresponding to the two phases of Emanation: Procession and Reversion. For Number comprises both the Power to Generate everything but also the Power to Unify everything. In particular, Number discriminates the holistic thought of Kronos into the distinct Ideas, the articulate **Logos**, of Zeus. But also, by Reversion, Number redirects and reunifies the Ideas toward the One.

This leads us to the important concept **Noêsis**, which is usually translated **Intellection**, but is better understood as a process of holistic intuition, especially at this level, which is prior to Time, and therefore prior to sequential thought. Rhea, as Mediator, is the intellective (or *noetic*) process connecting the Divine Intellect (Zeus) at the next lower level, with the object of His intellection, Pure Being (the Monad), at the next higher.

But Rhea's domain is also the level of **Life**, and therefore Proclus says, "Life is Intellection" (*Zôê Noêsis*). On the one hand, this means that Life is fundamentally identical to holistic Intuition. On the other, it means that the Ideas are themselves living Archetypes (not static concepts). The *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 56) tell us,

Of Blessed Noerics Rhea is the Source and Stream;
for, first in Power, in Wombs Ineffable all things
receiving, on The All She pours this whirling brood.

(The "Noerics" are Archetypes living in the intuiting Divine Mind, and may be identified with the Gods.)

The etymological connection between **Mother** and **Matter** is well-known, but it is worthwhile to look at it more closely. The Indo-European root *mâter* (mother) is the origin of our word Mother, as well as the cognate Greek and Latin words (*Mêtêr*, *Mater*). The latter is the source of **Matrix**, which originally meant a mother of any species, and by extension the **Womb** or anything else in which something originates, develops, is nourished, or is contained. Matrix, in turn, is the root of Matter and Material, which referred originally to an originating, nourishing, or sustaining substance. I will have more to say about Mother, Matrix, and Matter [below](#).

We have seen that the Mother is the Life-Giving Goddess, the source of Ever-Flowing Matter. Therefore She provides the Quantities (cf. Number) of Matter needed for the sustenance of everything in creation. She is the Goddess of the Primordial, Life-Giving, All-Sustaining **Earth**. **Demeter's** name means Earth Mother (*Dê-Mêtêr*, from *Dê*, an alternative form of *Gê* or *Gaia*). Pherekydes calls Her **Khthoniê**, which means "She of the Earth"; it is an epithet of Underworld as well as Earth Goddesses (rightly seen, They are hardly different, for creation is sustained from *within* the Body of the Earth Goddess). Indeed, Demeter and **Persephone** are called "The Khthoniai," and *Khthôn* is a name of the Earth Goddess. Her special realm is dark **Tartarus**, which stands opposite to shining **Olympus**, ruled by Kronos. Tartarus is the hidden region of dark Primordial Matter, the Foundation of Existence. The Black, Dark, Obscure Earth (*Khthôn* or *Gaia Melaina*) was proverbial in ancient Greek.

The Father and the Mother, having become Two, now must dance to Rhea's Rhythm. And this dance will bring Them together again, for the Father has Lust (*Orexis*) for the Mother's Body, and She desires to reproduce His Form. Through Their Conjunction, the Monad is divided by the Dyad, and Matter is unified by the One. From Them come the Creator and Creatrix of the Material World. Thus the First Generation, Kronos and Rhea, yields to the Second, Zeus and Hera. Indeed, after the Wedding, according to Pherekydes, Khthoniê is replaced by Gaia, the Goddess of the Earth as we know it, but that is our next topic.

Isis and Osiris

Plutarch, who was High Priest at Delphi, presents these ideas in his book *Isis and Osiris*, which was written for the Priestess Clea. **Osiris** and **Isis** are the **Craftsman** and the **Nurse**, the Creators of the world. Their Son, **Horus**, is the God of the material world, the organized cosmos. Osiris thinks the Ideas that give Form to the world, but Isis is the Mediator without whom they could not become embodied or substantiated.

We know from the myth that Osiris is torn apart (for the physical world continually renews itself). The Ideas still exist in His Soul, but they are transcendent and cannot directly order our world. However, the Ideas exist also in His Body, where they are immanent. Therefore Isis unites with Osiris' Body, for She desires His Formative Seed and wants to materialize It in Her Body. When She becomes pregnant, She becomes the **World Soul**, the Principle of **Nature** (*Phusis*), and Nature is dependent on Her. As the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 54) state:

and on the Goddess' back is Boundless Nature hung.

Nature's name, *Phusis*, comes from *phuô*, which means to beget, to produce, or to be something or other "by nature."

Still the world is not yet material, but only potentially material, for Nature is the principle of order in the world, but not the material world itself. This order becomes manifest in Matter only when Isis gives birth to Horus. Thus is Primal Matter organized by the Articulated Ideas, the **Logos**, of the Demiurge through the mediation of the World Soul. In this way we get Proclus' **Seven Levels of Reality**: *Unity (Aion)*, *Being (Kronos)*, *Life (Rhea)*, *Mind (Osiris)*, *Soul (Isis)*, *Nature (Pregnant Isis)*, and *Body (Horus)*.

Psychê as Mediator

Soul (Psychê), the principle of Animate Life, is the Mediator between Mind and Body, on both the Microcosmic and Macrocosmic levels; therefore the **World Soul** is the source of **individual souls**. She is the bridge between the Ideas and Matter, for the Ideas are transcendent, outside of time and space, and cannot be effective unless they are brought into manifestation. The Goddess Herself speaks in the *Oracles* (fr. 53):

... after the Paternal Thoughts,
I, Psyche, dwell, ensouling with My warmth The All.

She is ideally suited to this task, for the Pythagoreans say that soul is "Number moving itself." This motion takes place through the powers of **Sameness** and **Otherness** (a lower level image of the Monad and Dyad), for change presupposes that one Same thing becomes Other (or Different). (**Apollo** and **Artemis** are the Olympians responsible for Sameness and Otherness, according to Plethon; in the heavens, the Sun is always the same, but the Moon waxes and wanes.) Therefore, the World Soul mediates between **Eternity** and **Time**, bringing the Ideas into manifestation in both time and space.

She numbers the **Harmonies** that determine the motions of the **Celestial Bodies** (the "Music of the Spheres"), but also of all cyclic processes in Nature. From Limit come the measures of these motions, from the Unlimited comes the perpetual change of Nature. Hers is the perpetual motion of Life, for although individual lives (*bioi*) end, Life (*Zôê*) is eternal. Thus the *Oracles* (fr. 96):

for Psyche, by the Father's Power a Radiant Fire,
remains immortal, and She is Mistress of Life,
and holds Full-measures of the Kosmos' many Wombs.

In particular, Ideas "move themselves" in discursive reasoning, which is a function of the Soul (as opposed to the intuiting Mind, or **Nous**). More generally, the World Soul is also called **Wisdom** (*Sophia*) and **Thought** (*Ennoia*).

Since the World Soul brings the Ideas into space, the entire world is infused with Soul. Therefore She establishes **Cosmic**

Sympathy (*Sympatheia*), which unites The All into One; hence the alchemical maxim, "The All is One" (*Hen to Pan*). This Sympathy is the foundation of **magic**, and thus it is not surprising that Isis and Hekate ([see below](#)) are Goddesses of Magic. As Plotinus (IV.4.40) says,

"But how shall we explain the enchantments (*goêteias*) of Magic? By Sympathy and by the fact that there is a natural Harmony between things that are similar, and an Opposition between those that are unlike. ... And the real Magic in The All is the Love in it along with the Strife. This [Love] is the first Mage and Enchanter; it was when men observed Love's Magic that they started using charms and spells on one another." (adapted from translations of Kingsley and others)

We may say that **Eros (Love)** motivates the desire of **Psychê (Soul)** to manifest the World. This is well known from the story "**Cupid and Psyche**," which is part of the *Metamorphoses* (or *Golden Ass*) by Apuleius, the Pythagorean philosopher, mage, and initiate of the Mysteries of Isis and Osiris. Psyche is the one who, in pursuit of Her Love, descends into the Underworld at the behest of the Great Mother, and who is in turn raised to Olympus by Love.

The Wedding

The Father and Mother of the Gods, Kronos and Rhea, the Titanic Regents, engender the Olympian Regents, Zeus and Hera, who are wed. Zeus and Hera are emanations of Kronos and Rhea, and so we may take them to be children of the Titans or transformed versions of Them, as we like. Therefore, we may find the same name being applied to Gods in different stages of emanation, that is, at different points in a **Chain of Procession (Seira)**. (Hence, we sometimes find the names Rhea and Hekate reversed in the *Chaldean Oracles*.)

For example, according to Orphic scripture, **Rhea** takes on the form of a Serpent in a Cave and bids Zeus to come to Her. He (taking the role of Kronos) mates with Her, and She bears **Demeter**, the Earth Mother. Demeter recapitulates Rhea's actions with Zeus, and from Their union **Persephone** is born. Finally, according to Orphic myth, Persephone mates with Zeus (in which we see also His role as Underworld God) and bears Him **Dionysus**.

Pherekydes gives the names **Zas** and **Khthoniê** to the first Gods after the God of Unending Time. She is the Dark Queen of Tartarus, the Goddess of chaotic Primordial Matter; He the King of Olympus, who hurls transforming Lightning Bolts. But marriage domesticates Them. Acting as Divine Craftsman, Zas weaves a wedding gift, the "**Gift for the Unveiling**" (*Anakaluptêrion*), a **Variegated Robe (Pharos)**, which is adorned with the ordered world (the Cosmos, for **Kosmos** means good order, arrangement, adornment). After it has covered the bed on Their wedding night, He wraps it around Khthoniê, and thus She becomes **Gaia**, the Goddess of the living Earth. (A lost Orphic scripture is called *The Robe*.)

Through Their union the Womb of the World Soul is impregnated by the Ideas of the Demiurge, and She gives birth to the rotating Planetary Spheres (*Kosmoi*), which hide the fiery simplicity of the One, but yet connect us to It; in the words of the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 34):

from thence the birth of Variegated Matter leaps;
thence sweeping Lightning-Storm obscures the Flower of Fire,
in Coils of Kosmoi leaping; for from thence all things
begin to stretch forth, down below, the wondrous beams.

The "**Coils**" (*Koilômata*) may be translated as the Hollows or Womb of the World Soul (but see also "[Fire](#)" in *Opsopaus. AGEDE*).

The Goddess of the Cosmic Tree

By being enwrapped in the Variegated Robe, Khthoniê also becomes the **Winged Oak** (*Huptopteros Drus*), which is the **Cosmic Tree**; Her Roots are in the Underworld and Her Crown is in the Heavens; therefore She mediates Heaven and Earth. Her Sandal is Tartarus, the bottomless chasm, the dark depths of Matter. (See "[Water](#)" in *Opsopaus. AGEDE*, for more on Khthoniê's Robe and Tree, and see "[Fire](#)" for Hekate's Sandal.)

We have already considered the etymological connection between Mother and Matter, but there is more to say about it. *Matrix*, as noted, refers to a mother of any species, but also to a Parent Tree; it is also the Substance out of which anything grows, and the Womb (literally or figuratively), which nurtures it. Further, the original meaning of *Materia* (which is derived from *Matrix*) is **Wood** (the Substance out of which grows the Tree), and by extension the Substance of any physical object, that is, Matter. Similarly, the root meaning of Greek *Hylê* (Matter) is Wood. Ancient etymologists connected *hylê* with Latin *sylva* (i.e., *silva* = wood, forest), since Greek often has an "h" where Latin has an "s" (compare Indo-European *sreu-* with Greek *Rhea*, *rheô*, etc.,

[discussed above](#)). Although modern linguists reject this connection, it illustrates the ancient association between Matter and Wood. Wood is symbolic of Living Matter.

Materia also means food and nourishment, which reminds us that the Cosmic Tree is also the **Tree of Life**. She draws up the Sap of Life, the Waters of the Abyss, into Her Roots, and conveys it upward to Her Crown, from which **Ambrosial Dew** drips down like honey to feed immortal souls. Amidst Her Roots is the Outflow (*Ekroë*), the Ambrosial Spring, sought by Orphic initiates. The Goddess of the Tree is the Nurse who nurtures souls from Her **Ambrosial Breast**. (See ["Water" in Opsopaus, AGEDE](#), for more on the Waters of Life.)

There are many myths in which Zeus (or another God) weds Hera, Persephone, or another chthonic or vegetation Goddess in the form of a Tree, and the Goddess of the Tree was worshipped under many different names in ancient Greece and around the Mediterranean. For example, **Artemis** was called **Orthia**, the Upright Goddess, when She was worshipped as a Tree or Pillar representing the Cosmic Axis.

Although it is not well-known, Helenê (that is, the **Helen** of the Trojan War, Queen of Sparta) is also a Tree Goddess; She had temples at Sparta and many other places. In particular, at Sparta there was a Holy Plane Tree sacred to Her, which was garlanded and anointed with oil. She was represented also as a Pillar Goddess (rather like the Caryatid Maidens on the Acropolis) and was worshipped as "Helen of the Tree" (*Dendritis*) at Rhodes. Helen was born of Zeus and **Leda** (that is, the Goddess Lada, "the Lady"), Herself a daughter of Oceanus (on whom, [see below](#)), as told in the myth "Leda and the Swan." (The Swan is the bird of Apollo, who is hardly distinguishable from Zeus in this context; see ["Gods"](#).) She emerged from a blue **Egg**, which may represent the Celestial Sphere, or Heaven and Earth before they were separated.

Her brothers are the Twin **Dioskouroi** (the "Lads of Zeus": *Dios Kouroi*), **Castor** and **Pollux**. According to different accounts, They were born either from the same Egg as Helen, or from a different Egg born by Leda. They wore caps shaped like half-eggshells representing the Celestial Hemispheres (or Heaven and Earth), since Their stars are never above the horizon at the same time. The **Twins** are the **Faithful Servants of the Great Goddess**, the Mother of the Gods, whether She is called Rhea, Kybele, or another name. For example, the Dioskouroi rescued the adolescent Helen after Theseus abducted Her when She was a dancer in the Spartan temple of Artemis Orthia (who is hardly distinguishable from Helen). They are often shown standing on either side of a Goddess, such as Helen, Isis, Artemis, Astarte, Aphrodite, Hekate, Kybele or Demeter; often She is a Lunar Goddess. Often also She is a Goddess of fertility and material generation (corresponding to the third of Dumézil's three functions; Kronos and Zeus correspond to the first two).

Castor was mortal but Pollux is immortal. Therefore, Helen's connection with Castor and Pollux may be compared with **Isis'** relation to the Body and Soul of **Osiris**. If Helen shared the Egg with the Dioskouroi, then that would compare with Isis and Osiris sharing the Womb of the Mother Goddess Nut. Osiris was killed when he was trapped in a casket around which a tamarisk tree grew; Castor was killed while he was hiding in an Oak Tree (or perhaps each brother was in a tree). Immortal Pollux was so grieved by His brother's death that He petitioned Zeus that the Twins might share mortality and immortality through a cyclic death and rebirth, as Osiris is cyclically torn apart and rejuvenated by Isis.

Simon the Mage, the Gnostic holy man slandered in the Bible (Acts 8.9-24), adopted as his **Soror Mystica (Mystic Sister)** a courtesan named Helen, whom he believed to be a reincarnation of Helen of Troy. Therefore he called her the All-Mother, Being, and Wisdom; and he called himself Great Power of Zeus. Eventually his disciples raised statues to them, in which they were represented with the attributes of Zeus and Athena (as Goddess of Wisdom). Although Simon's claims might seem the height of hubris, they nevertheless illustrate his knowledge of the Craftsman and His Mystic Sister.

In Alchemy the Great Work recreates the act of cosmic creation. The Wisdom is provided by the **Wise Old Man**, identified with Saturn (Kronos) or Father Time (Khronos), also called Altus (High, Noble, Deep, Secret, Ancient); he has the Ideas, but cannot bring them into manifestation. This is accomplished by the **Alchemist** (Craftsman) in cooperation with his **Mystic Sister**; a conjunction of the male and female powers is necessary to complete the Work. (For more, see Opsopaus, *PT*, 129-30.)

The Goddess of the Tree is seen often with a **Crater**, a Bowl out of which She pours the Divine Nectar. (See ["Fire" in Opsopaus, AGEDE](#) on the special significance of the Crater; one of the Hermetic texts (*C.H.* IV) is called *The Crater*, as was a lost Orphic scripture.) Further, **Isis** is represented as a Tree with a **breast** from which Horus sucks, and at festivals of Isis at Corinth, milk was poured from a breast-shaped golden Bowl. Also, it is written that at a temple of Athena, **Helen** dedicated an electrum Bowl shaped to the exact measure of Her breast. Finally, when **Telemachos**, during his rite of passage, visited **Menelaos** and Helen (who correspond to the Demiurge and His Spouse), They gave him a Crater and a **Robe (Pharos)**. (Menelaos was deified by Helen and transported bodily into Elysium; in later days the pair were worshipped as Deities. His name means to Abide or Remain [*Menô*] and People or Host [*Laos*].)

The Crater is frequently shown as the recumbent **Horns of the Moon**, which is certainly appropriate to this Goddess. (Helen, Isis, Hekate, Artemis, and even Hera may wear the Lunar Horns.) However, the Crescent Moon also symbolizes that She is a Source of **Illumination**, and so She may be represented also by a Star or Torch (especially appropriate to Hekate; [see below](#) and ["Fire" in Opsopaus, AGEDE](#)). (Some mythologists have traced Helenê and Selênê (Moon) - and even Luna - to the same root, *helê*, referring to illumination; the evidence is inconclusive. The name *Helenê* was given to the Sacred Basket carried in certain festivals of Artemis; the word can also mean Torch.)

Of course the **Trojan saga** has the structure of an **initiation**: separation, liminal period (trials), and reintegration. Pythagoreans

associate *Ilion* (Troy) with *Hylê* (Matter) and interpret the Trojan War as an allegory for the seduction and entrapment of the Soul (Helen) by Matter (Trojan Paris), and Her rescue and return home to Her birthplace and to the House of the Mind (Menelaos). Also, I should recall **Penelope**, who awaits Crafty **Odysseus**, and sits by her **Wedding Bed**, which is a part of the **Tree** at the center of the palace, where she weaves and unweaves perpetually a **Robe**, a Winding Sheet. She waits while Odysseus seeks. Pythagoreans read the *Odyssey* as an allegory for the spiritual journey, as will be discussed in [Part V](#).

Finally, I should mention the story of **Rhea Silvia** and her **Twin** sons **Romulus** and **Remus**. "Silvia" is from *Silva* (forest), which, as we have [already seen](#), refers to Wood and Matter. She was also called Rhea *Ilia* because she was supposed to come from *Ilum* (Troy). She was raped by Mars in His Sacred grove, and therefore gave birth to the Twins by a kind of virgin birth. They were set adrift in a cradle (a symbolic **Arc**), and later washed ashore under a **Sacred Fig Tree**. Because they were suckled (by the She-Wolf) under this Tree, it was called the Ruminal Fig (*Ficus Ruminalis*) or Rumina, from *Ruma*, which mean **Teat** or **Nipple**; Rumina is also a **Goddess of Suckling**. As would be expected of such Twins of the Sacred Tree, Remus died (descended to the Underworld), but Romulus became immortal and ascended to Heaven.

The Dragon in the Waters

Since the Tree is the Cosmic Axis, the **Spindle of Necessity** (*Anankês Atraktos*), She is also the Matrix of Destiny, and therefore the prophet (*mantis*), "healer-seer" (*iatromantis*, "shaman"), and inspired poet (*entheos poiêtês*) all come to the **Tree of Knowledge** desiring Wisdom (Sophia). They read Destiny in the fall of Her Leaves. However, neither this Wisdom nor the Fruit of the Cosmic Tree are easy to win, for the Tree is surrounded by **Primordial Waters** and guarded by a **Serpent** or **Dragon**.

The Waters and the Tree represent the unindividualized Power of **Universal Life** (*Zôê*), associated with the Great Mother (Rhea, Aphrodite, Demeter). These Titanic forces are conquered and superceded by the Demiurge and His Mystic Sister, who, by means of Soul, bring Universal Life into manifestation in space and time, thus giving birth to **Individual Life** (*Bios*), which dwells beside Death (Persephone, Isis, Psyche). The Waters are the path of souls into incarnation, but also the Way to immortality.

The Greeks said that the Primordial Waters, which define the boundaries of our existence, were ruled by **Tethys** and **Okeanos** (**Oceanus**); She is invoked as the Mother and He as the Origin of the Gods and all the World. Strife separated Them and They ceased from mating; thus ended the process of primary manifestation, thereby keeping the World in finite bounds.

Typically the **Dragon** is a hybrid: human (often female) above and a snake or fish below, rather like a mermaid. Such a being combines human time-bound consciousness with the eternal, unconscious Power of Life.

There are many mythological accounts of the Serpent and the Tree. For example, Mother Earth gives Zeus and Hera an **Unveiling Gift**, a Tree bearing Golden Apples, which is planted in the West, in the dark regions beyond Okeanos, where Atlas stretches between Earth and Heaven. This is the **Garden of the Hesperides**, a triad of Goddesses akin to Mermaids or Sirens, who lure mortals to secret rites and initiations by Their enchanting music. They are named for Hesperos, the Evening Star, which is sacred to Aphrodite, who is sometimes credited with creating the Golden Apples. The Hesperides tend the Tree and its Golden Apples, but Hera also has it guarded by the Dragon Ladôn, born of Gaia, who lies hid in the dark Hollows of Earth.

In the well known tales of **Heracles**, one of his Labors was to fetch some of the Apples of the Hesperides, but stories differ as to whether he got them by force, slaying the Dragon, or with the cooperation of the Hesperides. Thus one may obtain the Fruit by either conquering the Dragon or by recruiting the assistance of the Tree Spirit. (Although it may seem surprising, Pythagoreans, Stoics, and other Greek philosophers take Heracles as the ideal spiritual hero; this is because they understand his Labors allegorically as the spiritual exercises and trials that led to his eventual deification. See also [Opsopaus. AGEDE. "Fire."](#) for more on Heracles and Heroization.)

Apollo slew (or otherwise conquered) the Dragoness of **Delphi**, born of Gaia, who was coiled around the Laurel Tree at the World Navel there. This Dragon is often called the **Pythôn**, but this is not correct, according to the oldest sources. At Delphi dwelt the Dragon Typhôn (born of Gaia and Tartarus) as well as the Dragoness Delphynê, whose name comes from the same archaic root *delph-* (Womb) as Delphi itself. Apollo slew the Dragoness, but the Dragon still guards the Omphalos, the Navel Stone marking the Cosmic Axis. The Holy Power of the Sun caused the Body of the Dragoness to Putrefy (*Pythô*) - that is, the Sun reduced it alchemically to Prime Matter - and from this event Delphi received its old name, Pythô. As a consequence, the Dragon is now named Pythôn and the Delphic Prophetess is called the Pythia. Apollo was required to atone for His deed for one **Great Year** (eight mortal years), during which He was exiled from Delphi.

Pythagoras' name is also traced to Pythian Apollo. When his parents were visiting Delphi, the Pythia prophesied that his mother would bear a holy man; Apollonius of Tyana said the Pythian Himself sired the child. In any case, Pythagoras certainly belonged to the Procession or Lineage (*Seira*) of Apollo. Henceforth his mother called herself Pythais and named the unborn child Pythagoras.

When **Kadmos** (whose name recalls *Kosmos*) had come to the place where he was to found Thebes, he needed Water for a sacrifice, but when he approached the Spring of Ares, he found a giant Dragon guarding it. (Many vase paintings show the Dragon rearing over a woman, presumably the Spirit of the Spring, perhaps **Harmonia**, who sits beside it.) He slew the Dragon and, under divine guidance, sowed its teeth, which sprouted into men called the Sown Ones (*Spartoi*) or the Golden-Helmed Seed. (We may see in this the sowing of the Seminal Ideas into Mother Earth.) In atonement for slaying the Dragon, Kadmos was required to serve Ares for a Great Year (as Apollo had been for slaying the Delphic Dragoness). After repaying his debt, he was wed to Harmonia, the daughter of Aphrodite and Ares (**Love and Strife**, the Primal Forces that mix and separate the Four Elements, according to Empedocles). *Harmonia*, in ancient Greek, means the binding together of two different things into a seamless whole, and so She is the great Mediator; She is a Goddess, who also appears as a Serpent. As **Unveiling Gifts** Kadmos gave Her a Robe and a Necklace. Kadmos and Harmonia were the parents of Semele, the deified mother of Dionysos. (See [Opsopaus, AGEDE, "Fire."](#) for more on Love, Strife, and Harmonia.)

Such stories are common, of course. For example, **Theseus** won his bride **Ariadne** (a Goddess closely connected with Persephone "Most Pure," *Ariagnê*) by slaying the Minotaur (born of the Bull from the Sea, and Pasiphaë, daughter of the Sun), who dwelt in the Coils of the Labyrinth (see [Opsopaus, "Rit. Lab."](#) esp. [nn.140-3](#)). So also **Perseus** slew the Dragon from the Sea and released **Andromeda**, his future bride, from the Pillar to which she was bound.

Hekate

Hekate has a special role in the *Chaldean Oracles* as the principal Goddess involved in magical and spiritual practices, for She is the **World Soul**. As such, She is the one who mediates between the Empyrean Realm, where the Gods reside, and our world; conversely She is the one who leads our way back to the Gods through Theurgy and other spiritual practices.

The Demiurge and Hekate together create the Aetherial Realm where the **Celestial Bodies** (the Fixed Stars and Planets) reside. Since the Celestial Bodies are material, and Hekate must mediate between Them and the Olympian Gods (who are immaterial), She is the Goddess at the lowest point of the Empyrean Realm, simultaneously separating and connecting the Aetherial and Empyrean orders. In other terms, She is the Mediator between Zeus, the **Transmundane Sun**, who rules the Olympian Gods, and the Mundane Sun (Helios, Sol), who rules the Celestial Bodies. She also keeps them apart,

for as a Girdling Mental Membrane She divides
the First and Other Fire, hastening to mix,

as the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 6) say. (The word here translated "Mental" is *Noeric*, referring to holistic Intuition.) This **Girdling Membrane** (*Hymên*) enwraps the material world to which She gives birth. In another Chaldean fragment (38) the Goddess Herself places Her fiery Girdle at the lower extremity of the Noetic Realm:

The Father's Thoughts are these, and then's My winding Fire.

This "(en)wrapping" or "twisting" of Her Girdle also suggests Her Serpents, on which, more [below](#).

The **Womb** of Hekate captures the Father's Ideas and births them, through the Fiery Membrane, into the material world. Thus in the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 32, ll. 2-3) we may see an allusion to the Demiurge, who

... is a Worker, Giver of Life-Bringing Fire,
and fills the Womb Life-Giving of Hekate...

(The gender, in Greek, of "Worker" and "Giver" is feminine, suggesting a Goddess, but the sense seems to require the Demiurge.)

The *Oracles* (fr. 35) also reveal that She is an emanation from the **One** as well as the means to His further emanation:

for from Him leap the Thunderbolts Implacable
and Lightning-Storm-receiving Wombs of Radiant Light
of Father-born Hekate, and Girdling Flower of Fire,
and mighty Spirit from beyond the Fiery Poles.

(This divine **Spirit** (*Pneuma*) is Hekate in Her role as World Soul.)

The Platonic Cross

In the *Timaeus* (36B-E), Plato tells us that the **World Soul** has the form of the Greek letter X (chi), and Proclus says that an X has been placed at the heart of every individual as an image of the World Soul. This X has a very special form, for it represents the way that the World Soul brings the Ideas into manifestation in space and time in the Celestial Realm. The two lines meet at 23.5 degrees and represent the Circle of the Same (*ho Tautou Kyklos*) and the Circle of the Other (*ho Thaterou Kyklos*), which are, respectively, under the guardianship of **Apollo** and **Artemis** ([as mentioned above](#)) and correspond to the motions of the mind and the vital soul.

The **Circle of the Same** is horizontal and outside the other; it corresponds to the Celestial Equator and rotates to the Right, from East to West, like the daily movements of the heavens through the Houses of the Zodiac and around the Spindle of Necessity (*Anankês Atrakto*). This is called the *Inerratic* (*Aplanês*, Non-Wandering, Fixed, Unerring) Sphere, which by its alternation of Day and Night, according to Plato, teaches us "the lesson of One and Two." That is, this motion is regular, and is governed by the processes of pure thought. This Circle is the Girdle (*Zôstêr*, *Zona*).

The **Circle of the Other** is diagonal and inside the other; it represents the Ecliptic (the Zodiacal Circle) and rotates to the Left, from West to East, like the slow movements of the planets through the Signs of the Zodiac. The motion is irregular (in fact, split into seven wandering motions) and is subject to nonrational judgements, beliefs, and feelings, especially those associated with the body (for the Aetherial Realm is the Bodily Vehicle of the World Soul). These are called the *Erratic* (*Planêtai*, Wandering, Unstable) Spheres, although their motion is lawful. However, of all the Planets, the Circle of the Other is most closely connected with the Sun, for it is the motion of the Sun that determines the yearly cycles of growth and decay that characterize mortal Life. (The Moon, of course, also exhibits cyclic change, but monthly cycles are not so closely connected with Life.) This Circle is the Sword Belt (*Telamôn*, *Balteus*).

When combined, the two motions create the **Helix**, which is a symbol of **Aiôn** (Eternity), the Unity preceding the opposites, Sameness and Otherness. The stars spiral though the heavens like a Snake, **Hekate's Serpent**, which represents the World Soul and is symbolized by Her encircling **Girdle**.

Our commonality with the World Soul, symbolized by the X placed on our hearts, may be represented by the **Sign of the Platonic Cross** (the *Crux Platonica* or *Littera X Platonica*): In one form the hand is passed diagonally from right to left and then horizontally from left to right. A downward diagonal corresponds to facing toward Libra so the **Gate of the Moon**, in the Northern sign of Cancer, through which souls descend into incarnation, is on your right, and the **Gate of the Sun**, in the Southern Sign of Capricorn, through which souls ascend to Heaven, is on your left; this is the passage from birth to death. This is the normal position of the Greek Sword Belt (*Telamôn*). An upward diagonal corresponds to facing in the opposite direction, toward Aries; this is the passage from death to rebirth. This is often the position of the Roman Sword Belt (*Balteus*), which was, however, sometimes worn like the Greek.

Here is another form of the X: Place your right arm diagonally across your chest, with your fingers spread above your heart. This is the Way of the Slant, and places the Gate of the Moon at your Heart, for they are both associated with the Soul. The spread fingers represent the division of the Circle of the Other into the seven Planetary bands. (If you are bothered by the fact that you don't have seven fingers, you can make instead the ancient finger sign for seven: bend the pinky in two and keep the other fingers and thumb extended.) As you cross your chest say, "By Sun and Moon." Now place your left arm horizontally along your diaphragm, across your right arm, with its fist on your right upper arm. This is the Way of the Side, and places your fist, representing the daily motion of the Fixed Stars, near the Gate of the Sun. As you make the outer line of the Cross, say "From Night to Day."

The X or **Crux Decussata** (Divided Cross) is rich in symbolism. It represents any Mediator creating a marriage of opposites, including Heaven and Earth, Sameness and Otherness, etc., joined in perfect Balance and Harmony. It is the initial letter of Khronos {XRONOS} and Khthoniê {XQONIH}, the Primordial Father and Mother, and thus unites Them. The X cuts as well as joins. The Romans marked boundaries with X, and so it also marks the boundary (Hekate's Girdling Membrane) separating and uniting the Mental and material realms. The X (*sešh*) hieroglyph means to divide or multiply, and therefore also symbolizes union (by the polarity of meanings typical of symbols).

We may also compare the X to the **Tiet Knot** on the **Girdle of Isis**, which represents Life and Immortality. It is placed on the neck of the deceased and protects the Body of Osiris. Tied, the Knot represents the union of body and soul in mortal life. Untied, it represents immortality attained by freeing the immortal soul from the mortal soul and body. The Knot cannot be severed (as Alexander cut the Gordian Knot), or immortality will be forfeit, but must be carefully untied (as in certain Tantric practices). Thus, the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* exhorts us, "Untie the Knots of Nephthys!"

The Moon

Although Hekate resides in the Empyrium, She is, of course, especially associated with the Moon. This is because the Moon is the nearest Celestial Body, and therefore the Mediator between the ("sublunary") world of mortals and the Celestial Realm and those above it, that is, in Chaldean terms, between the material world, on the one hand, and the Aetherial and Empyrean Worlds, on the other. (We have already seen that the World Soul is identified with many Lunar Goddesses.)

Because Hekate is the World Soul, She oversees the incarnation of individual souls and their fate after death. Plutarch says the Moon is the location of **Hekate's Hidden Place** (*Mukhos*), where we go when we die. There we enter the uterus-shaped **Infernal Coils** (*Koilōmata*). Those who have more time to spend on Earth go to the dark side of the Moon to await reincarnation; those who have achieved enlightenment, pass by way of the light side to the Elysian Fields in the Sphere of the Sun. (See "[Fire](#)" in [Opsopaus](#), [AGEDE](#), for more on the progress of the soul.)

Because of Hekate's mediating role, She also rules the **Daimones** and other Mediating Beings (called Iunges, Connectors, and Initiators in the *Chaldean Oracles*). I will defer Their discussion to [Part V](#), in the discussion of Theurgy.

Other Goddesses

A brief mention must suffice for the other Goddesses of Pythagoreanism. If one supposes that Kronos and Rhea did not become Zeus and Hera, but gave birth to Them, then one may wonder what became of the **Titanic Regents**. One answer is suggested by Plethon's statement that Tartarus, where the Titans dwell, is ruled by **Kronos** and **Aphrodite** (Herself a Titanic Mother Goddess). Since They dwell in the depths of Matter, They are responsible (along with the other Titans) for producing mortal creatures, such as humans. Kronos is Time (*Khronos*) and Aphrodite brings Eternity into the mortal world through the perpetuation of Forms (*Species*) in a succession of Bodies (*Corpora*).

In this creation the Titans cooperate with "**the Young Gods**," the Celestial Beings (who are also material, it will be recalled), under the leadership of the **Sun**; from the Celestials we inherit planetary and astral influences, for They attach our souls to our bodies. The Sun gives mortal creatures their Form, the **Moon** gives them Matter. The Titans rule the mortal parts of our nature, that is, the body (*sōma*) and vital soul (*psyché*), but the Celestials rule the immortal part, the mind (*nous*). (They are similarly responsible for the ensouling of the Terrestrial Daimones.)

In the context of modern science, it may seem naive or superstitious to treat the Celestial Bodies as living beings, so it worth exploring this notion. According to Pythagorean doctrine, anything that is self-moving is living and has a soul, among which the ancients included the Celestial Bodies. We, however, explain their motions by Newton's laws of motion and gravitation. To us, the planets and stars are not higher beings, but lower, merely lumps of rock or hot gas moving according to mechanical laws. However, this view stems from modern science's limited understanding of reality, and to appreciate the Pythagorean view, we must see Celestial Bodies as **symbolic entities**. Certainly, the Celestials have physical bodies (as do we) obeying the laws of physics, but they also have an existence in the world of Ideas (as do we), where They are numinous and divine, for They are symbols of divine perfection and providence. They exhibit for our wonder and admiration the perfection of luminous spirits, each following its own path, yet all a part of a single divine movement, like a well orchestrated dance.

Therefore Pythagoreans say that each of our souls has a corresponding **Star**, a Celestial of which each soul is the image and to whose Procession it belongs, a Star to which one's **Nous** (immortal soul) returns between incarnations. When you are born, your Nous departs from your Star and acquires characters from each of the Planets as it descends through Their Spheres; on death, these characters are given back to the Planets as your Nous returns to your Star.

Besides Hera, other Goddesses in Olympus are, according to Plethon, **Artemis**, **Athena**, **Dione**, **Hestia**, and **Tethys**. As Tartarean Goddesses he lists **Aphrodite**, **Demeter**, and **Korê** (**Persephone**). In general the Goddesses provide Matter to complement the Form that comes from the Gods, and are especially associated with the mediate Procession (Power, Life, Mother) phase in each Triad of Emanation (Abiding, Proceeding, Reverting).

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A Summary of Pythagorean Theology

Part III: Gods

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Enigmas of the One

I begin with an enigma. The Pythagorean [theogony presented in Part I](#) says that the **Primordial One**, the bisexual Aiôn (Eternity), engenders the **Primary Duality**, the Monad and the Indefinite Dyad, the archetypal Male and Female. These two represent all dualities, including Sameness/Difference and Being/Not-being, but principally Unity and Plurality. The One, in contrast, transcends and unites all these dualities, joining the opposites. Yet by uniting them it must in some sense be a Unity. And if The One is a unity, it must stand opposed to a Many, and we are back to the duality of Unity and Plurality.

We may resolve the paradox by observing that The One unifies **Being** and **Not-being**, so that It may *be* a unity and *not be* a unity simultaneously. Nevertheless, we may be left in some doubt as to how The One (*To Hen*), the Monad (*Monas*), Being (*To On*), and Existence (*Ousia*) relate to one another, and all these to the Good (*T'Agathon*). Pythagoreans and Platonists differ among themselves about these highest realms of Reality. This is hardly surprising, since we cannot know them directly, and even such knowledge of them as we can have is beyond verbal expression.

In this brief Summary of Pythagorean Theology, I will ignore most of these issues. In this part we will begin with the Monad, identified with the **First God Kronos**, Father of the Gods, and then proceed to the other Gods. The Indefinite Dyad, identified with Rhea, Mother of the Gods, has, of course, been dealt with already in the [Part II](#). The [Part III](#) will consider The One, also called The All (*To Pan*).

The Monad and the Indefinite Dyad

Many of the contrasts between the Monad and Indefinite Dyad were presented in the preceding parts (["Theogony"](#) and ["The Indefinite Dyad"](#)) and will not be repeated here. However, we may add that ancient Pythagorean doctrine (coming perhaps from Zoroaster) associates the Monad with the Light (as opposed to Dark), Hot, Dry, Light (vs. Heavy), Swift, and Male; the Indefinite Dyad with the opposite qualities. Since Fire is Hot and Dry, we will see that the Monad and His Offspring are especially associated with **Fire** and the **Sun**.

As mentioned in Part I (["Theogony"](#)), **Aiôn (Eternity)** is Time both Infinite and Indefinite. Time as we know it, **Determinate Time** is created by the Monad and Indefinite Dyad, for Rhea entices the unchanging, self-limiting Kronos to proceed out from

Himself, and to become *Khronos* (Time). As explained in Part II (["The Mother of the Gods"](#)), Rhea creates Rhythm, and from the cyclic alternation of the opposites (Light/Dark, etc.), Determinate Time is born.

Creation of the Demiurge

According to Pythagorean doctrine, the Essence of **Kronos** is to Remain (or Abide), but **Rhea** has the Power to cause Him to Proceed beyond Himself. However, He must eventually Revert to His Essence to preserve His Identity. (See Part I on ["Triadic Structure."](#)) In this way the determining, form-imparting power of the Monad emanates outward to inform Matter, but it preserves its form by looking back toward its origin. For if this Procession were to continue without Limit, all Form would be lost in the dark abyss of indefinite chaotic Matter.

Kronos' essence is to remain Himself, but Rhea has the power to create another, and so from Them **Zeus** is born. Thus the three phases, Remaining, Proceeding, Reverting, create the **Tridynamos**, the Threefold Power of the **Triune Godhead** - Kronos, Rhea, and Zeus - and we read in the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 26):

The World, which saw Thee, Threefold Monad, worshipped Thee.

This means that the Monad contains the Triad of **Father, Mother, and Son**.

The **Ideas (Forms)** exist in unity in the mind of Kronos, for He is the Monad, but Rhea has the power to multiply them, for She is the Indefinite Dyad. Therefore in the mind of Their Son Zeus the Ideas are distinctly articulated, and become the **Logos** by which He creates the world. The Forms or Ideas have their origin in Kronos, the Father; they multiply without bound by the power of Rhea, the Mother; and the Ideas become active in the Mind of Zeus the Son. Thus the Gods of the Tridynamos govern the three levels: Being (*On*), Life (*Zôê*), and Mind (*Nous*). Referring to the Monad, the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 4) say,

For with Him is the Power, but from Him is the Nous.

(The Indefinite Dyad is also called "Power"; see ["Indefinite Dyad"](#) in Part II.)

Creation of Hera

Zeus is the first of the Olympian generation born of the Titanic Regents, Kronos and Rhea; the second is **Hera**, His sister and wife. As explained in Part II (["Isis & Osiris."](#) and following), She is the **World Soul**, who embodies in matter the articulated Ideas of Zeus.

Pythagoreans differ about Hera's birth, but we may say that Gods give birth by creating images of Themselves, by a process of continuous emanation. Pherekydes (fl. 544 BCE), one of Pythagoras' teachers, implies that when Kronos and Rhea wed, They transform into Zeus and Gaia (here equivalent to Hera; see also ["Wedding"](#) in Pt. II). Proclus (c.411-485 CE), however, says that Zeus the Creator makes the World Soul (Hera), as will be discussed later (["Craftsman"](#)). In this case She may be seen as an image of Zeus in terms of rank and of Rhea in terms of character.

In any case, we have two ranks, Titanic and Olympian, with a God and Goddess in each. The Emperor Julian (Caes. 307CD) had a **vision** in which he saw Them seated upon **Thrones**: Kronos' was of black ebony of "a luster so intense and divine that no one could endure to gaze thereon"; indeed its intensity was more intense than the Sun (on which, [see below](#)); this is the blinding blackness of the **Paternal Abyss** (see ["Self-contemplating Nous"](#) below). Zeus's throne was of brilliant electrum, a union of gold and silver. (*Elektron*, which may refer to amber as well as to the gold-silver alloy, is from the same root as *Élektôr*, which is a name for the Sun, on which [see below](#).) Opposite them on golden thrones were Rhea nearest Kronos, and Hera nearest Zeus.

Creation of the Other Gods

Kronos and Rhea give birth to the other Gods by a **Multiplication of Unity**. That is, the Mother, the Indefinite Dyad, as the principle of multiplicity, creates a plurality of images of the Monad, the Father. She causes separation and unlimited proliferation, but He maintains Their definition by imposing Limit on Their identities. (See also ["Theogony"](#) in Part I.) The result is a plurality of unities, which are called **Henads (Units)** and correspond to the Gods. In the mind of Kronos They are individual yet interpenetrating, like the spectrum of colors in white light. As Proclus says, "All the Henads are in all, but each separately." In Zeus's Noetic Realm, however, they become articulated as distinct Divinities.

Pherekydes explains how the various Gods came to have Their characters. He says that **Kronos' Semen** is warm, quickening, and moist, which are the qualities of the three subtler **elements**, for Fire is warm, Air is quickening (since Air, *Pneuma*, corresponds to Spirit; see ["Air" in Opsopaus, AGEDE](#)), and Water is moist. These correspond to the components of the **tripartite soul**: (1) the higher soul, seat of the intuitive mind (*nous*), (2) the rational soul (*logistikón*), seat of discursive reason

(*dianoia*), and (3) the nonrational soul (*alogia*), responsible for the senses, appetites, and motion.

In order to create the Gods, this Semen must be nurtured in the **Dark Womb** of the Earth Mother, which corresponds to the element Earth and to the Body, house of the soul. The Semen is placed in five **Craters** (Mixing Bowls or volcanic Craters) or **Mukhoi (Hidden Places)** in the Earth, each corresponding to a different **Mixture (Crasia)** of Mind and Matter. (See "[The Cosmic Tree in Part II](#)" and "[Fire in Opsopaus, AGEDE](#)", for more on the Crater.) Each such mixture corresponds to one of the five **Elements**, ruled by a God. In the highest place, the Circle of Light, we have **Kronos**, ruling the Fifth Element, the Quintessence or **Aithêr**. The deepest place, the Dark Earth, is ruled by the Mother, who may be called **Rhea, Demeter, or Gaia**. Between them is the Threefold Sovereignty apportioned between **Zeus** (Fire), **Hades** (Air), and **Poseidon** (Water). All three are considered Creators (*Dêmiourgoi*) operating on behalf of the King, Kronos). (The reasons for the traditional Platonic association of Hades with Air are discussed below, "[The Lower Zeus](#).")

According to Proclus, some of the Gods acquire their character from the **triune nature of The One**. The three relations of [Remaining, Proceeding, and Reverting](#) correspond to three aspects of the One: **Peras (Limit)**, **Apeiria (the Unlimited)**, and **Pronoia (Foreknowledge, Providence)**; they reveal the Essence, Power, and Activity of Divinity, respectively. Each has a corresponding class of Gods, who manifest its character.

Limit leads to **Father Gods**, who manifest limit, delimitation, definition, form, and law. At the Noetic Level (that of Zeus the Demiurge) and below They are often **Creators** of some sort, for They create by imparting form to pre-existing matter. Notable among these is the **Solar Series** ([discussed later](#)).

The Unlimited leads to **Mother Goddesses**, who manifest the unlimited, indefinite, infinite, multiplying, productive, and generative powers. At the Noetic Level and below They are called **Life-Giving**. (See [Part II, "Goddesses"](#) for more on Them.)

Pronoia leads to the **Perfecting (Teleiôtikoi, Telesourgoi) Gods**, who manifest Foreknowledge and Providence by assisting with the reintegration of the soul and its elevation to the Gods. At the Noetic Level and below, some of These are called **Guardians (Phrourêtikoi)**, because at these lower levels it's necessary to protect the essence of beings by preserving the distinctness of their forms. Others are called **Purifiers (Kathartikoi)** or **Liberators** because They liberate and elevate the divine part of the soul.

The Self-contemplating Nous

The concept of **Noêsis** (intuitive thought) was touched upon in Part II ("[The Mother of the Gods](#)"), but we must consider it in more detail, for both Kronos and Zeus have the character of an **Intuiting Mind (Nous)**. Although Noêsis is sometimes translated "intellection," it does not refer to a process of discursive reasoning; rather, Noêsis is a direct, intuitive apprehension of the essence of things. In contrast to reasoning, which occurs sequentially in time and deals with particulars located in space, Noêsis is **not bound by space or time** (which occurs only at the level of the World Soul and below, for reasoning is an activity of the soul).

Nous is timeless in Essence, Power, and Activity; **Soul (Psychê)**, however, is timeless in Essence (for She is eternal), but temporal in Activity, for Her Power brings the Archetypes into time. As the Gods have Nous, so also Daimones, humans, and animals all have Nous, which is the divine part of their souls. That is, as there is a World Nous, so also each of our individual souls has a Nous, the **immortal divine part within**, which understands meaning by means of a direct grasp of the eternal Ideas. (Pythagoras is credited with the discovery of the individual Nous.)

Nous has direct knowledge of the eternal **Forms or Ideas**, because it is of the same nature as them, but it cannot know the transient, changing individuals participating in those Forms, or anything that is Formless. That is, we might say that the Nous is the **Archetypal Mind** (in Jung's terms, the **Collective Unconscious**), which has direct knowledge of the **Archetypes**. (Therefore also, the Gods, who reside in the Noetic Realm, cannot deal with us as individuals, but employ the **Daimones** as intermediaries; see "[Mediating Spirits](#)" in Pt. V.)

Both Kronos the Monad and Zeus the Demiurge can be characterized as Cosmic Minds (*Noi*), but of different kinds. Kronos is a **Self-contemplating Nous**, that is, an inwardly directed Mind, eternally at rest, for which the thinker and the thought are numerically One. He is utterly simple, because He transcends Form, of which He is the **Fount or Source**. His is the level of **Pure Being**, and therefore He is the only one who has Pure Being as His sole object of thought. Thus Plato (*Crat.* 396b) suggests that **Kronos' name** means Pure Mind (*Koros Nous*, from *korein*, to clean out). He is called the **Unmixed Nous**, the **First or Primal Nous**, and the **Paternal Nous**. The Demiurge, in contrast, is an outwardly directed Nous, who contemplates the Monad, as will be discussed in more detail later ("[Demiurgic Nous](#)"). He is called the **Demiurgic Nous**, the **Second Nous**, and **Nous Proper**, for His active Noêsis is most akin to our own. The Demiurge is often mistaken for the Father, for His work is more manifest, as the *Oracles* (fr. 7) say,

The Father finished every thing and handed them
to Second Nous, whom you, the tribe of men, call First.

Here "finished" means "perfected," for the Father thinks the **Model** perfectly.

Kronos, as the Primal Nous, thinks the Ideas, but they exist in an undifferentiated unity, for He is the Monad. Therefore these unified Ideas are called *Kurioi* (Proper, Supreme). The Lords (*Kurioi*), that is, the Gods (the **Henads**), also lie hidden at this level, and may be compared to the Archetypes, which are hidden until They choose to manifest in consciousness.

Rhea, the Indefinite Dyad, has the power to separate the Ideas and cause them to proceed outward from the Source. Therefore Her Son Zeus thinks the Articulated Ideas, that is, the **Logos**. The Monadic Totality, the Idea of Ideas (*Eidos Eidôn*), provides the *Paradeigma* (**Paradigm, Model**) of the Universe, which the Demiurge contemplates in His articulation of the Ideas and His creation of the world according to the Logos (see "[Demiurgic Nous](#)" and following sections, below).

The name "**Kronos**" has been connected to the word *Krainô*, which means to accomplish, fulfil, or bring to pass, but also to reign or govern. This etymology shows Him to be the ultimate Cause and Governor of the universe. *Krainô* comes from the Indo-European root *Ker*, which means "to grow." From it we also get the Latin words *Cerus* (Maker), *Creare* (to create, beget, bring forth), and *Creator* (Begetter, Maker). Interestingly, another Indo-European root *Ker* means Heat or Fire. Thus we further understand Kronos as the fiery ultimate Begetter and Creator of the universe.

Kronos' Realm is the Primary Cosmic Order (*Prôtos Diakosmos*), the level of **Essential or Real Being** (*To Ontôs On*), and therefore of ultimate **Truth**. However, because Kronos is identical to the absolute unity of His Ideas,

... the Father snatched Himself away,
and didn't close His Fire in Noeric Power. (C.O. fr. 3)

That is, the Supreme (*Kurioi*) Ideas cannot be known by our unaided minds, for even our Nous can comprehend the Ideas only as distinct and separate essences. Therefore the transcendent Monad is called Indescribable, Unnamable, Ineffable, Invisible, Hidden, and the **Paternal Abyss** (see "[Theogony](#)" in Part I on the Maternal Abyss), for at the levels of Life (Rhea) and Being (Kronos) all possibilities occur simultaneously. However, by means of **Illumination** (*Ellampsis*) from the Gods,

who see and know Abyss, Paternal, Hypercosmic

(C.O. fr. 18), we may apprehend the Monad by means of our divine indwelling spirit, the **Flower of the Nous**, as will be explained in [Part V](#) of this summary.

The Good

According to Pythagoreans, the Monad is identical to **The Good** (*T'Agathon*), as confirmed in the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 11):

The Good perceiving, where Paternal Monad is.

The Good is the highest value, the goal of all striving, because The Good saves all things by preserving their **Unity**, and Unity is in itself Good. The Good tends toward Unity, and Nature strives for The Good. Therefore, we may identify The Good with **Providence (Pronoia)** and say that the Cosmos, the orderly universe, depends on The Good. As a consequence, the First God is called Good, Blessed, Conferer of Blessedness, Excellent, and many similar names.

Primal Fire

We have already seen that the Monad is associated with the **Light**, the **Hot**, and **Fire**. Similarly, the Zoroastrians say that the Father exists in Beginningless Light as the Mother dwells in Endless Darkness. Therefore we will see that the **Sun** is the preeminent symbol of the central Gods of Pythagorean theology.

First, Kronos is the **Lord of Time** (*Khronos*), as is the Sun, who defines Time by the alternation of night and day, and who governs Nature through the cycle of the seasons. Therefore, the *Chaldean Oracles* call the First God the **Transcendent Fire**. And according to Julian (331-363 CE), the First Principle is **Hyperion** (He Above All), the mythological Father of **Helios (Sun)** and **Selene (Moon)**.

The **Rays** of the Primal Fire emanate throughout the universe, down through its levels, connecting it into one whole and harmonizing its parts. As the *Oracles* (fr. 81) say,

All yield to the Noeric Lightning-storm of the
Noeric Fire and serve the Father's cogent Will.

The "Lightning-storm" (*Préstêr*) represents the **Ideas or Connectors** ([see below](#)), the Rays that integrate and coordinate the universe.

Each level has a Sun at its center, which unifies that level and bathes the lower levels in Light. Also, each level is further removed from the original Source of Light (the **Light of Lights**) and more admixed with the Dark; therefore each level partakes

less of Unity and more of Diversity, and there is a **Hierarchy of Lights**. However, it is a mistake to think that the higher levels are better than the lower, for the Light and the Dark are necessary complementary **Poles of The All**. From the One to **Prime Matter**, the universe is an **Image of Divinity**.

In Part I ("[Triadic Structure](#)") I mentioned the **Seirai**, the multilevel **Chords** or **Chains** that emanate from the Monad and tie the levels together. The most important of these is the **Solar Series** (*Héliou Seira*), the central Axis of Light, which comprises the Monad (Kronos), the Demiurge (Zeus), the Transmundane Sun (Apollo), and the Mundane Sun (Helios).

The Demiurgic Nous

We have seen that **Zeus the Demiurge** is the third member of the **Tridynamos**, and that He is the Activity and Actualization born of Abiding Kronos and Proceeding Rhea. His activity is *Noêsis*, the intuitive thinking of the Ideas articulated as His **Logos**. Zeus is the Nous Proper, that is, the **Nous** as active, intuitively understanding Mind. The Indefinite Dyad (Rhea) corresponds to **Noêsis**, the living process of intuitive understanding, by which Nous, the subject, is directed towards its object, the **Noêton**, the eternal Monad of Being (Kronos).

The Demiurgic Nous, like all things, has a **Triadic Character**: Abiding, Proceeding, and Reverting. He Abides in Himself, preserving the integrity of the Ideas. But when He Proceeds outward, He creates the world, thereby becoming the Demiurge. He provides the Archetypes for the material world, and therefore occupies the lowest place in the Noetic Realm. However, His Procession, His Creation, is delimited and restrained by the Ideas, which He contemplates in His Reversion. So also the Nous in each of us is both **contemplative** and **creative**.

The Logos

Logos has a broad range of meanings in ancient Greek, which include word, explanation, argument, rational account of any sort, tabulation, and ratio; we may summarize them by saying that **Logos is Articulated Thought**. The *Demiurge* is called the Logos because He articulates the holistic thought in the mind of Kronos. By the separating Power of the Indefinite Dyad He is able to discriminate the **Ideas** and define them by the unifying Essence of the Monad. The Ideas are individually simple and distinct; together they are the **Model (Paradeigma)** for anything that can exist.

Ancient Greek *Demiourgos* comes from two **Indo-European roots**, *da* and *werg*. *Da* means to Divide, and therefore also to apportion and provide (whence we also get *Daimôn*, for the Daimones provide for us). *Werg* means *to Do* and also refers to any Worker. (From *Werg* we also get *Orgia*, the secret rites.) Thus the Demiurge is the one who Does the Work of Division.

The Ideas are both **Transcendent** and **Immanent**. They are transcendent in that they reside hypercosmically in the Demiurgic Nous, and beyond that, as Supreme Ideas or Henads in the Monad. However, they are also immanent in **matter** as the organizing Logos of the world. Plutarch (c.46 CE - c.125) compares the Immanent and Transcendent Ideas to the Body and Soul of **Osiris** (see also "[Isis & Osiris](#)" in Part II). As the Body of Osiris is repeatedly torn apart by Typhon and restored by **Isis** so that Osiris is continually renewed, so also the material world, ordered by the Immanent Ideas, undergoes continual dissolution by the power of the Indefinite Dyad and rejuvenation by the **World Soul**. In contrast, the Soul of Osiris is eternal and indestructible, like the Transcendent Ideas in the Divine Nous.

In its transcendent aspect, the Logos is Eternal and independent of Time; it is like the timeless **Harmonic Ratios** (*Logoi*). However, in its Immanent aspect, the Logos proceeds in Time by sequential thinking, like a sequential melody. Thus Logos is both an eternal principle and a sequential narrative. In this way the Demiurge creates **Time** on the model of **Eternity (Aiôn)** and by means of the cyclic measure of Time, which is created by the dance of the Monad and Indefinite Dyad, and which is manifested by the motions of the Celestial Beings (stars and planets). The **Nous** is an activity in Eternity (i.e., outside of time), for He contemplates the Eternal Monad, whereas the **Soul (Psychê)** is an activity in Time, for She animates the material world. Since the Demiurge acts outside of Time, His creation is not a historical event, but an eternal emanation.

Providence, Fate, and Free Will

The sequential thinking of the Demiurgic Nous is its sequential projection of the Ideas and Forms onto matter. Thus the **Logos** is the **Divine Law** governing the material world, which creates the **Kosmos** (World Order). Whereas the Monad is the source of **Pronoia (Providence, Foreknowledge)**, the Demiurge is the source of **Fate (Heimarmenê)**, which is more manifest and more closely connected with a changing physical nature than is Foreknowledge.

Contemplating the Monadic Ideas, which He articulates, **Zeus** guides the Harmony of the World, steering it by means of the Forms (the Logos). However, He is unable to completely order Matter (which is subject to the ever-flowing Indefinite Dyad), and so Divine Providence leaves room for **Chance** and **Necessity**.

Neither Foreknowledge nor Fate implies absolute determinism, however. Rather, as Providence defines the context in which

Fate is free to act, so Fate delimits and influences, but does not determine, Necessity, Chance, and **Free Will**, which operate within Fate. We may say that Providence encompasses Fate, and Fate encompasses Free Will.

Indeed, according to Apuleius (born c.125 CE) there is a **hierarchy of Providences**, and each governs the lower, as the higher parts of the soul govern the lower. The First Providence, which has its origin in the **Good**, is the Model for the Noësis and **Will** (*Boulêsis*) of the Demiurge, and thus for the Logos, which governs the Noetic Realm and the Principal Gods dwelling in the **Empyrium**. Our Higher Souls are guided by this Providence by means of the Demiurge. The Second Providence, which corresponds to Fate, is governed by the **Secondary (or Young) Gods**, who correspond to the Planets and occupy the **Aetherial Realm**. During the **descent of our souls** into bodies, they acquire from the Planetary Gods the characters and powers necessary for the survival of our kind. That is, our Lower Souls come from the Celestial Spheres, and are therefore subject to Fate and Astral influences. The Third Providence, subject to Fate, is governed by the **Daimones**, stationed in the **Terrestrial (Material) Realm** and delegated by the Planetary Gods as Overseers of human activity.

The Craftsman

Zeus is called **Demiurge** (*Dêmiourgos*, Creator), **Maker** (*Poiêtês*), and **Craftsman** (*Technitês*). His office is described in the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 5):

... For not in Matter doth
the First Transcendent Fire His own Power clothe
by means of deeds, but by the Nous; for Nous of Nous
is Craftsman of the Fiery Cosmos....

That is, the First Nous (the Transcendent Fire) does not directly clothe His Ideas (Power) in Matter, but this is accomplished by the Second Nous (Nous born of Nous, the Craftsman), who creates the Empyrean World (the Fiery Cosmos).

To accomplish this He looks towards the **Pattern or Model** (*Paradeigma*) to guide His creation of the World. In particular, the First Nous is the Model upon which He fashions **human souls**. As the *Oracles* (fr. 25) say,

These things the Father thought; a mortal was ensouled.

This refers to Noësis, the intuitive thinking, of the Paternal Nous, the ultimate source of all souls.

By means of the **separating Power** of the Indefinite Dyad, the Demiurge articulates the Ideas, creating the **Logos**, and beginning the process of multiplication and generation by which the Cosmos is born from the World Soul. Like a prism, which separates the colors from white light by bending the rays of each color in the same way, but differently from the other colors, so the Demiurge separates the Ideas by projecting them in accord with their essences. (This is, according to Empedocles (c.495-435), the power of **Strife**, which differentiates by associating each with its kind and apart from other kinds; Strife is the separating power of the Indefinite Dyad. **Love**, in contrast, draws all things together, regardless of kind; it is the unifying power of the Monad. For more on Love and Strife, see ["Fire" in Opsopaus, AGEDE.](#))

The **process of emanation** is described in the longest surviving fragment of the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 37):

In Thought with vigorous Will Paternal Nous shoots forth
the Multiformed Ideas, and from one Fount they all
leap out; for from the Father are both Will and End.
They were divided by Noeric Fire and shared
with more Noerics; for before the Cosmos Multiformed
the Ruler placed the vigorous Noeric Pattern, where
by cosmic track appeared with shape the rushing World,
engraved with Manifold Ideas; their Fount is one,
from which shoot forth divided others, terrible,
which break upon the bodies of the World, and round
the awful Wombs are born like swarms of bees,
which one way, then another, shine around about,
and are Noeric Thoughts from the Paternal Fount,
which oft from sleepless Time's peak pluck the Flower of Fire.
The Father's first and self-perfecting Fount doth gush
forth these Primordial Ideas....

This seems to be the meaning: The **Ideas** rush with a whooshing sound (associated with the Music of the Spheres) from the First God (Paternal Nous) by means of His Thought and Will, which are associated with the Son and His Mother, for Thought is closely related to **Nous**, and Will is closely related to **Dynamis (Power, Potential)**. The **Fount** is the Father, and the Father's Will is also the End (the Accomplishment or Perfection). The Ideas must be divided to become articulated; this is accomplished by the Second Nous (the Noeric Fire). These Ideas are shared with the "other Noerics," the Ideas which *inform* the material

world. The Noeric Pattern (*typon*) is the **Paradeigma**, the holistic unity of Ideas in the Paternal Nous. The fiery Forms imprint themselves on Primordial Matter, and swarm around the **Wombs** of the World Soul (on which, see [Part II](#)). In this oracle, "**Time**" seems to refer to a Teletarch (perhaps Aiōn), rather than Kronos/Khronos, but it's unclear ([see below](#) on the Teletarchs).

The following **Stages** in the Creation (or Emanation) have been identified by Proclus. First the Demiurge produces from Himself the "Nous of The All" (*Nous Tou Pantos*) or **World Mind**, which contains all the Noetic Beings, the Ideas or Forms. Next, with the Crater He creates the **World Soul** (and so, in this account **Hera** is created by Zeus rather than by Kronos and Rhea; [see above](#)). In this way He creates the **Womb** from which the World is born (for more on the Womb see ["Mother of the Gods"](#) and ["Hekate"](#) in Part II). In the same manner He creates all other souls (Celestial, Daimonic, and Sublunary) along with their vehicles; they are governed by the **Laws of Fate**. Finally, in conjunction with **Whole Nature** (*Holê Physis*) He creates corporeal things, and in conjunction with **Necessity** (*Anankê*) He creates the **World Body** (*Sôma Tou Pantos*). Thus, from Him emanate by degrees the World Mind, World Soul, and World Body.

However, according to Orphic Scriptures and other ancient accounts, the Divine Craftsman opens the **Cosmic Egg**, and the halves of Its Shell become Heaven and Earth. (For more on the Egg, see ["The Goddess in the Cosmic Tree"](#) in Part II.) And according to Pherekydes, Zeus the Craftsman **weaves** the **Variegated Robe**, adorned with Creation, as the **Unveiling Gift** for His Bride, **Hera** (see ["The Wedding"](#) in Part II). In many ancient traditions the Craftsman, who may be identical with the **Sun**, weaves the Cosmos by His cyclic activity, binding it together with the **Thread of Pneuma** (Air or Spirit). By His eternal, repetitive working of Forms into the **Chords (Seirai)**, the **Harmony** of the World is created.

Ancient Greek *Technitês* (Craftsman) comes from the **Indo-European root Tek**, which means "to Weave" and, more generally, "to Fabricate" (hence Architect, from *Tektôn* = Builder). From the same root comes Latin *Tela* (web, net, warp of fabric) and *subtilis* (finely woven, subtle), which refers to the Thread passing under the warp (*sub tela*). English "Toil" also comes from this root. The Craftsman works at weaving the world with His subtle thread.

The Mediating Dyad

Zeus the Demiurge is called a Dyad, but He must not be confused with the Indefinite Dyad, His Mother Rhea. (We might call Him the Definite Dyad.) He is called a Dyad for two reasons. The first is because He is Son of Kronos the Monad; they are called the **First and Second God**, the **First and Second Nous**, the **First and Second Fire**, the **Once and Twice (First and Second) Transcendent**, and so forth. Second, He is called Dyad because He is a **Mediator** between the **Empyrean (Noetic)** and Material Worlds. On the one hand, He contemplates the Ideas; on the other, He hurls His formative **Lightning Bolts** into the **Wombs of Nature**. This interpretation is confirmed by the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 8), which say:

... beside this one a Dyad sits.
For He hath both: to hold Noetics in His Nous,
to bring Sensation to the Worlds....

That is, he brings Sensation or Sense-perception to the world by planting the Ideas in Matter.

In other terms, we may say that the soul of the Demiurge has two faculties. His **Critical Faculty** (*Kritikon*) is directed upward toward the Monad of Being, which His Nous can grasp, although ours cannot. His **Impulsive Faculty** (*Hormêtikon*) results from His **Lust (Orexis)** for **Matter**. Therefore He sends His Fiery Logos into the Womb of the World Soul to impregnate Her with His Ideas.

Helios and Eros the Mediators

Because of His role as a Mediating Dyad, the Demiurgic Logos is associated with many **mediating Gods**, who are considered identical or closely related to Him. Among them are **Helios**, **Mithras**, **Attis**, and **Asclepius**, all of whom may all be referred to as Middle (*Mesê*) and Mediator (*Mesitês*).

As we have seen (["Primal Fire"](#)), each of the Levels of Being has a sort of Sun at its center, which governs and harmonizes it, while emanating the next lower level; this is the **Solar Series**. Therefore, various of these Central Deities are called "Helios" (Sun).

First, Helios may refer to the **Mundane Sun**, who stands in the **middle** of the Planets, where He causes and governs Their motion. This is His position in the Chaldean or metaphysical order of the Planetary Spheres: Moon, Mercury, Venus - Sun - Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. Thus He stands midway between the Moon, representing the **World Soul**, and Saturn, representing Kronos, the **Monad** (also called the Dark Sun; [recall](#) His ebony Throne). The Sun is also central in the modern view of the solar system, which we call "Copernican" (but which Copernicus called "Pythagorean"). Therefore Helios is called "Midmost among the Middle Gods" (that is, among the Celestial, as opposed to Olympian, Gods). Since all things on Earth flourish and decline as the Sun approaches and retires, He governs our world of Becoming.

Second, as the Mundane Sun rules the Planets and other Celestials in the **Aetherial Realm**, so Helios as the **Transmundane Sun** rules the Ideas in the **Empyrean Realm**; thus He is called Noeric Helios. ("Empyrean," it should be noted, comes from *Pyr*, Fire.) Here the Transmundane Sun is the **Demiurge Zeus** (called the Noeric God), who **mediates** between the Mundane World below and the Transcendent Monad (the Primal Fire) above, which is the third and highest hypostasis of the Sun.

Hesiod says that Helios is the son of **Theia** and **Hyperion** (He Above All), whom we have already seen to be the First Principle. "Theia" of course means "divine female," but it is also a word for Aunt and Nurse; it is synonymous with *Têthis*, which is connected with Têthys (Goddess of the Abyssal Flux), another name for Hyperion's bride. Both names are derived from a root meaning "to milk or suckle." Theia is obviously the Great Mother Rhea. Hyperion and Theia gave birth to a Triad: the **Sun (Helios)**, the **Moon (Selene)**, and the **Dawn (Eôs)**, who comes between the other two. Helios is the **World Mind** and Selene is the **World Soul** (see "[Moon](#)" in Part II); Eôs marks the place where They meet.

Sometimes the Demiurge is distinguished from the Transmundane Sun, in which case the latter may be identified with **Apollo**, who then mediates between Zeus and Helios. Plutarch explains Apollo's name (Apollôn) as meaning "Not-many" (*A-pollon*), which shows His descent from the Monad.

Pythagoreanism was influenced by the doctrines of the Magi, which were traced back to Zoroaster, according to which Helios was identical to **Mithras**, the Savior God of Mithraism. Therefore Julian had little difficulty reconciling his Pythagorean and Mithraic beliefs.

Based on Mithraic doctrine, we may say that **Helios-Mithras mediates** in three domains. Cosmically, He mediates between His parents, Kronos and Rhea, that is, between the Monad, the principle of unity, and the Indefinite Dyad, the principle of plurality, for His Logos comprises the articulated Ideas, a plurality of unities. Theologically, He stands between the Gods, residing in the realm of Eternal Being, and humans, residing in the realm of Perpetual Becoming. Morally, He is the Savior by whom humans may hope to ascend to the Good. For Helios-Mithras is the Psychopomp, who shows the mystic's soul the way to the Gods, and who leads the disincarnate souls of the dead up through the seven planetary spheres. Helios-Mithras is the **God of Truth** and is called the **Judge (Kritês)** because the Sun sees all things (recall: Helios was the only God to witness the abduction of Persephone), and because He judges each soul after death and decides whether it should be reincarnated.

Another Mediating God closely related to the Demiurge is **Eros (Love)**, and Pherekydes says that when **Zeus** intended to create (*demiourgein*), He changed into Eros. The *Oracles* say that Eros was the first to leap from the Paternal Nous (who, [it will be recalled](#), is identified with Love as opposed to Strife). All the Gods are born through the agency of Love.

Eros is called the **Noetic Archetype of the Sun** (which makes Him a **Transmundane Sun**), and therefore He governs the Noetic Realm of the Ideas. As the Noetic Archetype of the Sun, He also corresponds to **The Good**, which is the goal that all things desire. He is the cosmic force who draws The All together in Unity. In the words of the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 39):

For, thinking deeds, the self-produced Paternal Nous
in all things sowed the fire-heavy Bond of Love,
so that all things Remain in love through Boundless Time,
nor fall the Webs wove of the Father's Noeric Light.
Through Love the Cosmic Elements Remain on course.

The *Hyphasmena* (**Woven Webs**) may also be Robes, recalling the Craftsman's weaving of the **Variegated Robe** (see "[The Wedding](#)" in Part II and "[Craftsman](#)" above).

Further (as explained in Plato's *Symposium*), Eros captures souls, and, being Intermediate (*Metaxu*), turns them toward the **Beauty** of the Monad and leads them upwards toward It. (In contrast, the **Mundane Sun**, by illuminating sensible things, may lead us deeper into the material world and bind us to it, unless of course we understand the Mundane Sun as a visible symbol for the **Transmundane Sun**.)

Helios-Mithras is considered an ally of humanity. He creates and orders the material world, and taught us civilized life, including religion, politics, and culture. Therefore His mediation is called Friendly and Harmonious. Such a **Mediating Logos** is necessary for **Salvation**, for the Monad is beyond the reach of our unaided minds, and therefore a mediating power is necessary to join the individual nous with the First Nous. Thus we must seek aid from such Gods as Helios-Mithras and Eros, who can help to lift our minds to the Apex of Being. The Demiurge is able to apprehend the Monad, and by being allowed to merge our own nous with the Divine Nous, we too may approach the Monad. This **mystical union** is effected through the **Flower of Nous (Anthos Nou)**, the highest part of the soul (see [Part V on Theurgy](#), for more on this).

lunes, Teletarchs, and Connectors

There are a number of other **Mediating Spirits** who occupy the Middle Dyad (*Hê Mesê Duas*) and are essential aids in **Theurgic Rites**. Since They will be discussed in [Part V](#) of this summary, here it will suffice to say that They participate in governing the universe by maintaining the channels of influence and bonds of harmony emanating from the Nous.

First (and most important in Theurgy) are the **Teletarchs (Masters of Initiation)**, chief of whom is **Eros**, who binds the Ideas as **Craters** of the **Paternal Fount or Source**. In the words of the *Oracles* (fr. 42), the **Ideas** are created

by Bond of wondrous Eros, who from Nous leapt first,
with Fire clothing Binding Fire, so to mix
Source Craters, offering the Flower of His Fire.

That is, before even the Ideas were created, Eros leapt from the Paternal Nous, and mixed the Ideas, the Craters (or Mixing Bowls) of the Fount, by means of His Binding Fire clothed in Noetic Fire. ("Binding" here refers to the enchantment of a **Binding Spell** or a **Love Charm**.) Without His binding power, the Ideas could not have been consolidated into the **Logos** (see also fragment 39, [quoted above](#)). (On the Craters, see also ["Creation of Other Gods"](#) above and ["Cosmic Tree" in Part II.](#))

Three other Teletarchs are the **Kosmagoi** or **Rulers of the Three Worlds** (Empyrean, Aetherial, Material): **Aiôn** (not the ineffable God of the same name), **Helios**, and **Selene**. Next are the **luniges**, who empower the Symbolic Ideas, Signs, and Tokens used in Theurgic Rites. Finally, there are the **Connectors** (*Synokheis*). This must suffice on them for now.

The Demiurge and the World Soul

The Demiurge and World Soul (**Zeus and Hera, Osiris and Isis**) are called the **Second and Third Gods**, after the Monad (Kronos), the First God. Each level of Being is **active** with respect to those below and **passive** with respect to those above; therefore the Demiurge and World Soul are relatively active and passive, respectively. The Demiurge rouses the World Soul from Her trance-like sleep (*karos*), so that She desires to reproduce His Form in Her **Matrix (Womb)**. She longs for completion by His **Logos**, and desires and seeks the **Good** through His **Love**. According to Plethon, the Demiurge's **Semen** is the source of the Form of everything in the World. He creates by projecting His Forms into the Womb of Hera, whose **Menstrual Fluid** provides the Matter and Nourishment for material existence. (See [Part II. "Goddesses."](#) for more on the World Soul.)

The Lower Zeus

As the Soul and Body of **Osiris** are distinguished, so Pythagoreans distinguish a **Higher (Hypatos) Zeus** and a **Lower (Neatos) Zeus**, who may be two aspects of a single God. In any case, it is the Lower Zeus, or Body of Osiris, who is most involved with Matter, imprinting the Forms so that they are immanent in it.

As previously remarked, the Demiurge has **Lust (Orexis)** for Matter, which motivates Him to rouse the World Soul from Her torpor, but in the heat of His passion, He forgets His Identity, and Proceeding forward with too much Power, abandons His Essence. Therefore He is **torn apart**.

Alternately, consider this analogy: The imperishable Seal (the transcendent Form) may be impressed in wax (Matter) and leave its Sign (immanent Form), an imperfect copy of the original. But the wax is soft and soon the Image will deteriorate. Therefore the wax must be melted and smoothed (reduced to *Prima Materia*) so that the Seal can be impressed again and its Image restored.

We may compare this with the periodic dismemberment of Osiris by the **chaotic Power of Matter** (Typhon, here equivalent to the Indefinite Dyad), and with His rejuvenation by **Isis**, Nurse and Mistress of Magic. Similarly, according to Orphic Scriptures, **Dionysos** (the Son of Zeus) was torn apart by the Titans but later restored by Athena.

The dismembered God becomes the **Patron of Divided Matter**, that is, of the distinct material objects that occupy the sensible world, and so the killing of the God has been called the "drama of individualization." Naturally, this is not a work of evil, but Divine Providence's way of creating the material world. Similarly, **Mithras**, by slaying the Bull, can be seen as the Patron of Divided Matter. Therefore, all three of these Gods are very close to mortals, and thus **Saviors** who mediate on our behalf. (We have already seen Mithras as Mediator.)

In the myths of Osiris and Dionysos, the God's **Phallus** is severed; so also in the myth of **Attis** (young consort of the Great Mother) and in many similar myths. This emasculation symbolizes an end to the chaotic generation impelled by the multiplicative Power of the Indefinite Dyad, and a Reversion to the Limit imposed by the Monad.

Dionysos is the Son of Zeus and in many respects His Alter-ego; indeed He may be identified with the Lower Zeus. This identification is reinforced by Orphic texts, in which Dionysos is closely connected to **Hades**, who is called **Zeus Katakththonios** (Beneath the Earth).

Indeed, according to Pythagorean doctrine, as (the Higher) Zeus is the Demiurge ruling the Noetic Realm, so the Lower Zeus is the Demiurge ruling the Sublunary Realm, specifically, the **Air** between Earth and Heaven. So also, we may be surprised to find Hades named as the ruler of the Air, but His name *Aidēs* was explained by the formless (*aeidēs*) nature of Air. (Thus the **Aerial Daimones**, who occupy Nature, are governed by Hades.)

Therefore we have four Divinities ruling the **Elements**, as mentioned above. Earth is ruled by **Demeter**, and the Three Brothers **Zeus**, **Poseidon**, and **Hades** - all Sons of Kronos - rule the subtle Elements, Fire, Water, and Air, respectively. The Three Brothers correspond to the functions of **Abiding, Proceeding, and Reverting** in each realm of the universe. For example, Zeus is the Father, who creates **souls** prior to generation; Poseidon brings them into generation, for **water** symbolizes the flux of material existence (see "[The Mother of the Gods](#)" in [Part II](#)); Hades frees souls from generation by showing them their origin. Therefore, we read in the *Oracles* (fr. 27):

In every World a Triad, ruled by Monad, shines.

In particular, in the Aetherial Realm, Zeus rules the Sphere of Fixed Stars, Poseidon rules the Planetary Spheres, and Hades rules the Sublunary Sphere. Earth is central to them all.

According to Orphic myth, when the **Titans** dismembered Dionysos, They cooked and ate the pieces. Zeus incinerated the Titans with His Thunderbolt, and from the Ash (containing both Titanic and Divine Substance) He made humanity; therefore we are part God, part mortal. As a consequence of our Titanic nature, we must spend some time clothed in matter, on earth, in the realm of the Lower Zeus, before we return to the Gods. This is our **Guard Duty** (*Phroura*), under the command of Dionysos/Hades, and so we should execute it well.

Other Gods

I will mention briefly the other Olympian Gods as They are described by Sallustius (fl. 363 CE) in *On the Gods and the Universe* (Bk. VI); these are the **Encosmic Gods** directly responsible for the cosmos. They are in four Orders (*Taxeis*), each responsible for an Operation (*Pragma*), with a beginning, middle, and end (corresponding to the triadic phases: **Abiding, Proceeding, Reverting**); therefore there are twelve Gods with twelve corresponding Powers (*Dynameis*). The **Creators** (*Poiountes*) are Zeus, Poseidon, and Hephaistos; the **Animators** (*Psychountes*), who ensoul the world, are Demeter, Hera, and Artemis; the **Harmonizers** (*Harmozontes*), who unite the world into a Harmony, are Apollo, Aphrodite, and Hermes; and the **Guardians** (*Phrourountes*), who preserve the resulting Harmony, are Hestia, Athena, and Ares. A little contemplation will show the appropriateness of each of these functions.

Sallustius also tells us the Deities responsible for the **Elemental and Celestial Spheres**: Hestia (Earth), Poseidon (Water), Hera (Air), Hephaistos (Fire), Artemis (Moon), Hermes (Mercury), Aphrodite (Venus), Apollo (Sun), Zeus (Jupiter), Demeter (Saturn), Athena (*Aithêr*); the Sphere of Fixed Stars is common to Them all. We might expect Kronos to hold the Sphere of Saturn, but since He is the First God, the Saturnian Sphere is assigned to His wife Demeter (here equated with Rhea, an identification made as early as the fifth century BCE). Also, here we find Zeus as the ruler of the Jovian Sphere rather than with Kronos among the **Hypercosmic Gods**. Finally, Athena rules the **Aithêr** because it is the home of our Nous and She is the Goddess of Wisdom.

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A Summary of Pythagorean Theology

Part III: The One

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Note: *There is much more to say about The One, and this section will be expanded in the future.*

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Aiôn, the Primordial God

In the Pythagorean tradition the many individual Gods, such as Zeus and Hera, Apollo and Artemis, are understood as offspring of the Father and Mother of the Gods, commonly known as Kronos and Rhea (see [Part I, Theogony](#)). These two rule all the principal dualities of the universe, including light and dark, form and substance, mind and matter, being and becoming, identity and diversity. These dualities are all manifestations of **Unity** (the Monad) and **Plurality** (the Indefinite Dyad).

However, beyond the Father and Mother of the Gods, most Pythagoreans recognize a primordial Divinity who encompasses all Divinities, and indeed all things in the universe. This transcendent Deity is sometimes called **Aiôn** ("Eternity" or "Unlimited Time"), but also **The All** (*To Pan*), **The Whole** (*To Holon*), and **The One** (*To Hen*). Indeed, Proclus (c.411-485 CE) says, "The One is God" (*To Hen Theos*). (I will use all these names, as appropriate.)

According to the myths, Aiôn is bisexual and by self-fertilization gives birth to the Father and Mother of the Gods. But since Kronos and Rhea together create ordinary (determinate) time and space, Aiôn's creation of Them is outside of time, an eternal Emanation. Such a Deity might seem remote indeed from our everyday lives, but I will try to explain why, for Pythagoreans, union with The One is the essence of a spiritual life.

The One is Ineffable

Heraclitus (fl. c. 500 BCE) says, "God is day night, summer winter, war peace, glut hunger (all the opposites, that is the meaning)" (fr. 67). That is, the Whole transcends duality. The All, by definition, includes everything; therefore it must include all opposites. The One, by definition, must unify everything; therefore it must unify all opposites. Hence, The One is **paradoxical** and **contradictory**, and the ancients called It Ineffable, Invisible, Unspeakable, Unnamable, and Unknown.

The Whole is simultaneously mind and matter, one and many, stability and change. Indeed, It *is* and *is not*, for It unifies the opposites **Being** and **Not-being** (see ["Enigmas of the One"](#) in Pt. III). It encompasses not only what actually is, but also all potentialities, all possibilities. This is the foundation of Divine **Providence** (*Pronoia*), for The All comprehends all that might be, and out of that totality manifests what is. Further, because The One is the source and origin of the order and beauty of the Cosmos, and because It is the goal towards which everything is striving (the end of all becoming), many Pythagoreans identify The One with **The Good** (*T'Agathon*).

Is Matter Evil?

However, just because The One is called "The Good" and "The Highest" (*To Anôtatô*), it should not be supposed that It stands above something else (e.g., matter or the physical world), which is evil and debased. First, this is impossible, for The One is The All, and so there is no "something else" other than The Good. Furthermore, Pythagoreans recognize that transcendent Ideas emanate throughout the things of which they are the Essence; for example, Life pervades all living things. Therefore the highest Idea, The One, emanates Its Unity and Goodness throughout all things (existing or not existing). That which all things have in common, the featureless substrate of everything (existing or not existing), is **Primary Matter** (*Prima Materia*, *Hylê*), which is Universal Potential, the ultimate Principle of Receptivity (as the living One is the principle of activity). But be careful: Matter is not something different from The One, for The One is All; Matter is just The One from a different perspective. **Matter is**

good because The One is good, for They are the same. Each of these two apparent opposites is called "The Extreme" (*To Akron*) and "The Simple" (*To Haploun*). (See ["The Mother of the Gods"](#) and ["The Goddess of the Cosmic Tree"](#) in Part II for more on Matter.)

The Higher Self

In particular, we see that mind and matter are not two mutually exclusive categories; rather, *The All is Mind and Matter simultaneously*. The physical world is familiar (more or less), but the other side of The All is the psychical world, **the Mind of The All**, of which our individual minds are parts.

We are fooled into thinking that our individual minds are separate and independent, but that is because we identify ourselves with our ego-consciousnesses. However, the ego-consciousness is just the most concrete, material layer of the mind, evolved to facilitate our functioning in the physical world of space and time. Deeper or higher (pick your metaphor) than the conscious mind lies the unconscious, the **Higher Self**. (Although it is beyond consciousness, we can learn about it indirectly.) At the furthest reaches of our unconscious minds we reach the **collective unconscious**, which we all share. That is, our individual Higher Selves are just organs of the one Highest Self, the **Mind of The All**. As Empedocles (c.495-435 BCE) says, the **Divine All** (*To Theion Pan*)

is Mind, both Holy and Ineffable,
through the whole Cosmos darting with swift thoughts. (fr. 134)

Again, the Divine Mind is not separate from the physical universe, for it *is* the physical universe. Its thinking constitutes Divine Providence.

The wisest way to live then, according to Pythagoreans, is in **Harmony with Providence**; we are a part of It, and so to live otherwise is to fight against ourselves. **Wisdom** is the means by which we attune ourselves to Providence. That is, "Wisdom is one thing: to know the Thought, how all things are steered through all things" (Heraclitus, fr. 41). It is a lifelong process of **Individuation** (*Holôsis* -- making oneself whole), including **Unification with Divinity** (*Henôsis* -- making oneself one), which eventuates in **Deification** (*Theôsis*).

The Threefold Way

How can we come to know The One, which is by definition ineffable, unspeakable, paradoxical, and contradictory? According to the Pythagorean Tradition, there is a **Threefold Way** (*Triodos*).

The first way is **Analogy** (*Analogia*): we cannot say what The One *is*, but we can say what It is *like*. For example, we can say that The One is like the **Sun** illuminating all things while remaining undiminished, and that The One illuminates each level of being in its own way, as each thing reflects or absorbs the Sun's rays in its own way.

The second path to The One is by way of **Negation** (*Apophasis*). Since The One is "beyond being," we cannot say what It *is*; therefore we must resign ourselves to saying what It *is not*. This is a Spiritual Exercise (*Askêsis*) that considers each assertion we might make of The One and then rejects it. Eventually one reaches a state of **Silence** (*Sigê*), awestruck and dumb before **The Unspeakable** (*To Arrhêton*).

The third way is the **Ascent** (*Anagogê*), by which we ascend to union with The All. The other two ways are intellectual, and so they must ultimately fail to achieve full understanding and illumination. It is a tenet of Pythagorean philosophy that the only way to truly know something is to become it: **like knows like**. Therefore the only way to know God is to become God. This may sound presumptuous, at very least! But remember that The All is God, therefore we are already part of Divinity, and thus divine ourselves. What we are seeking then is to become conscious -- intuitively, not intellectually -- of ourselves as aspects of Deity, and to live accordingly, as organs of divine Providence. An ancient Pythagorean said, "People are akin to the Gods... hence also God exercises Providence over us" (Diogenes Laertius, VIII.27). (See Part V on the [Ascent](#).)

In order to know The One, you must become One, and so you must **unify the opposites** in yourself. In part this is accomplished by becoming more aware of **symbols**, for they can have multiple, contradictory meanings, and they are the language of the collective unconscious, by which we may communicate with the Gods.

Pagan Monotheism?

The foregoing description of The One may seem to verge on Pagan monotheism; indeed, mystical Christianity, Judaism, and Islam all borrowed generously from the Neo-Platonic branch of the Pythagorean tradition. However, there are significant differences, which are important to observe. First, as discussed in the earlier parts of this Summary, Pythagoreans recognize many Gods; in addition to Aiôn (The One), there are Kronos and Rhea (the Monad and Dyad), Zeus and Hera (the Demiurge

and World Soul), and all the other Olympians, as well as a host of lesser Divinities, Spirits, and Heroes (deified ancestors). All these Gods are aspects of The One, of course, who is sometimes called simply "God," but by this same reasoning we mortals are also aspects of God, as is everything else in the world. What this shows is that there is a **false dichotomy** between monotheism and polytheism. Just as we all are parts of The Whole, but nevertheless separate individuals, so also all the Gods are really distinct and individual Divinities, but also parts of the Divine One. Like our fingers, They are separate, but parts of one Whole. **The All is One** (*Hen To Pan*).

Finally, it's worthwhile to make a few remarks on the **ancient Greek word Theos** (God). First, in the oldest stratum of the language *Theos* may refer to either a God or a Goddess (the separate word *Thea* for "Goddess" was a later innovation). Second, the word is used almost like an adjective meaning Divinity, and so when something is called *Theos*, it means that it has the property of being Divine. This helps explain why an ancient Pagan may refer to *Theoi* ("Gods") in one line and to *Theos* ("God") in the next (as in the [quote from Diogenes Laertius above](#)); what he really means is "Divine Beings" (*Theoi*) and Divinity (*Theos*). The difference is between focusing on the individual aspects of Divinity or on Divinity as a whole. (It may also be worth mentioning that ancient Greek did not distinguish small and capital letters, so "god" and "God" are the same.)

In conclusion I will observe that the Pythagorean doctrine of The All reveals the full meaning of the familiar blessing:

Thou art God! (*Theos ei!*)

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A Summary of Pythagorean Theology

Part V: Theurgy

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The Pythagorean Succession

In ancient times mystical and magical traditions were passed on orally from teacher to student. Often this involved the teacher ritually adopting the student so that they became **Spiritual Parent and Child**. Thus in ancient texts the teacher is sometimes called "Father" or "Mother," and the student "Son" or "Daughter." Such a tradition was called a **Succession** (*Diadokhê*, "what has been received from another"), and it was commonly traced back to a **Divine Ancestor**, a God who first divulged the secret teachings to a mortal (often His son). Thereafter the Succession was under the guardianship of that God, and all its members were said to be in a divine **Seira** (Chord, Series, Lineage) originating from the God. (See [Part I, "Triadic Structure"](#) for the Seirai.)

One of the most famous traditions of this kind is the **Pythagorean Succession** (*Pythagoreios Diadokhê*), which traces it teachings to Pythagoras (572-497 BCE), who was rumored to be a son of **Apollo**: his name refers to Pythian Apollo, and his mother became pregnant after a visit to Delphi, where the Pythoness predicted that she would bear a great sage ([see in Pt. II](#)). Nevertheless, Pythagoras had his own teachers; he studied under Pherekydes and, according to his biographers, was initiated into the Mysteries of the Chaldeans, Egyptians, Brahmins, Phoenicians, and Zoroastrians.

As discussed in Part I ([History](#)), the Pythagorean Succession includes many of the most famous Sages and Philosophers of

antiquity, including Empedocles (c.495-435), Plato (427-347), Apollonius of Tyana (1st cent. CE), Plutarch (c.46-c.125), Plotinus (205-270), the Emperor Julian (331-363), and Hypatia (365-415). When the Pagan schools were closed by Justinian in 529 CE, the **Wandering Seven** philosophers fled Athens for Persia; they remained there for a time and a few settled in the East. In any case, after more than a thousand years, the Succession disappeared underground, and it is difficult to trace thereafter, although it surfaces from time to time.

Ancient Philosophia

Pythagoras coined the term **Philosophos**, which means Lover of Wisdom. A new word was necessary because, while many people call themselves "wise" (*sophos*), the truly wise person knows that **Wisdom** (*sophia*), like Buddhahood, is an ideal that few attain, and then only after many lifetimes. Desire and pursuit of Wisdom is the most we should claim.

Modern philosophy often seems like a dry, academic discipline residing in the highest attics of the ivory tower, but ancient **Philosophia** was very different; it was a practical discipline aimed at teaching one to live well. This is also the goal of modern teachers of *Philosophia*. (Better living through Enlightenment!)

In some ways *Philosophia* is more like medicine than a theoretical subject. Its goal is both **Therapeia** (care, therapy, cure) and **Hugieia** (health, soundness of mind and body). That is, it aims at alleviating the troubles and afflictions of people and at showing them a better way to live.

Since each student in a school of *Philosophia* is in a different situation, each student is prescribed practices suited to their condition. Assessing the spiritual condition and progress of the student is the job of the teacher, who may be called **Kathêgemôn** (Leader, Guide) or **Didaskalos** (Teacher, Master).

The Teacher often makes use of the **Therapy of the Word**, which includes incantations and spells, but also theological and philosophical discourse. The latter might be true or false to varying degrees or on different levels, but their literal truth was not so important as their effect on the mind of the student. Just as the doctor may administer different herbs to you at different times, depending on your condition, so also the Guide administers different doctrines (verbal therapies) appropriate for your spiritual state. The goal is not to build philosophical systems but to cure and care for souls. As Epicurus (c.55-c.135) said, "Empty are the words of that *philosophos* who cures no human suffering."

The Teacher may prescribe other **Spiritual Exercises** (*Askêseis*), including meditation, contemplation, affirmations, visualization, journal writing, and individual and group examination of spiritual progress and problems. More advanced students may be invited to receive training in **Spiritual Magic** (*Theurgy*) and other mystical practices requiring greater dedication.

Is the **Spiritual Guide** superfluous in the modern world? On one hand, the threads of the ancient Succession are hard to find (although self-proclaimed gurus are everywhere). On the other, much of the ancient teaching can be found in books and doesn't have to come from oral teaching. Therefore, **solitary practice** is often the best option nowadays. Nevertheless, a Guide is still useful for being able to assess the condition of the student and to prescribe appropriate practices. Furthermore, a Guide is useful when the student gets stuck or encounters special problems (especially in the more advanced practices). Finally, if a student is psychologically "at risk," a spiritual Guide may steer them away from potentially dangerous practices, and aid their healing (perhaps directing them to professional care). In summary, although a Guide is by no means necessary, your progress may be easier if you can find a competent, honest Teacher.

Mediating Spirits

In ancient Greek, **Daimôn** (DYE-moan) can refer to any divinity from the High Gods on down, but Pythagoreans tend to restrict it to the **Mediating Spirits** between the Gods and us. Some Pythagoreans call the higher orders of Daimones the **Angeloï** (Messengers), because of Their special role as messengers of the Gods; the lower ranks are the Daimones proper and the **Heroes**. A fourth class comprises the *Akhrantoi* (the **Immaculate** or **Undefiled Ones**), who are Perfected Beings (including certain Sages), who choose to reincarnate so they can help humanity. All together, Pythagoreans refer to the Daimones as our "Betters" (*Kreittones*).

Daimones have an **intermediate nature** between humans and Gods. All three classes of beings are animate and possess reason. However, the Daimones are like the Gods in being immortal and like humans in having emotions. In contrast, the Gods are impassive, and humans are mortal.

Most of the Daimones reside in the **Air**, which, in cosmological terms, is the intermediate region between the earth, where we live, and the heavens, where the Gods reside. The **Moon** is the boundary between the aerial domain and the aetherial heavens, and so that is where Their Ruler, **Hekate**, has Her domain (see "[Hekate](#)" in Pt. II). ([Recall also](#) that Hades rules the Aerial Daimones.)

As a consequence of Their intermediate nature, Daimones serve as **Mediators** between the Gods and us, and They convey

divine **Providence** (*Pronoia*) into the sublunary realm. In particular, They interpret the Gods' wishes for us and are the agents of **divination**, **oracles**, and **rituals**. They are ministering spirits who care for people, and are often called **Savior** (*Sôtêr*). ([Recall](#) that *daimôn* is from the Indo-European *da-*, to provide.) Many rituals are directed to Daimones (who have feelings and can be swayed), and They are thereby convinced to mediate with the Gods on our behalf.

According to Pythagorean doctrine, the Gods reside in the **Noetic Realm**, the world of Platonic Ideas, so They cannot relate to us as individuals, but only as representatives of the Idea of humankind. The Daimones, however, being intermediate, participate in both the Ideal and material worlds, and so they **interact with us as individuals**. They know our personal and family histories, our personalities, and often our thoughts.

Each Daimôn is the **offspring of a God**, who is Their **Arkhêgos** (Leader, Progenitor, Originator), and thus a Daimôn combines the nature of a God with Its own individual characteristics. Therefore the **Seira** (Chord, Lineage) of a God includes His or Her Daimones, as well as the Successions of Sages [already mentioned](#). (Nevertheless, all the Daimones are under the rule of **Hekate**, because Her station at the Gate of the Moon is above all the Daimones; She is *Daimoniarkhês*, **Ruler of Daimones**.) A God's Seira also includes various plants, animals, materials, words, etc. that are **symbolically** or **sympathetically** linked to the God; these are used in sacred magical operations directed toward the God.

Personal Daimones

Aside from the many Daimones, with Their various offices, we each have a **Guardian** or **Personal Daimôn** (*Idios Daimôn*), who knows our innermost thoughts and accompanies us through life and through death between lives. Our **Highest Self**, which Pythagoreans call "the **Highest Flower of the Soul**," is our Inner Daimôn; some think It is the same as the Guardian Daimôn, but others, including myself, believe They are different.

We also have with us a **Shadow Spirit**, the Other Daimôn or **Bad Daimôn** (*Kakos Daimôn*), who is created from all the beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and so forth that we have rejected as wrong. The Bad Daimôn cannot be banished, and if we imagine we have done so, we only fool ourselves, which generally leads to *Kakodaimônia*: Misfortune, misery, and even madness. It is better to come to know your Other Daimôn, so that you can satisfy His or Her needs without compromising your moral convictions; to this end, Theurgy is very valuable. (Your Guardian Daimôn and Shadow Daimôn both have the same sex as yourself, in most cases.)

We have other Daimones who are particularly concerned with us as individuals, such as **Muses**, who bring us inspiration, and **Soul Guides** (*Psychopompoi*, often of the opposite sex to ourselves), but there are also other Daimones who may possess us in counterproductive ways; it's best to become acquainted with them all, an important goal of Theurgy.

Interaction with Daimones

Of course, *daimôn* is the origin of the English word **demon**, but Daimones are **neither good nor evil** by nature. They carry out various offices for their Ruling God, which might or might not be to our benefit. Like forces of Nature, They are what They are. However, due to Their intermediate nature, They are subject to emotions, feelings, and passions, and in this They are unlike the Gods. Therefore They can be more capricious and unpredictable.

As mentioned, Daimones can **possess** us, other people, and even non-human things. This is not necessarily bad, for the Daimones are **sources of Divine Power** for us; when poets invoke their Muses, they are inviting Possession by Them. Nevertheless, unconscious or uncontrolled Possession can be undesirable, and so it is important to be aware of the Daimones. (Here, certainly, is one place where an experienced human Guide can help.) The Daimones can raise us up or drag us down.

There are various ways of entering into **communication** with a Daimôn, the simplest being to create Sacred Space, invite Their presence, and begin talking with Them. [Later](#) we will explore the more powerful methods of Theurgy. Although Daimones deserve respect, do not forget that we mortals also have a Spark of Divinity in us, and so you should never abandon your **moral autonomy**.

Divine Guides

With a Daimôn as Mediator, we can enter into **conversation with the God** who is Their Leader (*Arkhêgos*); the Daimôn may either manifest the God or conduct Him or Her into our presence. As already remarked, Gods are remote from the mundane world, so we are often better off dealing with the Daimones who are Their Ministers, but for some purposes the God must be contacted.

One reason to have a **Sustasis** (Meeting, Compact) with a God is to learn about the Divine Realm. The goal should not be idle curiosity, but to seek **Knowledge** which can aid our cooperation with, and furthering of, Divine Providence. In particular, we can inquire from the Gods Themselves the techniques of Sacred Magic and Theurgy.

For example, instead of trying to guess how best to **invoke** a Deity, or learning it from possibly unreliable sources, we can ask the God how They wish to be invoked. (Of course, They might not tell us, if They think we're unworthy; indeed, the *Chaldean Oracles* warn us that if an impure person seeks this hidden knowledge, the Gods will punish their presumption with misleading replies.) It is from such Divine Meetings that we have **Inspired Texts** such the *Chaldean Oracles*, which teach us these Arts.

One of the most valuable things that a God can teach a Mage are the **Signs and Symbols** (*Sunthêmata*, *Sumbola*) by which the Deity may be invoked. These are animals, plants, stones, colors, times, and especially secret characters and words, which belong to the God's **Seira** and attune the soul of the magician to the God.

Since **Hekate** is *Daimoniarkhês* (**Ruler of Daimones**) and is the **Key Holder** (*Kleidoukhos*) and **Gatekeeper** (*Propulaia*) at the boundary of the Divine Realms ([Opsopaus, AGEDE, "Fire"](#)), She is the God most closely connected with **Theurgic Rites**, and so it is from Her we seek instruction in those Arts. (Indeed, it is primarily from Her that we have the *Chaldean Oracles*.) She controls the Daimones, who can assist us or impede our progress. However, the Pythagorean Succession as a whole is in the Seira of **Apollo**, for He is the God of Oracles and the Guardian of Truth and Illumination; Pythagoreans are in the Solar Lineage (see ["Primal Fire"](#) in Pt. III). See also the earlier discussion of Mediating Gods (["Helios, Eros & Other Mediating Gods"](#) in Pt. III).

Ascent to the One

The Ascent (*Anagôgê*) to The One is the central spiritual practice in the Pythagorean Tradition (see also ["The Threefold Way"](#) in ["Part III"](#)). It is based on the principle that **"like knows like."** Therefore, to know The One, you must become The One. To know the Highest God, you must unify with and become the Highest God, a process of **Deification** (*Theôsis*). Further, since The One is the principle from which all things have their existence, by returning to The One we rediscover and preserve our eternal Essence, and thus the Ascent is the principal means of **Salvation** (*Sôtêria*) in the Pythagorean Tradition. Through Union with the Divine we come to see beyond our individuality and to understand our own roles as organs and instruments (*organa*) of **Divine Providence**. In a sense that will become clear, the Ascent achieves **Immortalization**.

There are three Paths of Ascent in the Pythagorean Tradition, each correlated with one of the three principle **Attributes of The One**: Its Beauty, Wisdom, and Goodness, and the corresponding connecting properties, Love, Truth, and Trust, which are the **Chaldaean Virtues**. This table summarizes their similarities and differences:

Three Paths of Ascent to The One

Attribute of The One	Beauty	Wisdom	Goodness
Connecting Property	Love (<i>Erôs</i>)	Truth (<i>Alêtheia</i>)	Trust (<i>Pistis</i>)
Vehicle of Salvation	Erotic Madness	Divine Philosophy	Theurgic Power
Path of:	Aphrodite Eros	Athena Hermes	Hekate Helios
Stages of Ascent: - material - aetherial - empyrean	Desire for: - body - soul - spirit	Contemplation of: - sense - reason - intuition	Operation by: - material rite - mental rite - unitive rite

Pythagoreans differ about which path is better; different approaches seem to be suited to souls with different personalities and talents. I will discuss them in order:

1. [Erotic Ascent](#)
2. [Contemplative Ascent](#)
3. [Theurgic Ascent](#)

Erotic Ascent

We may begin with the Erotic Ascent (*Erôtikê Anagôgê*), in which the power of Love and Desire (*Erôs*), directed toward **Beauty**, raises the soul toward the Beauty of The One. Naturally, the guides on this path are **Aphrodite** and **Eros** (both of whom I have already discussed). **Erotic Madness** is the Vehicle of Salvation and draws the Lover and Beloved together, with the ultimate goal of union. It's best known description is in Plato's *Symposium* (209E-212C), where it is put into the mouth of the Priestess Diotima (via Socrates); other versions are given by many later philosophers (e.g. Ficino).

The Ascent proceeds through **three stages**, corresponding to the Material, Aetherial, and Empyrean Realms (see ["Theogony"](#) in Part I). At the material level, desire is aroused by the **beauty of the body**, which is experienced through the senses. This begins with love of an individual's beauty, but expands into love of physical beauty in general. The **second stage** ascends to desire for the **beauty of the soul**, which manifests in the **moral excellences** (Justice, Fortitude, Moderation) and the **intellectual excellences** (Prudence, Knowledge, Wisdom). This higher beauty is perceived by the rational mind rather than the senses. In the **third stage** one comes to know **Beauty Absolute** in the only way possible: by uniting with It. This union transcends the duality of subject and object - of Lover and Beloved - for the Lover merges into the Beloved.

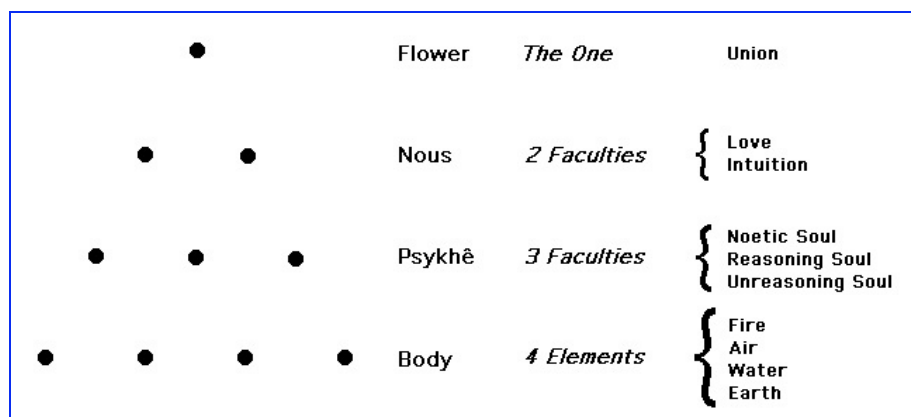
Images of **fire** are common at this stage: As the moth is attracted to the candle and is consumed by it, so the soul desires and is consumed in Beauty Itself. The soul gives itself as a burnt offering to The One. As fire refines gold, so the Holy Fire of Divine Beauty refines the soul, burning away its grosser elements and sublimating it. As the **smoke** ascends to the Gods from the sacrificial fires, so the spiritualized soul ascends to union with the Divine. The Lover and Beloved are united in Bliss.

Unfortunately, this union is imperfect and impermanent, for it cannot be sustained while the soul is still bound to the body. Although the devotee of Love must return to ordinary life, the transformation of the soul is permanent. Much more could be said about the Erotic Ascent, but not in this Summary.

Contemplative Ascent

The second path to The One is the Contemplative Ascent (*Theôrêtikê Anagôgê*), in which the power of **Truth** (*Alêtheia*) leads the soul to the **Wisdom** of The One. The guides on this path are **Athena**, patroness of wisdom, and **Hermes**, the guide of souls, messenger between Gods and mortals, and patron of boundary crossers. (Thus this may be called also the **Hermetic Ascent**, although "Hermeticism" is more theurgic in its operation.) On this path the Vehicle of Salvation is **Divine Philosophia**, which must be understood in the traditional way, as already discussed (see ["Ancient Philosophia"](#)). This Way is described by Plotinus.

The **stages** of this Ascent may be understood by reference to the Pythagorean **Tetractys** as shown in this diagram:



[\(click to open in separate window\)](#)

The Tetractys explains, of course, the phases of Emanation as described in [Part I "Theogony."](#) However it also shows the stages of Ascent back to The One. As usual, the Ascent begins in the material realm with the contemplation of the Divine in the objects of sense; this is **The Awakening**. A further prerequisite for the Ascent, which must be fulfilled before progress can be made, is the practice of the **Four Cardinal Excellences** (also called Civic or Social Virtues), as taught by *Philosophia*: Moderation, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice, corresponding to Earth, Water, Air, Fire.

The **second stage** is **Purification** (*Katharsis*), which brings order to the **Soul's Three Faculties** (Non-reasoning, Reasoning, Noetic). This is accomplished by cultivating the **Kathartic Excellences**, by which the soul is turned inward and upward toward The One. The goal is to calm the lower parts of the soul, which are more intimately connected with the body, so that the higher parts may ascend. Also, on the principle of "**like knows like**," we attempt to achieve the **tranquillity** of the Gods and the inner unity of The One.

First we must **calm the non-reasoning soul**, which we share with animals and plants, and which is the seat of our appetites and of the faculties of growth and nutrition. Since excessive pleasure and pains can disturb the desired tranquillity, the philosopher strives to live healthily, with proper diet, sleep, and exercise. (Extreme asceticism may be counterproductive.) The higher (reasoning) soul must learn that disturbances arise largely from mental **judgements** about sensations rather than from the sensations themselves. Therefore, by controlling how we think about these things we can diminish the disturbing effects of

excessive pleasures and pains.

When the non-reasoning soul has been calmed, you next turn your attention to the reasoning soul, achieving tranquillity by **quieting the inner discourse**. The thought of the Divine Nous is neither discursive nor sequential in time (see [Part III, "The Self-contemplating Nous"](#)), so to become more like It we must quiet our own discursive, sequential thinking.

When the reasoning part of your soul has been quieted, all that is left is the **noetic part**, which is akin to the **Divine Nous**, in its intuitive, direct grasp of the Ideas, but different, for your nous still acts in time, for it is part of the individual soul. Nevertheless, if by a **non-willful surrender** you allow your nous to contract inward and be drawn upward, it will be awakened to its true nature and origin, the Divine Nous.

This brings us to the **third stage**, called **Illumination**, which ascends above the soul to the Divine Nous. Here the divine part of the soul (the individual nous) takes its place in the divine community, for the Gods are living, conscious **Ideas** in a state of mutual, intuitive contemplation. They are separate yet one, like interpenetrating beams of **light**, or the individual colors mixed in white light (see also [Part III, "Pagan Monotheism?"](#)). So also your individual mind experiences itself as separate yet one with the others, moving in the **divine dance** of The All.

To reach this experience of being an integral part of The All in the Eternal Now, you must set aside the **Non-Being** that makes you an individual, for it is Non-Being that separates one thing from another ([recall the discussion of the Dyad in Pt. II](#)). In this way, your nous forsakes the individual, particular, and finite, and ascends to the **Universal** and **Eternal**.

To reach this level, you must not *think* about the Forms, or even contemplate them as other, but you must *become* them and experience their **organic, fluent mutual contemplation**. In this intuitive flow, you are unselfconscious and lose your separate awareness (as in our everyday experience of completely absorbed, competent activity).

To achieve the **final unification** with The One, the nous must transcend even the Divine Nous, for it still has the characteristic of **Multiplicity**, for it contains all the Ideas (even if mutually interpenetrating). The Nous contemplates Itself through Its Ideas, and so there is still an element of **Duality** in It.

The One has **proceeded** outward into the Nous, but now the Nous must **revert** back toward The One (recall [Part I, "Triadic Structure"](#)). In this movement It is motivated by Its Love for Truth and the Good (and so we see the convergence of the three paths). It must rise above Form and Idea in the **Inebriation of Love**. Thus you are lost in the direct experience of the Truth. In contemplative union with the eternal, immutable Truth, you achieve **immortality** and **deification**, a state which persists even after the inevitable return to ordinary life (for the contemplative, non-dual state cannot be maintained for long).

Theurgic Ascent

The third path to The One is the Theurgic Ascent (*Theourgiké Anagôgê*), in which the Theurgic Power of *Pistis* (**Trust, Faith**) is the Vehicle of Ascent, which leads the soul to the **Goodness** of The One. The guides on this path are **Hekate** and **Helios**, both of whom we have seen to be Mediators (see [Part III, "Helios and Eros the Mediators"](#); [Part II, "Hekate"](#) et seq.; Part V, ["Mediating Spirits"](#) and ["Divine Guides"](#)). Hence this path may be called also the **Heliacal Ascent**. The Theurgic Ascent is presented especially in the *Chaldean Oracles* and Iamblichus' book *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians*.

It will be seen that the Theurgic Ascent has much in common with the Erotic and Contemplative Ascents, the major difference being the use of rituals involving symbolically meaningful **material objects** (statues, stones, herbs, incense, etc.). Because it makes use of these material aids, theurgy is claimed sometimes to be easier or more accessible than the more interior paths through Love and Truth. Certainly, as will be seen, the higher degrees of theurgy are less material in their orientation, and so theurgy might be viewed as a lower degree than the Contemplative and Erotic practices. However, it may be argued also that theurgy reaches higher than those practices. The arguments hinge partly on theological disputes about the soul (i.e., whether it "descends completely" in embodiment). Personally, I don't think that either of these views are quite correct, and I think it is better to choose a path that fits your personality, inclinations, and talents. Ultimately you will make more progress **following your own destiny** than someone else's.

Like the Paths of Love and Wisdom, theurgy seeks the salvation of the soul through Union with The One. However, by its emphasis on the necessity of material rites, it focuses on our **embodiment** and its role in the system of the universe. For embodiment is part of the necessary Procession from The One and the **Manifestation of Love** in the universe. Love is a relation between the Lover and the Beloved, and so there must be an Other for there to be Love. The creation of the **Indefinite Dyad** and Her separation from the Monad were necessary before Love (*Eros*), Firstborn of the Paternal Nous, could appear in the universe (see [Part II, "The Indefinite Dyad"](#) and [Part III, "Helios and Eros the Mediators"](#)). This Love proceeds outward from the One Mind and is directed toward Primordial Matter. As part of this *procession*, our souls are embodied in human bodies, but the completion of the **"Erotic Circuit"**, which binds the universe into one, requires us to *turn back* toward our essential source, The One.

Thus theurgy uses material objects, which participate in the **Eternal Forms**, and reorients our souls, into which the Ideas have descended, to turn material creation back toward The One, which is its origin. In this way theurgists complete the work of

creation begun by the Demiurge; they participate in the eternal creative work of the Gods and by this participation become immortal and deified themselves. Finally, theurgists participate in the **Providential Evolution** of the universe; in so doing they win **Salvation**.

Basic Principles of Theurgy

The Gods, which exist as Henads in the Monad ([see Part III](#)), *proceed* outward into manifestation, thereby becoming **Living Ideas** in the Nous of the Demiurge and giving rise to a lineage of Daimones and mortal human souls (see "[Pythagorean Succession](#)" above). These Ideas descend through the World Soul, who births them into time and space to inform the material world. Thus all around us and in our souls we find the Forms and Ideas belonging to the **Seirai** (Chords) of the Gods; they are the material and means of theurgy, and our next topic.

Sumbola and Sunthêmata

When things that are enformed by the divine Ideas, whether they are found externally in physical reality or internally in psychical reality, are used in theurgy, they are called *sumbola* or *sunthêmata*. These words are often translated "symbols" and "tokens" or "signs," but we will understand better their role in theurgy if we begin by looking at their meanings in ancient Greek.

A **sûnthêma** is something put together or devised (*suntithêmi*), an agreed upon signal, password, passport, indeed any token or sign. More generally, *sunthêma* may refer to a pledge, covenant, or agreement, or to tokens of these relations. Further, it may refer to a communion or connection between two parties. Thus, in the context of theurgy a sunthêma is a password or sign, given to us by the Gods, in token of and to facilitate our **communion** with Them. Reread the preceding definition and try to grasp the full meaning of sunthêma, for it will help you understand the role of sunthêmata in theurgy.

A **sûmbolon** brings together (*sumballein*) two things. We may begin with the most concrete meaning: in ancient times the parties to an agreement might break an *astragalos* (small bone), *ostrakon* (pottery shard), or coin into two pieces; the two parts, each retained by one of the parties, fit together like lock and key. So also a seal impression in wax or clay, such as made by a signet ring, is a sumbolon, a good metaphor (oft-repeated in antiquity) for the impression of the Forms on matter. The **Material Form** or **Embodied Idea** is the signature or imprimatur reflecting the sanction of the God. The sumbolon is a sign of **goodwill**, and thus in theurgy of a God's goodwill. The signet ring and like sumbola are **proofs of identity**, the passwords and secret signs that allow one to proceed and, in a theurgic context, to approach and contact the Gods. Such a password might take the form of *signum* and *responsum*, and so also in theurgy there is an **interchange of signs**. The God teaches the Signs; if the theurgist responds appropriately, they are admitted. So also, the sumbolon becomes a token of the **agreement**, treaty, or contract between the parties; here, between the God and theurgist. In particular, the sumbolon as **secret sign** leads to its meaning as allegory, omen, portent, or occult sign, and in these meanings we arrive at the English word "**symbol**." Again you should try to grasp the full range of meaning of sumbolon to understand the role of sumbola in theurgy.

The sumbola and sunthêmata are in the Seirai of the Gods; they participate in the divine Forms or Ideas; they are in the Gods as the Gods are in them. They are found everywhere, as the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 108) attest:

Paternal Nous sows Sumbola throughout the World;
He thinks the Thoughts, called Beauties Inexpressible.

Literally, the *Nous* intuitis (*noei*) the Ideas (*Noêta*). Henceforth, in the context of theurgy, I will use the terms *sumbolon* and *sunthêma* synonymously.

Examples of Sumbola and Sunthêmata

Once you understand the general principles of sumbola and sunthêmata, you can see that they take many different forms: anything in the God's Seira, anything participating in the divine Idea.

A sumbolon may be **material**. For example, gold and golden colored **objects** (e.g., the stone citrine) are in the Seira of the Sun. So also **animals**, such as the cock, which welcomes the Sun, and **plants**, such as the heliotrope, which turns toward the Sun. Hot **spices**, such as cinnamon, are sumbola of the Sun, and may be used in ritual food, offerings, or incense. Obviously **images** of the Sun or of the God Helios participate in the Form of the Sun and may be used as sumbola. More abstractly, various **kharaktêres** - secret gestures, figures, and geometric shapes that participate in the divine Form - may be used. Such figures may be written, drawn, or engraved, or they may be uttered or otherwise enacted in time.

Sunthêmata need not be so material. For example, a **poem** or **hymn** to the Sun may serve as a sunthêma, as may various **musical modes, melodies, or vocalizations** ("magic words") that have occult sympathies with the Sun. Indeed, the sunthêmata need not be external at all, but may be constructed or **imagined** in the soul of the theurgist, and contemplated and offered to the Gods upon that most sacred altar.

Furthermore, since the Celestial Gods are important mediators by which the Ideas *proceed* into the sublunary world and by which we *return* to the Gods, so also **astrological correspondences** are important sumbola, and astrological considerations enter into the timing of theurgic rites.

How does one learn a God's sumbola and sunthêmata? Sometimes they have been handed down by **tradition** and can be learned from ancient **mythology** as well as from more recent **magical texts** (such as Cornelius Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*), which tabulate correspondences. Such sources, however, cannot be accepted blindly: just because it's old doesn't mean it's correct! The more recent work of **depth psychologists**, such as Jung, can also be helpful, as can dictionaries of symbolism.

None of these sources can be accepted uncritically. At very least, they should be tested by your own **intuition**, for your individual nous participates in these same Ideas. (The Gods place the sumbola in our souls as well as in the material world.) In the final analysis, we must learn the sunthêmata **from the Gods** Themselves: They teach us the appropriate *signa* and *responsa*.

How do we learn them from the Gods? One of the principal ways is **by theurgy**, which is therefore the means as well as the end. By theurgy we learn the rites and sunthêmata for more advanced theurgy. As a practical example, the **Chaldean Oracles** are the result of **Julian the Theurgist** (2nd or 3rd cent. CE) learning theurgical technique from Hekate Herself.

Theurgic Invocation

It is necessary to say a few words about theurgic invocation, for when we invoke the Gods we do not in any sense order Them to come to us. Nevertheless, the theurgist's actions, including the invocations, are instrumental in the God's arrival. This may be explained by analogy.

We cannot order the **Sun** to shine, but by uncovering and cleansing our windows we can allow the sunlight in. So also, you cannot order a God to come, but by proper theurgic cleansing of your soul, you may make it a suitable **Receptacle (Dokhê)** for the God's presence.

To change the analogy somewhat, light follows its own law and the sunlight contains all the **colors**. You cannot command a certain color to descend from the Sun, but you can put a colored filter over a window to admit only one color, bathing everything in that hue. Or you can paint an object or make it of a material that reflects only one color; for example a golden object manifests the yellow light in the Sun's rays. That is, you can, by appropriately skilled means, create a **Receiver (Dokhê)** that is "tuned" to a particular color like a radio receiver is tuned to a radio frequency.

So also in theurgy. Although all the Gods are everywhere, like the colors in the sunlight, we may arrange suitable receivers or receptacles that are tuned to a particular God. This tuning is accomplished by means of the God's **sumbola**. Like one half of a **sunthêma**, they match and engage the God's energy, causing it to resonate and reflect, illuminating the world and our souls with this energy.

Like all analogies, these are imperfect and should not be taken too literally. Nevertheless, it's astonishing how much theurgy can be learned from them, and the student will be rewarded for contemplating them carefully.

Theurgical Operations

The following are the principal theurgical operations (*praxeis*):

1. [Telestikê, or Ensoulment](#)
2. [Desmos kai Eklusis, or Binding and Releasing](#)
3. [Sustasis, or Liaison](#)
4. [Anagôgê, or Ascent](#)

They are of increasing difficulty.

Telestikê, or Ensoulment

The first theurgic operation (*praxis*) that I will discuss is called in ancient Greek *Telestikê*, a vague term that means "mystical" or "initiatory"; in this case it refers to a particular mystical art (*tekhnê*) or science (*epistêmê*). In English the procedure is often called "**animating a statue**," which might suggest statues dancing about unless you remember that *anima* is a Latin word for soul, and thus *animation* is literally giving a soul to something. In Greek this process is called **empsûkhôsis**, since it puts a soul (*psukhê*, psyche) into something. Normally *empsukhôsis* (ensouling) is used to cause a



divine or daimonic soul to take up residence in a divine image (*agalma*); thus the soul is given a material vehicle through which it may operate. Therefore in this, as in all theurgic operations, the theurgist participates in the creative activity of the Demiurge, specifically, in the **ensoulment of the material world**. Such an operation may be used to **consecrate a statue** (for example, to be the principal divine image in a temple), or to provide a **medium of communication** with a God or Daimôn, or to **purify the theurgist's soul** by serving as a medium by which the individual soul may participate in the divine image.



Needless to say, a God is not ordered or compelled to take up residence in the image. Rather, the theurgist prepares the image as a suitable *dokhê* - **receptacle or receiver** - for the divine power (*dunamis*), so that it may actualize its energy (*energeia*) in the material world. It is like preparing an object to reflect a certain color of light, but the light must be present already for the reflection to take place. This is accomplished by using the *sumbola* and *sunthêmata* of the God (or a Daimôn representative) in the preparation of the divine image. The more *sumbola* that are used, the better the *agalma* will reflect the divine energy.

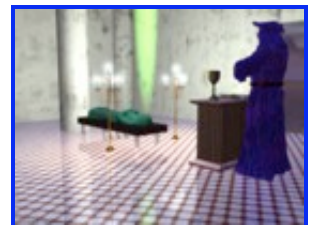
First we may consider the form of the *agalma*: it may be a **statue** or other image (e.g., a **picture**) of the God in a characteristic pose, or an image of an attribute associated with the God, such as an animal sacred to the God (e.g., an owl for Athena), or the God's instrument (e.g., a lyre for Apollo). The *agalma* may be engraved or otherwise marked with the name (especially the Secret Names) or epithets of the God. Esoteric signs or other *kharaktêres* may be used also.

Often a statue has a **receptacle** in its back or base into which the God's *sunthêmata* may be placed. These include gemstones, metals, herbs, plants, and animals. This is also a good place to put tokens marked with secret names or signs, if the image is to be visible to the public. (If the image is a picture, it may be mounted on or placed above a box in which *sunthêmata* are put.) The *agalma* may be fumigated with incense appropriate to the God and anointed with appropriate oils or perfumes. The theurgist may address invocations, prayers, chants, poetry, or other texts to the God, sing hymns, or play music in the appropriate modes (*harmoniai*) for the God. Finally, the *agalma* will be a better receiver if it is constructed or consecrated at a time that is **astrologically auspicious** for attracting the God's power. The general principle should be clear: the more *sumbola* and *sunthêmata* that can be combined in the image, the better the receiver it will be.

The *agalma* will become **numinous** when it is in the *energeia* of the God or Daimôn. **Phenomena of light** may appear around it: luminous or luciform apparitions (*puraugê* or *phôtoeidê phasmata*). When this occurs, the *energeia* of the God will be actualized in the soul of the theurgist, and the image may induce prophetic dreams, manifest omens, or deliver revelations (*theoparadota*), often in response to the theurgist's petition. In particular, this is an opportunity for the theurgist to obtain information and instructions for theurgic operations.

Desmos kai Eklusis, or Binding and Releasing

Through the operations of *Desmôs kai Êklusis* (Binding and Releasing) a God or Daimôn is called to take temporary **possession** of a person. The terminology is from traditional magic, but in theurgy we must interpret "binding" in the sense already discussed ("[Theurgic Invocation](#)"): preparing a suitable *receiver* for the divine energy. In fact, the easiest was to understand *Desmos* is as *Telestikê* in which a human receiver replaces an *agalma* (divine image).



But first some **terminology**. The theurgist, who invokes the God or Daimôn, is referred to as the *Klêtôr* (CLAY-tor, Caller) or *Theagôgôs* (God-evoker), whereas the subject is referred to as the *Dôkheus* (Recipient), *Theatês* (Seer), or *Kátokhos* (the "Held-down One"). They may be the same person (i.e., the theurgist may call the divinity to seize themselves), but this more advanced operation will be described later ("[Autodesmos](#)") and for now we will treat them as different people.

In *Desmos*, *sumbola* and *sunthêmata* are used in much the same way as in *Telestikê* (with obvious adaptations, some of which are [described later](#)). The goal again is to "tune" both the Caller and the Receiver so that they are receptive to the divine power (*dunamis*) and actualize the divine energy (*energeia*). This allows the energy to awaken and shine forth, in the souls of both the Caller and Receiver, as well as in the material environment.

The advantage of *Desmos* over *Telestikê* is that the Receiver is a human being, and therefore they can speak with the **divinity's voice**. On the other hand, the disadvantage of a human Receiver is that their soul may (consciously or unconsciously) **contaminate** the revelation from the God. Less obviously, there is a danger that the Receiver's **personal daimones** (see "[Personal Daimones](#)" above) may seize them, rather than their being possessed by the God or Daimôn who was invoked. (Similar problems can arise in *Telestikê*, for the theurgist is human too, but they don't usually directly contaminate the receiving image.) This is the reason that naive young boys were often used as Recipients in ancient times: they are less likely to put their own ideas and personalities in the way, as their personal daimones (especially sexual daimones) are fewer and weaker. They have what theurgists term **epitêdiôtês** (suitability, fitness). In general, we can see that the Seer needs to be able to enter a trance state in which their conscious mind is quiet; their personal daimones should be pacified and dormant during the operation. Then the Seer may become a **pure and uncontaminated Receptacle** for the divine energy. To reflect the divine light clearly, the mirror should be unblemished, clean, and polished.

Needless to say, depending on their **psychological state** and the activity of their daimones, Seers may be better able to bear the God at some times than at others. This must be taken into account before attempting Desmos. In what may be a fragment from the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 211), a God complains,

The Recipient's wretched heart supports me not.

Furthermore, an inexperienced Seer may have trouble at first achieving an adequate receptive state, but with talented Seers this improves with practice. We say that they acquire the *Hieratikê Dunamis* (**Hieratic Faculty**).

The Desmos

The Desmos operation begins with the **cleansing and purification** of both the Caller and Receiver. They will take a ritual bath and dress in ceremonial attire: typically a white robe bound with a belt bearing the symbola of the God to be invoked; they may wear also garlands and other divine symbola as appropriate. Next, the Caller, Receiver, and ritual area are purified, typically with salt water and burning sulfur (*Hólmê kai Theíon*: **Brine and Brimstone**). The atmosphere may be prepared by *Atmoí* (Vapors), that is, **incense** appropriate to the divinity.

During the operation, the Caller may stand on **kharaktêres** (esoteric characters and figures) that are **symbola** of the divinity.

In general, as in Telestikê, the more symbola and sunthêmata that are used, the better will the Recipient be prepared for the arrival of the divinity. To help the Seer achieve a trance state, it's helpful to provide a point of **focus**, such as an **oil lamp** (traditional), a **candle**, or a **kharaktêr** or other divine symbolon. The **state** we wish to achieve is called *Theophoria* (bearing a God), *Enthousiasmós* (having a God within, *entheos*), *Epíphnoia* (inspired by a God).

There are various **signs** that the experienced Caller may use to tell if the Recipient has achieved a state of Theophoria. These include changes of voice and facial expression. Also, there may be unusual bodily movement or rigidity. Levitation has been reported! Often there is insensitivity to pain. Theophoria is often accompanied by **luminous visions**, which may be perceived by the Seer (called *autoptic*) or by the Theagôgos (called *epoptic*). In the latter case, the Caller may describe the visions to the Recipient, so that they may experience the Enthousiasmós more fully. Both may experience visions. Sometimes the Seer is seized completely by the God, in which case they will be unconscious of what transpires, and the Theagôgos will witness *epoptic* manifestations of the God; the Recipient may have no memory of the Theophoria. At other times the Seer will consciously experience the Enthousiasmós; they may feel their mind and body to be seized and bearing the God, or they may experience the God externally through *autoptic* visions. Also, the Dokheus may observe the **lamp focus** to transform from the ordinary "mortal light" to a numinous "strong immortal light."

The experienced Caller can tell from the luminous apparitions what sort of God or Daimôn has seized the Seer (some of the rules can be found in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, Bk. II). This is important because some of the **lower ranks of Daimones** (which are governed more by emotion than by reason) do not respond honestly when asked their identity. In any case, you should never accept a divine spirit's statements uncritically nor abandon your intellectual and moral autonomy.

Generally, **formless luminous apparitions** are more reliable indicators of divine presence, since they are truer to a God's form than recognizable shapes (see Iamblichus, loc. cit.). Also, the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 148) state:

But when you see the very holy Shapeless Fire,
which shines by leaps and bounds throughout the whole world's depths,
attend the Fire's Voice....

In any case, an incorporeal Deity adopts a corporeal form for our benefit. As the Goddess explains in the *Oracles* (fr. 142),

... for you these bodies have been bound
upon autoptic apparitions ...

The Eklusis

The operation is usually brought to a close when the Theagôgos perceives that the divinity has departed from the Recipient, but it may be terminated also if the Recipient or Theagôgos are becoming too tired to sustain the Theophoria. At this time, the Eklusis (Release) removes the burden of bearing the God (Theophoria) from the Katokhos (Held Down One).

The Theagôgos bids the divinity to depart (if necessary) and thanks them for their presence:

At last release the Lord; no more the mortal holds the God.

(*Chaldean Oracles*, dub. fr. 225). Again, in theurgy it is recognized that a God cannot be "banished." Rather, this dismissal begins the "detuning" of the Recipient's soul from the divine power and back to the material realm, thereby allowing the divine

energy to dissipate.

Once the Recipient begins to return to normal consciousness, they should accelerate the process by turning away from the focal lamp and turning their attention to **mundane matters**. Focusing on their body (which is probably uncomfortable after the operation) is a good strategy. This process, which may happen accidentally if the Seer loses focus, is described in the *Oracles* (fr. 141):

The sluggish mortal, nodding here, is God's Release.

That is, if the sluggish (matter-bound) Recipient "nods" or inclines towards the things *here* (of this world), it will result in the God's Release.

The Theagôgos may step off of the God's kharaktêres, if they were used, and extinguish the incense and focal lamp. These and other kharaktêres and sumbola of the God may be covered. Finally, the Theagôgos and Theatês remove their ceremonial robes and the sumbola of the God. This **ends the rite**.

Note that the goal is not to sever all contact with the God, but simply to effect the Release (*Eklusis*) of the Held Down One (*Katokhos*) from divine control. The Theagôgos must be sensitive to any signs that the Release is not complete and take measures, if necessary, to restore the Katokhos to himself. This is, in brief, the operation of *Desmos kai Eklusis*.

Autodesmos

As previously remarked, it is possible for the Caller and Recipient to be the same person, an operation that we may call *Autodesmos*, but the preceding description highlights some of the difficulties of this more advanced operation. First, since you are acting in both roles, you must be both **active and passive** at the same time: concentrating your mind on the invocations and other sumbola, while surrendering your body and soul to the divinity. In practice, the operation goes through **stages**, from more active invocation, to more passive contemplation of kharaktêres or divine *logoi* (sayings), and finally to surrender. Obviously, you cannot surrender completely, or you will not see the (necessarily autoptic) visions or here the revelations.

Finally there is the matter of **Release**. When you perceive that the God has departed or you have become too tired to continue, you must refocus your attention on the material realm, as in ordinary *Eklusis*. Remove your robe and leave the ritual area.

It's worth noting that there is little danger of a trained theurgist getting **stuck in a trance**. The mortal frame cannot sustain a divine spirit indefinitely; eventually it will fatigue, and you will fall asleep. This is not necessarily bad, for in this still-inspired state you are likely to have revelatory or prophetic **dreams**. In any case, it's important to know that when you awake there may be lingering effects of Enthousiasmos, and so it's still necessary to take definite measure to **reground** yourself in the material world. (Clap, stamp, dance, exercise, have sex, eat, etc.)

Recall ("[Goal of Theurgic Ascent](#)") that in theurgy a **return to embodiment** is an essential part of the process, for that is our role in the creation of the universe. Theurgy effects the **Epistrophê (Turn Back)** toward The One, and thus the full actualization of Divine *Energeia*.

Sustasis, or Liaison

Sustasis is usually translated "meeting" or "conjunction," but again we will get more insight into the goal of the operation if we look at the range of meaning of the word. A *sústasis* (pl., *sustáseis*) is literally a putting-together (from *sun-istêmi*, to set up or place together). Therefore, in its most basic sense, a divine sustasis is a **meeting** that brings together a mortal and a divinity (Daimôn or God). Sustasis also means an **introduction** or **recommendation**, by which a mortal and divinity may make each other's acquaintance. By extension "sustasis" can refer to a **friendship** or **alliance**, and this cooperative relation is also a goal of divine sustasis.



Therefore we may say that the purpose of a divine (or *hieratic*) sustasis is to meet and form an alliance with a divinity for the sake of cooperation. By means of such an alliance you can place yourself under a God's **guidance and protection** (tutelage, in the ancient sense), or you may secure the assistance of a Daimôn for furthering divine purposes. Such an assistant is called a **Paredros**, which literally means "one who sits beside," and by extension an assistant divinity, a **familiar** spirit, or a counselor who provides magical aid.

Sustaseis with Gods and Their Daimones

As previously discussed ("[Mediating Spirits](#)"), Gods exist outside of space and time, and know us individually only as representatives of humankind. Therefore it is usually easier, more beneficial, and more common to have a **Sustasis with a**

Daimôn, for They exist in time and space and know us as individuals. Since the Daimones are intermediate between humans and Gods (recall "[Mediating Spirits](#)" above), They are ideal mediators and are especially suited as **messengers** (*angeloi*, "**angels**") between our material universe and the Noetic Realm of the Gods. We may bring our individual problems to Daimones and request Their guidance and aid in our individual lives.

Sometimes it is appropriate to form a **Sustasis with a God**. This may be when the issue or goal is transpersonal (i.e., dealing with humanity as a whole), or when you wish to participate in the transcendent *energeia* of the God. (In the latter case beware, however, since the High Gods, in fulfilling Their purposes, may have little regard for the needs, desires, or sensibilities of individual humans. Being the instrument of **Divine Will** may be neither convenient nor pleasant.) Practically, even if your goal is sustasis with a God, you should start with a Daimôn. The Gods have created Their **Chords** or **Lineages** of Daimones as mediators and messengers for us. Therefore, a God is normally approached through Their Daimones.

Even if a God is invoked, a Daimôn may appear in Their stead, and you should not be surprised at this. Further, if asked to identify Themselves, the Daimôn may claim to be a God. This may not be intentionally **deceptive** (although Daimones are capable of such deception). Rather, the Daimôn may be delegated to this purpose by the God, for we are better able to relate to the individual personality of a Daimôn than to the transcendent character of a God. Second, as we have seen, names may be duplicated at each level of the divine hierarchy; thus, since many Daimones do not have names, They may call Themselves by the name of the God who heads their lineage. As previously remarked, there are theurgic means for distinguishing divine and daimonic **apparitions** ([see under "Desmos" above](#)), but it is probably safer to assume that you are communicating with a Daimôn.

The fact bears repeating that you cannot simply accept that a spirit is who They say They are. How, then, can you trust anything They say? You can't! Even if you are confident that you are communicating with one of the High Gods, you should not **believe uncritically** what (you think) They say or **blindly accept** Their advice or commands. Although your ego - your individual conscious mind - should serve divine Providence, it was given to you for a reason. Use it! Do not abandon your **critical reason** or your **moral autonomy**. They are essential to our role, as **humans and Magi**, in the Divine Order.

Sustaseis with Personal Daimones

As previously discussed ("[Personal Daimones](#)"), we all have personal daimones who are assigned to us throughout our lives and perhaps beyond. For example, each of us has a **Guardian** or **Personal Daimôn** (*Idios Daimôn*), who mediates between us and the God who originates our lineage. In particular, your Guardian Daimôn watches over you and strives to guide you according to your destiny; some say that this Guardian is your advocate between lives. In any case, your cooperation with your Guardian will be facilitated if you make Their acquaintance and form an alliance with Them. Thus a **Sustasis with your Personal Daimôn** (*Sustasis Idiou Daimonos*) is especially worthwhile; life will go much smoother.

Another personal daimôn is the **Evil Daimôn** (*Kakos Daimôn*), which is born from the rejected potentials and energies of your soul. That is, everything that you, consciously or unconsciously, whether by conscious decision or by cultural and environmental osmosis, take to be bad, all those qualities will be the characteristics of your Evil Daimôn.

Such might seem to be the last sort of Spirit one might hope to meet (for It's demonic in the colloquial sense), but that is incorrect. For if you ignore the existence of the Other Daimôn, He or She (for its sex is the same as yours) will act outside your awareness, **possessing** you or possessing those with whom you deal. For the Other Daimôn wants to live and act, and will find a way to do so.

Therefore it is much better to establish a **Sustasis with your Evil Daimôn** (*Sustasis Kakou Daimonos*). Become acquainted so that you will recognize Him or Her: whether seizing you or another person, or simply hovering in the air. Find out the Kakos' needs, desires, and issues with you, so that you may form an agreement that satisfies the Daimôn without sacrificing your personal needs and moral autonomy. By this alliance your Other Daimôn, who was created from **rejected parts of your own soul**, may be recruited to work for your higher (divine) purpose. The Kakos Daimôn holds **great power**, and by a proper alliance ("pact"), you may reclaim this power for divine ends. By reclaiming the lost parts of your soul, you become more whole.

For many centuries **Western culture** has rejected and denied the Evil Daimôn, both individual and collective (for the collective consciousness of a culture, nation, or religion also creates its Kakos Daimôn); this is the reason these destructive powers are rampaging ungoverned around our world. They cannot be banished; the only solution is a cooperative alliance in conformity with modern society and ethics.

The Operation of Sustasis

Having discussed at length the meaning and purpose of Sustasis, we can describe the operation briefly, for it builds on the techniques already discussed ([Telestikê](#), [Desmos kai Eklusis](#)). This is because the first step is to **invoke the Divinity** into your presence. This may be accomplished by invoking Them into a **divine image** (*agalma*) or other prepared and consecrated **focus** (as in Telestikê), or into a **human Receiver** (as in Desmos). To this end, all the techniques of Telestikê and Desmos are

appropriate, so long as you have gained experience with seeing visions through practice of these arts. The principal difference is that once the Spirit is present, you engage in a dialogue directed toward establishing an alliance. This might include **vows** on your part in thanks for the divine aid, and other agreements on **Sunthêmata** (signs, tokens) by which you may communicate with each other. Standard techniques of Eklusis (Release) are used to terminate the Sustasis.

The so-called "**Mithras Liturgy**" (Betz, PGM IV.475-289; Meyer, 211-21) is a good example of an ancient Rite of Sustasis, although it is not purely Pythagorean.

Theourgikê Anagôgê, or Theurgic Ascent

We now come to the last, and most advanced, theurgic operation, the *Theourgikê Anagôgê* or Theurgic Ascent (also known as the **Hieratic Ascent**). Although the procedures are similar to the operations already discussed, in particular [Desmos kai Eklusis](#), there is a crucial difference between Ascent and all the other operations, for in those operations the Divinity is always experienced as "other," but by means of the Anagôgê you ascend so that your soul, so far as is possible for a mortal, unites with a God. In this way you experience **deification** (*theôsis*).

Thus the goal of theurgic ascent is **union** (*henôsis*) with a God. This may be any God, including even the Demiurge and The Ineffable One (an especially difficult operation). By means of this union you may experience your own inherent divinity and your continuity with The One, and thus, by means of the union, come to be in better harmony with Providence. Consciously experiencing your participation in Providence gives meaning to life.

The stages of the Theurgic Ascent are essentially similar to those of the [Contemplative](#) and [Erotic](#) Ascents, but the Theurgic Ascent makes more use of ritual (material substances and actions). Therefore, it may be effective when the other, more interior, ascents are not.

By the principle of **like knows like**, it is the image of The One in your own soul (called the **Flower of the Whole Soul**, *Anthos Pasês tês Psukhês*) that is able to unite with The Ineffable One. (See ["Personal Daimones" above](#) on the Flower of the Soul.) By means of this "knowledge through identification," your individual One comes to participate more perfectly in The One Itself. This is the turn back toward the One (the ultimate source), known as the *Epistrophê* (**Return**; recall ["Triadic Structure" in Part I](#)), by which your soul becomes the *energeia* actualizing the power (*dunamis*) of the One. This is our destiny.

To accomplish the ascent, the parts of your soul that are more like The One must be separated from those that are less like It. This separation is accomplished by a **symbolic death**: "dying before you die." Before describing the procedure it is necessary to explain that the ascent is a cooperative activity between the Initiate (masc. *Tetelesménos*, femn. *Tetelesménê*), who makes the ascent, and an Initiator (*Telesiourgós*) or Theurgist (*Theourgós*), who usually has (human) assistants. ([As for Desmos](#), it is possible, but difficult, for a Theurgist-Initiate to make the ascent on their own.)

Step 1: Purification and Protection

Preparatory to the ascent is the Purification (*Kátharsis*) of the **Soul**, its **Vehicle** (*ókhêma*), and the **Body**. The principal goal is to facilitate the ascent by making the initiate as similar to the Gods as possible. Purification of the body may include a ritual bath ([as in Desmos](#)), sexual abstinence, and dietary restrictions or prescriptions, as appropriate to the Deity. The bath corresponds to the **washing of the corpse**, and after it the initiate dresses in a *khitôn termiôeis* (funeral robe), which is a loose ankle-length tunic, white or mostly white in color. In addition, the initiate is purified by Burning Brimstone and is anointed with olive oil and other perfumed unguents. These preparations also will facilitate purification of the soul's vehicle, the goal being to make it "well-wheeled" (*eútrokhon*) for the ascent. Purification of the soul is directed toward quieting the lower parts of the soul, which do not ascend. To this end, the techniques described under ["Contemplative Ascent"](#) are appropriate. Clearly, these skills are not developed overnight; some of them require a lifetime of practice.

While, on the one hand, purification is intended to eliminate those influences that may impede the ascent, on the other hand we aid the ascent by means of **sumbola and sunthêmata** appropriate to the Deity who is our goal. Physical sunthêmata may be worn, ingested, or placed in the ritual area. Nonphysical sunthêmata, such as hymns, prayers, and chants, will be recited out loud or in the initiate's mind as the ascent proceeds.

Intermediate between purifications and sumbola are the *apotrópaia*, or **averting charms**, whose purpose is to ward off the **Material Daimones**, known as the **Dogs of Hekate**, for She is

the Driver of the Dogs of Water, Earth, and Air. (C.O. fr. 91)

(For more on Hekate, see [Pt. II, "Hekate"](#) and ["Mediating Spirits"](#) above.) The Material Daimones are not hostile, as is sometimes supposed, but it is their function in the Cosmos to carry forth the Ideas into material embodiment. Thus, in the ascent we oppose Their natural activity, and therefore They must be placated.

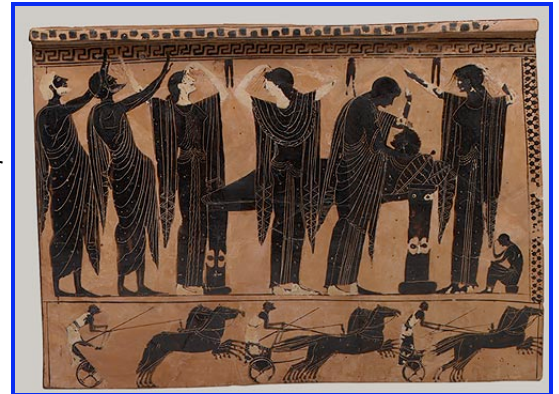
While the Material Daimones are agents of Procession (*Próodos*), the **Heroes** are agents of the Return (*Epistrophê*). Therefore, the Heroes, especially **Heracles** (see "[Examples of Heroization](#)" in "Fire" in [Opsopaus, AGEDE](#)), may be invoked to keep the Material Daimones at bay and to facilitate the ascent. This will be more effective if, through a prior [Sustasis](#), you have recruited the Hero as a *Paredros*.

An *apotrópaion* may be a physical charm hung or tied on the initiate (called a *periápton*, "tied-on thing"), or it may be less material: an apotropaic prayer, chant, or hymn. The principles of *sumbola* and *sunthêmata* apply. In this way the initiate is "well-equipped" for the ascent, "all-armed" (*pánteuukhos*) in Plato's terms (*Laws VII*, 796C1). Using the same word, Hekate Herself sets the example in the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 72):

for now, equipped, all-armed, I have come Divine.

Step 2: Symbolic Death and Dissolution

The next step is a symbolic *Thánatos Authairetos* (**Voluntary Death**) followed by a **Funeral** (*Kêdeía, Kêdos*) and symbolic **Burial** (*Entaphiasmós*). The procedure derives from an esoteric interpretation of the funeral of Patroclus in the *Iliad* (XVIII.343-53). The **initiators** (theurgist and assistants) have spread a bier cloth (*strōma*) over the garlanded bier (*klinê*) on which the initiate will be laid out. (The *klinê* is a waist-high, cushioned platform, but an ordinary bed or mats on the floor will work.) The *klinê* is oriented with the feet towards the (principal) door, if indoors, or towards the East, if out of doors, for the dead go to the Otherworld feet-first.



For the *Próthesis* (**Laying Out**) the initiate lays upon the bier with their head on a pillow ([see illustration](#)). The initiators spread the *kosmos*, a predominantly white **funeral mantle**, over the initiate; the *kosmos* (or **pharos**) represents Mother Earth, in which the initiate's body will be buried (see [Pt. II, "The Wedding"](#) on the *kosmos-pharos*). The initiators station themselves around the bier, with the theurgist at the initiate's head. When the initiate has prepared themselves for the voluntary death, they pull the *kosmos* over their face. The assistants begin their lamentation, but the theurgist interrupts it, saying something like this:

Euphêmeite! Keep sacred silence! "What is this strange outcry?" [*Phaedo* 117D] Let there be no such lamentation, for [Initiate's name] has chosen die while yet in their body. "One's End [*teleuté*] ought to be in sacred silence" [*Phaedo* 117D, a Pythagorean precept].

There follows the *Anakaluptêria* (**Uncovering**), in which the theurgist uncovers the initiate's face. The initiate's head is uncovered because it is the residence of their immortal nous, which resides in the round cranium just as the Divine Nous resides in the Celestial Sphere. After some additional funerary rites, the initiators begin to sing chants and hymns while they process around the bier.

For the *Entaphiasmós* (**Burial**) the initiators return to their places around the initiate. The theurgist symbolically buries the initiate by tossing three handfuls of earth on them; the earth prevents the initiate's body from polluting the Divine Realms and permits its **dissolution** and **separation** from the initiate's soul.

Next is a very important operation called **Breathing and Thrusting Forth the Soul** (*Anapnoê kai Psukhês Éxōsis*). The theurgist grasps the initiate's head on both sides ([see illustration](#)) and invokes the Winds and Rays of the Spheres to fan the fire to separate the initiate's soul and body. Then the theurgist admonishes the initiate to shield themselves with **Sounding Light** and **Three-barbed Strength** in preparation for scaling the Rays. The theurgist might say: "My child,

when thou hast donned the Vigor full-arrayed of Sounding Light,
and hast equipped thy nous and soul with Three-barbed Strength,
then cast the Triad's whole Sign in thy breast, and haunt
Empyrean channels, not dispersed, but gathered in." (C.O. fr. 2)

The theurgist begins to call forth the initiate's soul, invoking the Three-barbed Strength, the Soul Spark born of the Father's Thought, to draw their soul forth from their body. He declares the initiate to be clothed in Shining Raiments, girded by the Substance of the Spheres, and bids them to concentrate their



nous upon the *sumbola* and *sunthêmata*, and calls their soul to come forth to scale the Fiery Rays. The theurgist continues with various magical formulas to evoke the soul, and the assistants begin singing chants and hymns to aid the separation. While the theurgist calls forth the soul, the initiate focuses on their breath and begins to breathe more deeply and quickly, in time with the chanting or music.



Step 3: Ascent Through the Spheres

Through the following stages the assistants, under direction of the theurgist, adjust their chanting, singing, or other music to aid the elevation of the initiate's soul. Henceforth the initiate may breath through the mouth and intone the **vowel chants**, *Onoma Barbara*, and *Voces Magicae* selected to aid their ascent.

After an initial phase of relaxation, the initiate may experience opposition from the Material Daimones. By attention to the Three-barbed Strength and other *sunthêmata* of The One, and by appeal to the Heroes and *Kosmagoi* (Rulers of the Three Realms) the ascent through the **aetherial spheres** may proceed. (See [Pt. III. "Iunges, Teletarchs, and Connectors."](#) on the *Kosmagoi*.) In each of the planetary spheres the initiate gives up (sacrifices) one of the outer/lower **layers of their soul**. Eventually a new peace is attained, as the initiate rests at the **Gate of the Sun**.

Once the initiate has ascended above the aetherial sphere, they should focus on chanting the *sunthêmata* in their mind rather than out loud, for they are ascending through the immaterial **empyrean spheres**. Here the initiate may encounter the Gods, who may assist the ascent. **Visions** of the Gods are possible.

Step 4: Unification (Henôsis)

Ultimately the initiate may ascend all the way to **The Ineffable One**. At this transcendent pinnacle they will be beyond duality, beyond language and conceptual thought, indeed beyond all differentiation and change. In this eternal realm, beyond time itself, this domain of **Aiôn**, the initiate experiences **immortality** and **deification**. (Recall our discussions of Aiôn in [Part I. "Theogony."](#) and [Part III. "The Monad and the Indefinite Dyad."](#)) *Henôsis* cannot be described; it must be experienced.

Step 5: Redescent

The Initiate cannot remain in the state of unification for very long, and when they sense its dissipation they must begin to redescent and to redon the **layers of their outer soul**. The trained theurgist will perceive that the initiate is falling from the unitive state and assist their redescent with appropriate formulas, chants, songs, prayers, and hymns. The methods of the theurgic Release ([discussed above](#)) can be used to help the initiate to re-ensoul their body.

When the descent is complete, the initiate is "unburied" (i.e., the Kosmos is removed) and they rise from the bier. The initiators welcome the **reborn initiate** with joyous hymns of welcome and praise.

As a result of the ascent, the initiate is transformed, reborn with a new soul. Although they have returned to the material world, henceforth their soul retains **roots** planted in The One. With this permanent connection to the **Transcendent Source of Divinity**, the initiate henceforth consciously embodies divinity on earth.

The theurgic ascent is a difficult and hence infrequent rite, for which years of preparation may be required. But when it is successful, the initiate is transformed into a *Theios Anêr* (**God-Man**), one of the **Perfected or Immaculate Beings** (*Akhrantoi*), who by Their very presence on earth bring grace to humanity and to all of Nature.

This completes our discussion of Theurgy and hence our Summary of Pythagorean Theology. Vale!

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A Summary of Pythagorean Theology

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This list of sources is complete to date, and will be extended as the Summary is revised.

All translations are my own unless stated otherwise. Naturally, they have been checked against previous translations.

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