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Cyphi in the Hermetic and Pythagorean traditions:

This lemma has to be read in the context of two interrelated traditions: Hermeticism and Pythagoreanism (especially in its Neoplatonic version). Both traditions conceive medicine in the framework of cosmic harmony and the sympathy that unites all life in the universe (cf. *Corpus Hermeticum*, VIII.5 and Copenhaver 1992, note on p. 26; cf. also Ebeling 2007 pp. 22, 27; on Pythagorean cosmic sympathy and friendship, see Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras*, 49; Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pythagoras*, VIII, 33-35; cf. Burkert 1972 pp.272-273; see also Plato's *Symposium* 186a-187a and Plotinus, *Enneads* IV.4.41.1). Medicine, alchemy, astrology and music are disciplines connected thanks to a common aim of spiritual self-transformation, which cannot be separated from the analogous association between the microcosm and the macrocosm, according to which the inner life of the soul is manifested in universal and particular modes. Life and health at the cosmic level are manifested as harmony and proportion, and there is a continuity of that universal life, which is the source of the connection between the human soul and the body at the physical level (cf. Proclus, *On Plato's Timaeus*, II.24.5 and *On Plato's Cratylus*, 174, p. 99.10). Thanks to cosmic harmony, the combination of ingredients used to make this particular remedy has a healing power that is effective not only at the physical level but also at the level of the spiritual therapy of the human soul. The symbolic and ritual aspects involved in the preparation or intake of this *pharmakon*, combine arithmology, astronomy and music in a Hermetic/Pythagorean way (for this reason this text mentions a therapeutic or cathartic ritual relating constellations and musical instruments). The underground "cave" mentioned here has also ritualistic and symbolic significances; Hermes was born in a cave (the cave of his mother Maia in Kyllene), he invented the lyre outside that cave, and this world is compared to a cave (see Porphyry, *De Antro Nympharum*, 2-4), which at the same time represents a place for manifestation of divine immanence and on the other hand, a "humid" state of the soul (associated with sleep and forgetfulness). Hermes as the guide of the soul, represents the awakening of the Logos, with his solar "golden staff" that points towards the recovery of memory of the origins and the exit from the cave (cf. Porphyry, *apud Stobaeus Eclogarum physicarum et ethicarum*, I.41.60 —translated in Lambertson 1989 — and Proclus, *Commentary on the Alcibiades I*, 195 ff.). In this symbolic context, remedies are not only suited for providing physical wellbeing and peaceful sleep, but also for including life in a wider search of meaning and knowledge, which involves the whole being of a person. The most complete explanation of this remedy is presented by Plutarch (*De Iside et Osiride*, 80, 383e) and in general terms can be depicted as having the power to induce a peaceful state for sleeping, while the body and mind are restored, but especially in the context of good and prophetic dreams. Plutarch compares the effect of *cyphi* with the power of the lyre of Pythagoras for purifying the emotional and irrational aspects of the soul before going to sleep (and also the discursive intellect and the imagination; cf. Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, 65). The symbolic and spiritual meaning of the state of being asleep provides a twofold possibility: either staying in a state of torpor and confusion or preparing for the receptivity of divine inspiration through prophetic dreams (with the help of this natural remedy and Pythagorean music). The awareness of divine immanence is related to the necessity of cultivating the faculties of imagination, memory, intellect, and the receptivity towards the divine world, and not falling into the spell of Circe. This allegorical connotation of the remedy leads to the idea of Hermetic guidance for not forgetting the divine homeland of the soul, while the soul is "asleep" in this world-cave. Hermes is the god that gives Odysseus the flower moly (*Odyssey*, 10, 302), the gift of memory and clear mind, which serves as a counter-magic against the spells of Circe's Cave. A similar symbolism appears in

Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* Book XI, 12, where Lucius is liberated from its brutal stupor and confusion thanks to another vegetal remedy: a crown of roses dedicated to the goddess Isis. Both in Plutarch and in Apuleius this kind of remedies are related to the cult of Isis and Osiris. These rituals are related as well to the Mysteries of Asclepius and the healing therapy of dream "incubation" in caves. In order to preserve the connection (harmony) between the physical (cave) and the divine world (outside the cave), musical and astronomical symbolisms and rituals are needed. Plutarch mentions sixteen ingredients required for making the remedy and 16 is a number that has Pythagorean arithmological and musical meanings; the proportion 18/16 (the interval of a tone = 9/8) is also mentioned by Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 42; 367f. In Plutarch's depiction there are also astrological correspondences, connecting the moisturizing agents with the Moon and the nocturnal period; while the resins correspond to the Sun and the daylight. The symbolism of myrrh takes into account not only its humid qualities (for being a resin) but also its aromatic and emanative aspects, as a product of the light of the sun, which symbolizes the immanence of the divine rays and also immortality. There is a divine spark present within the soul, even though the soul is "asleep" and moist in this world, like in a cave. There seems to be an analogy between the nocturnal dream and the life of the soul in this world. It is important to preserve a clear and peaceful mind thanks to the inspiration of the Hermetic "fire", which can be communicated by prophetic dreams or also by the hermetic sciences (alchemy, mathematics, including astronomy and music), which make the soul "dry" and "ethereal". Hermes, or in other cases Pythagoras, can serve as guides or messengers who lead the soul's self-transformation and awakening from the confusion and dampness proper to the obscurity of the cave. Thanks to its "ethereal" qualities, the *cyphi*, says Plutarch, is diffused in the body; this may evoke the all-permeating quality of divine ether, which makes possible the soul's assimilation to it in its journey of return. Music (especially the lyre) also transmits this kind of emanative or permeating quality of ether. Pythagorean music had the aim of purifying the ethereal "subtle body" before going to sleep (and in the morning); in this context, the vehicle and the "mirror of imagination" (Plato's *Timaeus*, 71a3 ff. cf. Sheppard 2003) connects the sensible and the intelligible levels, because the soul is mediator between those levels of existence and makes possible the communication between them and the return or ascent from the cave to a more real or deeper reality.

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