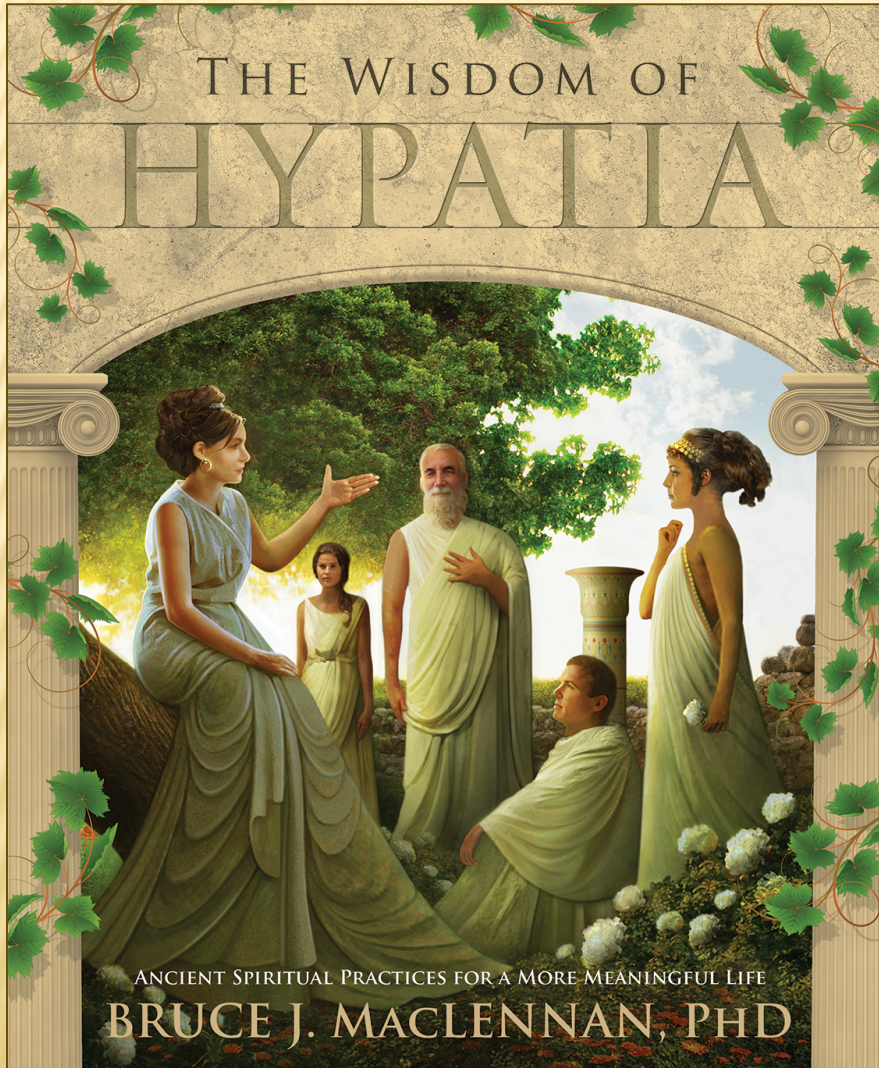


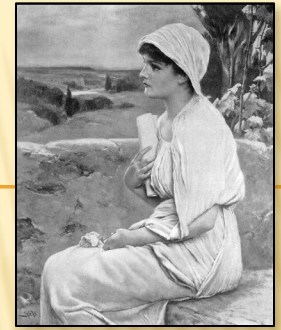
Bruce MacLennan, PhD

NEOPLATONIC THEURGY

THE BOOK



- ✘ Teaches *practical* Neoplatonic philosophy: How to live a more meaningful life
- ✘ Nine-month plan of study culminating in theurgy
- ✘ Progresses through “three degrees of wisdom”
- ✘ Numerous exercises
- ✘ WisdomOfHypatia.com



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- ✘ Hadot, P., *Philosophy as a Way of Life*
- ✘ Hadot, P., *What is Ancient Philosophy?*
- ✘ Johnson, R.A., *Inner Work*
- ✘ Kupperman, J. S., *Living Theurgy*
- ✘ MacLennan, B.J., *The Wisdom of Hypatia*
- ✘ Shaw, G., *Theurgy and the Soul*
- ✘ Williams, B., *For the Love of the Gods*

OUTLINE

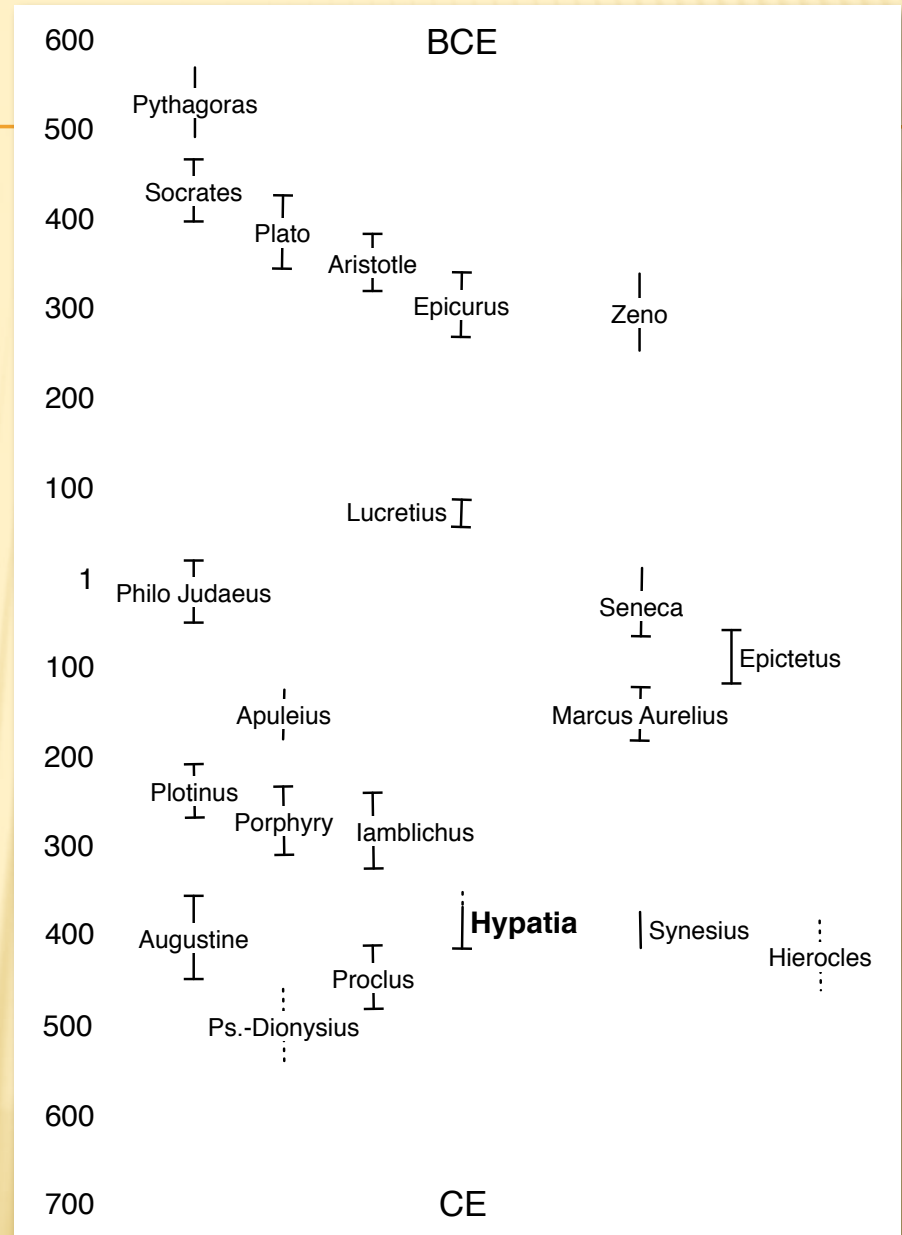
- I. History
- II. Philosophy as a Way of Life
- III. Cosmology
 - A. Macrocosm
 - B. Microcosm
- IV. Paths of Ascent
 - A. Overview of Three Paths
 - B. The Path of Trust: Theurgy



I. HISTORY

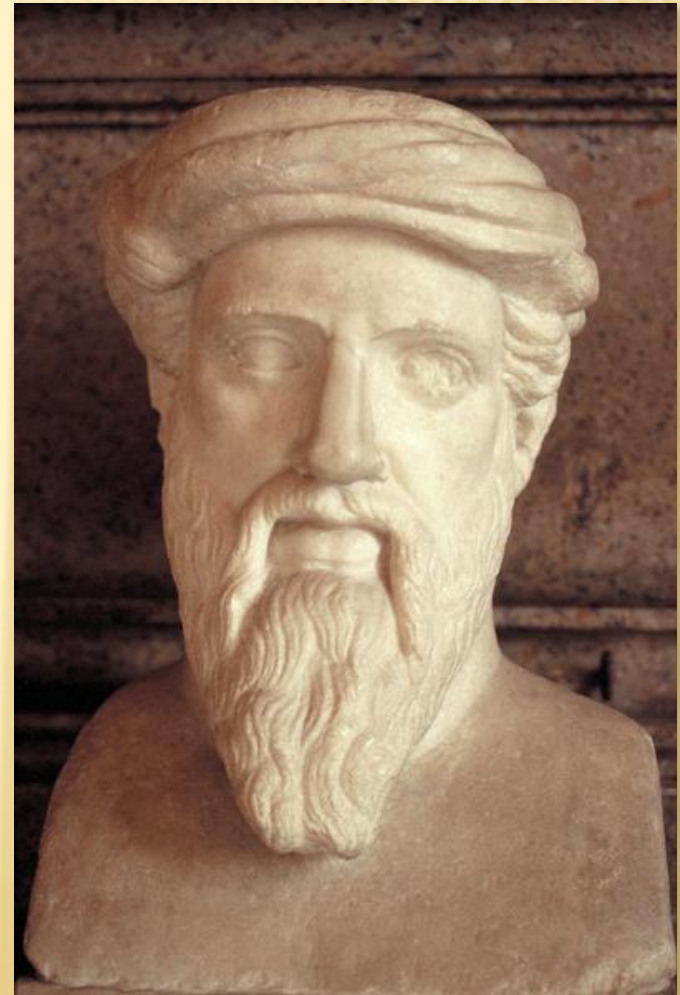
TIMELINE

- ✘ Some Platonist, Epicurean, and Stoic philosophers



PYTHAGORAS

- ✘ Born in Samos, mid 6th century BCE
- ✘ Traveled and studied widely
- ✘ Founded Pythagorean Order
- ✘ Beginnings of mathematical science
- ✘ Important influence on Plato



PYTHAGOREANS CELEBRATE SUNRISE



— Fyodor Bronnikov (1869)

HYPATIA OF ALEXANDRIA

- ✘ Born c.350–370 CE
- ✘ Died 415 CE
- ✘ Daughter of Theon, probable head of Museion
- ✘ Philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer
- ✘ We don't know what she looked like





HYPATIA AND THEON

Scene from the 2009 movie "Agora" about Hypatia
(Rachel Weisz, Michael Lonsdale)

TEACHER OF NEOPLATONIC PHILOSOPHY

- ✘ Taught “the philosophy of Plato and Plotinus”
 - + i.e., Neoplatonism
- ✘ Students included Pagans, Jews, and Christians
- ✘ Widely respected
- ✘ “The most holy and revered philosopher”
- ✘ “Divine guide”



HYPATIA TEACHING



ALEXANDRIAN POLITICS

- ✘ Escalating violence between Pagans, Jews, and Christians
- ✘ Rivalry between the Christian Patriarch, Cyril, and the Prefect of Alexandria, Orestes (also a Christian)
- ✘ Hypatia was an advisor to Orestes
- ✘ Cyril was jealous of Hypatia's influence
 - + “that Pagan woman”
 - + accused of devotion to “magic, astrolabes, and instruments of music”

THE MURDER OF HYPATIA



Artist: Howard Roberts

Title: Hypathia

Date: 1873

Medium: Marble; carved in
1877

Size: 67 x 23 3/4 x 28 1/2
in. (170.18 x 60.325 x
72.39 cm.)

Acc. No.: 1928.1

Credit Line: Courtesy of the
Pennsylvania Academy of
the Fine Arts, Philadelphia.

Gift of Mrs. Pauline L.
Roberts

“HYPATHIA” BY HOWARD ROBERTS

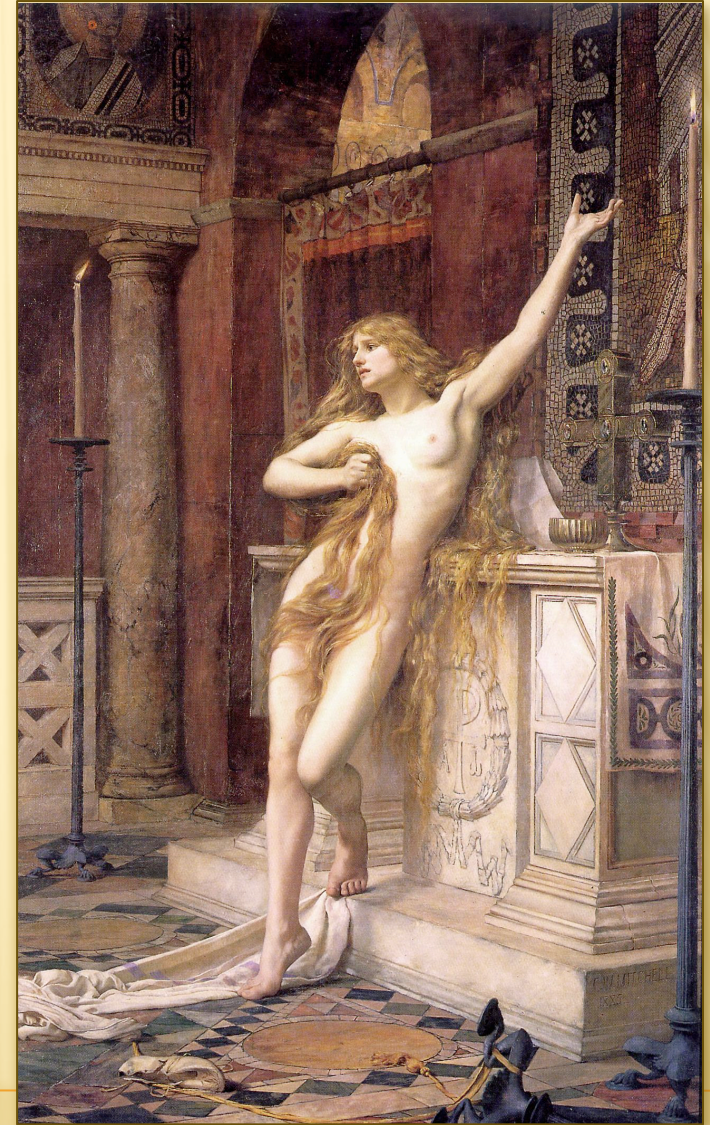


Artist: Charles William
Mitchell (1854–1903)

Title: “Hypatia”

Date: 1885

HYPATIA BY CHARLES WILLIAM MITCHELL



THE GOLDEN CHAIN

- ✘ Plato (427–437 BCE)
- ✘ Philo Judaeus (fl. c.40 CE)
- ✘ Plotinus (205–270 CE)
- ✘ Porphyry (233–c.309)
- ✘ Iamblichus (c.245–c.325)
- ✘ Hypatia (c.365–415)
- ✘ Synesius (c.373–c.414)
- ✘ Hierocles (fl. 430)
- ✘ Proclus (c.411–486)
- ✘ Damascius (fl. 529)
- ✘ pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (6th cent.)
- ✘ Psellus (1018–c.1081)
- ✘ Suhrawardi (1152/3–1190/1)
- ✘ Ishrâqî Sufis (13th cent.)
- ✘ Qabalah (13th cent.)
- ✘ George Gemistos “Plethon” (c.1360–1452)
- ✘ Cosimo de’ Medici (1389–1464)
- ✘ Marsilio Ficino (1433–99)
- ✘ Thomas Taylor (1758–1835)
- ✘ Romanticism & Transcendentalism (c.1800–c.1850)

II. PHILOSOPHY AS A WAY OF LIFE

ENDS — GOALS

- ✘ Wisdom (*sophia*) and the sage (*sophos*)
- ✘ The *philo-sophos* (philosopher) as lover of wisdom
- ✘ Unending pursuit of wisdom
- ✘ Pythagoras coined the term *philosophia* (philosophy)
- ✘ “Empty are the words of the philosopher who has cured no one’s soul” — Epicurus

MEANS — SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

- ✘ “Spiritual” because involve entire spirit
 - + intellect
 - + imagination
 - + sensibility
 - + will
- ✘ “Exercises” because:
 - + requires effort and training
 - + has to be lived



OUTER PRACTICES

- ✘ Self-mastery
- ✘ Fulfillment of duties
- ✘ Need for rules to be ready to hand
- ✘ Example: Epicurus' Fourfold Medicine:
“God presents no fear, death no worry; and the good is easy to obtain, but evil easy to endure.”

INNER PRACTICES



- ✘ Memorization
- ✘ “View from above”
- ✘ Meditation on death
- ✘ Inner discourse
- ✘ Examination of conscience
- ✘ Examination of dreams
- ✘ Reading, research, investigation, listening



ROLE OF DOCTRINE

- ✘ Theories are rational exercises in service to psychological exercises
- ✘ Cures intended for students in a particular psychological state
- ✘ “Therapy of the word”
- ✘ A treatise is a progressive therapeutic treatment
- ✘ Purpose is “to *form* rather than to *inform*”

THREE DEGREES OF WISDOM



- I. Epicureanism: teaches how to achieve joy and tranquility by moderating your desires
- II. Stoicism: teaches you where your true freedom lies and how to use it wisely
- III. Neoplatonism: teaches how you can live in harmony with the eternal forces that govern our lives

FIRST DEGREE OF WISDOM: EPICUREANISM

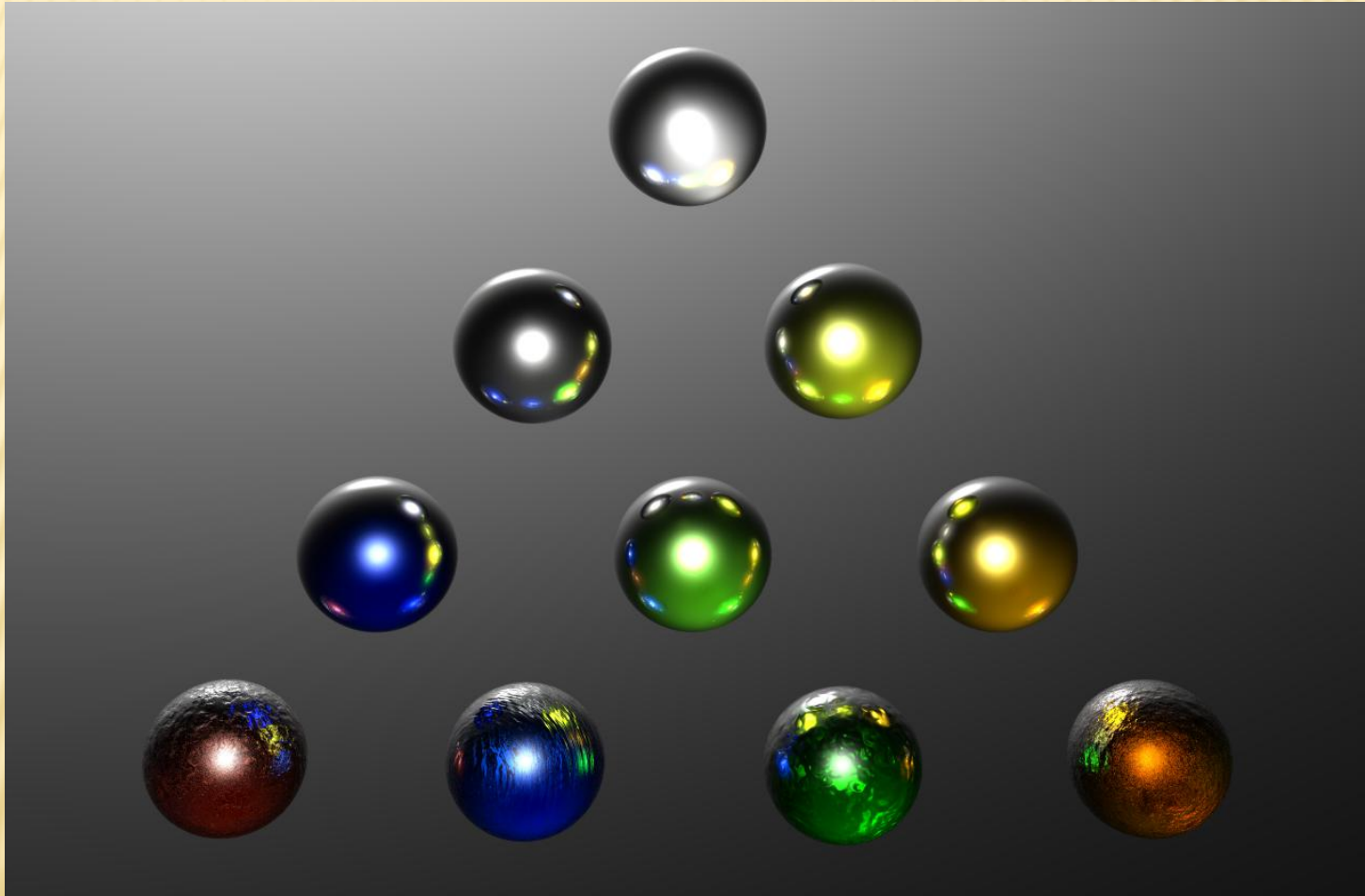
- ✘ Some desires are natural, others are non-natural
- ✘ Some natural desires are necessary, others are unnecessary
- ✘ Necessary natural desires are easy to satisfy
- ✘ The unnecessary ones can be satisfied in moderation
- ✘ Active pleasures require some effort to maintain, but passive ones do not
- ✘ The greatest pleasure is an absence of pain, a state of tranquility
- ✘ Moderating desire leads to self-sufficiency, which leads to freedom
- ✘ Friendship is a supreme pleasure, and friends help one another

SECOND DEGREE OF WISDOM: STOICISM

- ✘ Discipline of Assent addresses what is true or not
 - + Assent to the true
 - + Dissent from the false
 - + Suspend judgment on the uncertain
- ✘ Discipline of Desire addresses what is good or bad
 - + The only truly good thing is moral goodness, the only truly bad thing is moral badness, all else is indifferent
 - + The truly good is always obtainable and the truly bad always avoidable
- + Consent to destiny, and welcome what providence prescribes
- ✘ Discipline of Impulse addresses what we should do or not do
 - + (1) Social obligation
 - ✘ altruism
 - ✘ difficult people
 - ✘ friends
 - + (2) Worth and justice
 - + (3) Reservation for fate
 - ✘ The sage desires what destiny dictates
- ✘ Salvation consists in living an authentically human life

III. NEOPLATONIC COSMOLOGY

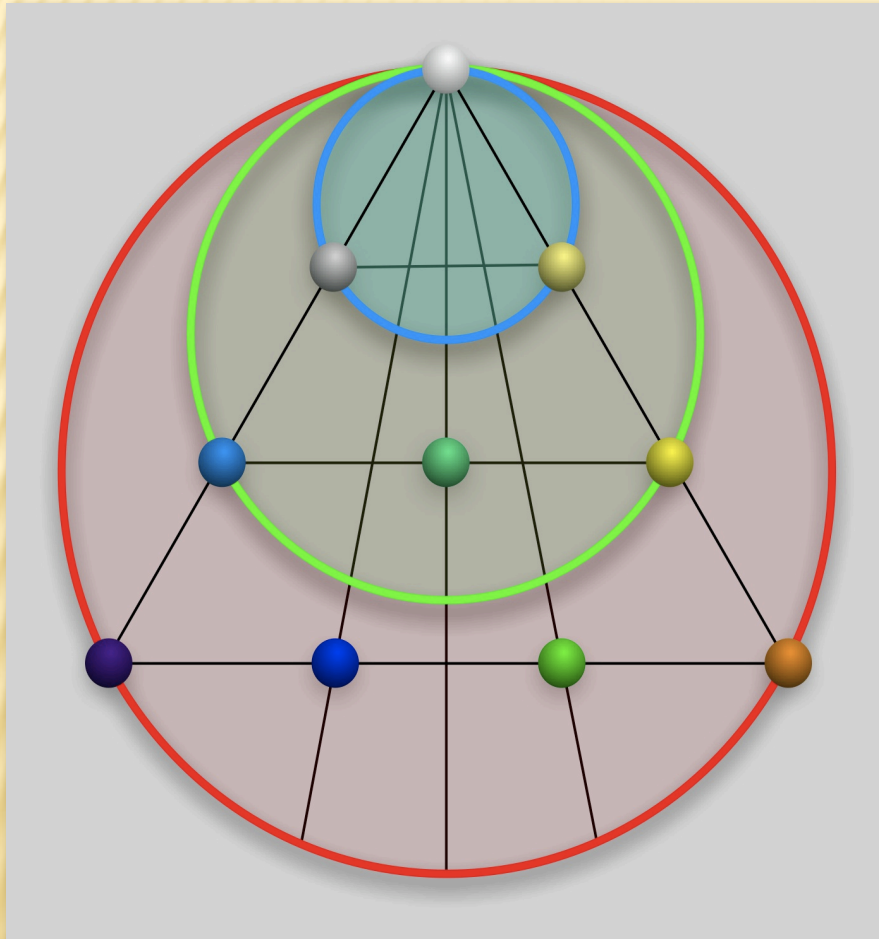
THE TETRACTYS



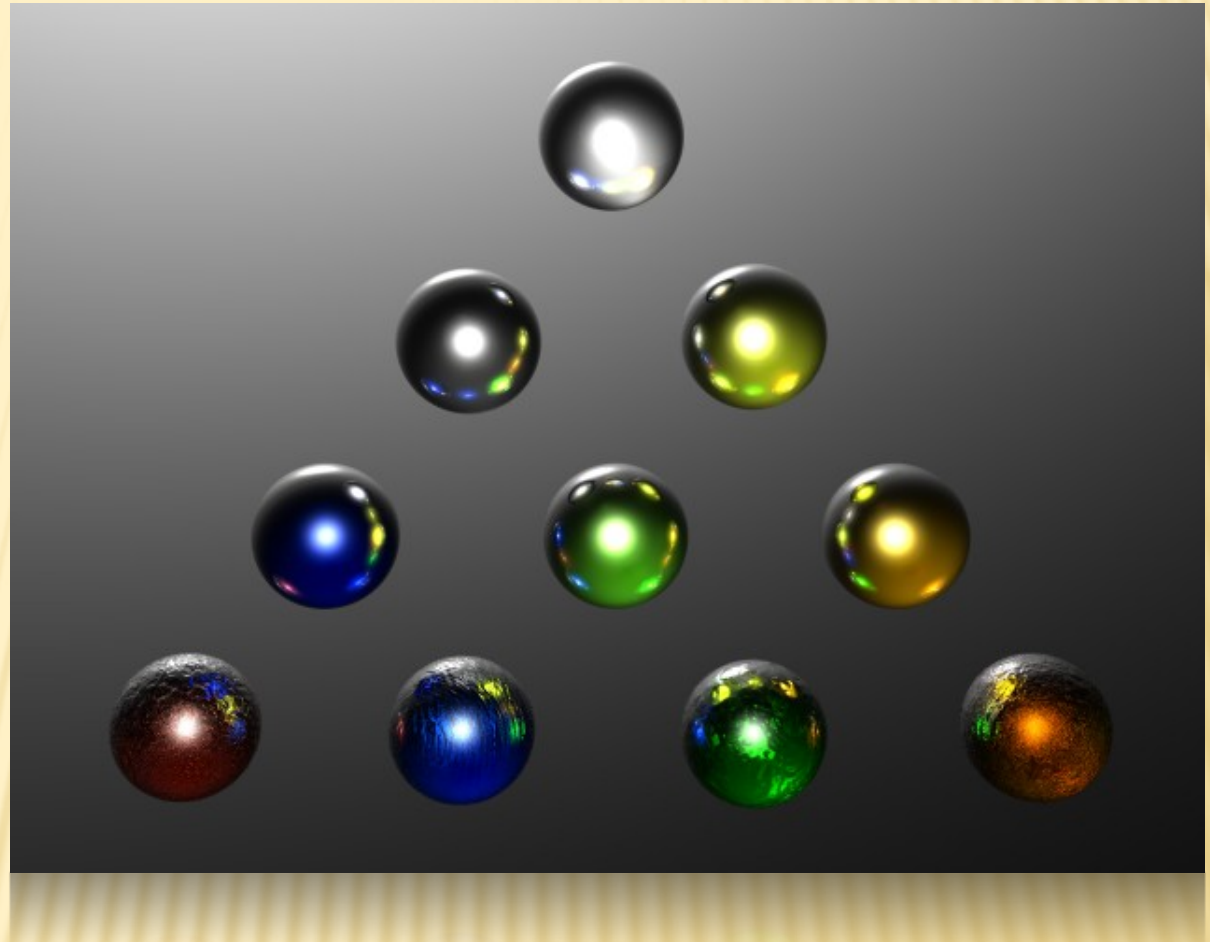
THE PYTHAGOREAN OATH

Swear! by him that gave our family
the Tetractys,
which holds the fount and root
of everflowing Nature.

PROCESSION AND RETURN



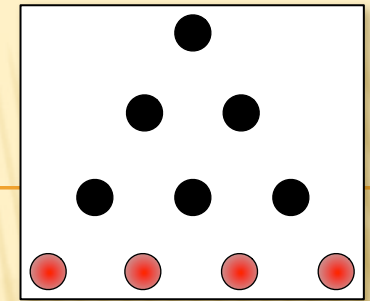
- ✘ Each level of reality has a triadic structure:
- ✘ It remains in its own essence
 - + top
- ✘ It proceeds (emanates)
 - + right arc down
- ✘ It returns (contemplates)
 - + left arc up



THE MACROCOSM

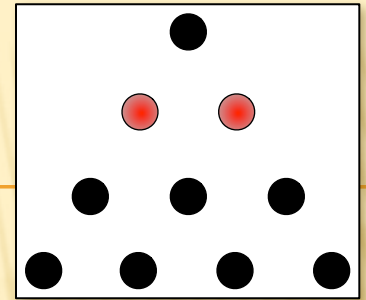
The *Tetractys*, a Pythagorean symbol, represents the structure of the Neoplatonic *Macrocosm*, that is, of external reality.

A cognitive model.



THE WORLD BODY

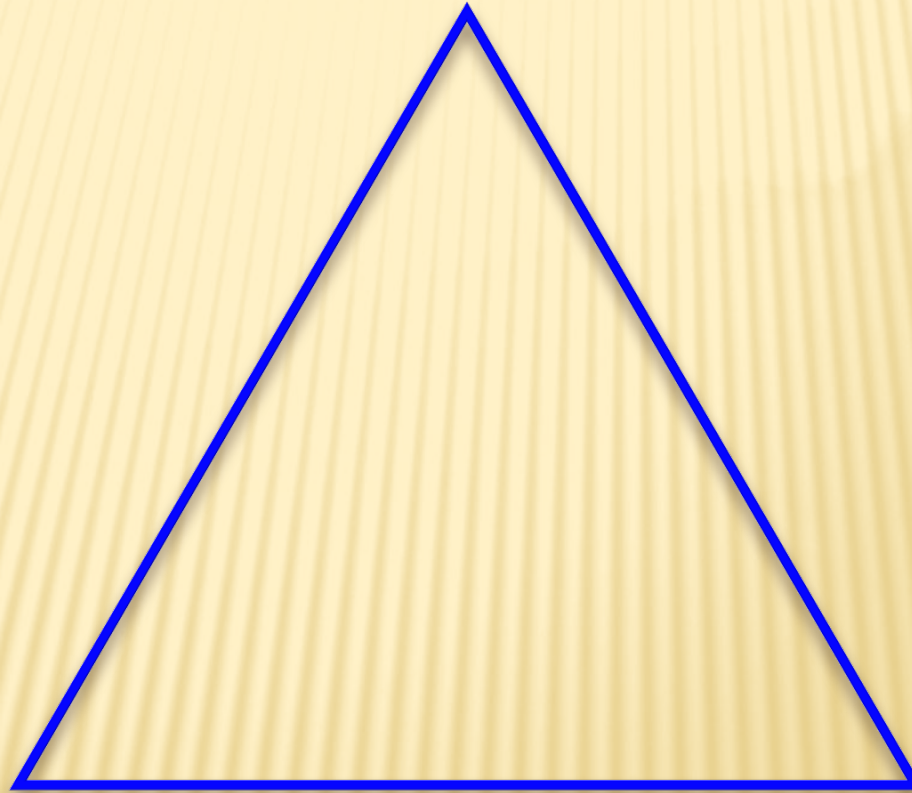
- ✘ Neoplatonists analyze reality into several levels or *hypostases*
- ✘ The simplest analysis has four levels, corresponding to the Tetractys
- ✘ Lowest is the *World Body*
- ✘ This is the ordinary physical world
- ✘ The realm of *Becoming* (motion and change)
- ✘ Traditionally associated with the four elements (fire, air, water, earth)

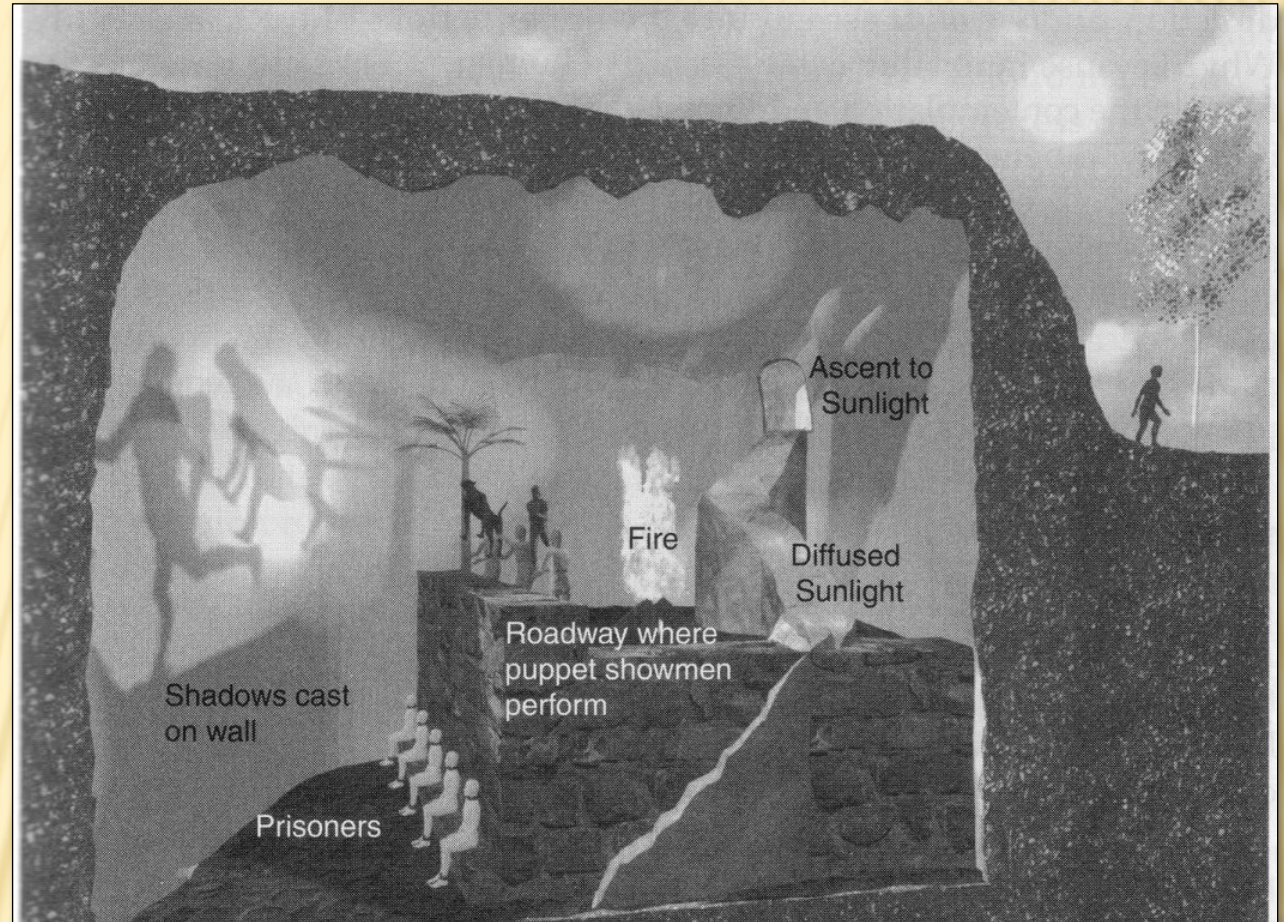


THE WORLD *NOUS* (MIND)

- ✘ The realm of the Platonic Forms or Ideas
 - + eternal & perfect principles of certain classes of objects
- ✘ Realm of *Being*: outside of time and space
- ✘ Characterized by *duality* (what *is* and *is not*)
- ✘ Greek “*nous*” (often translated “mind” or “intellect”) refers to the intuitive mind, which apprehends the Ideas directly
- ✘ It is not ordinary discursive reason
- ✘ Pagan Neoplatonists often placed the traditional gods (Zeus, Athena, Apollo, Aphrodite, et al.) here

THE EQUILATERAL TRIANGLE





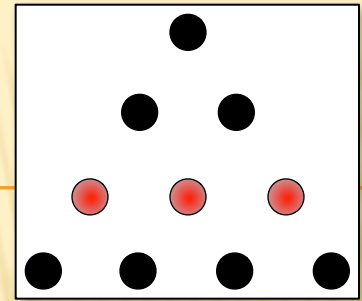
PLATO'S CAVE

The Republic (514a–520a)

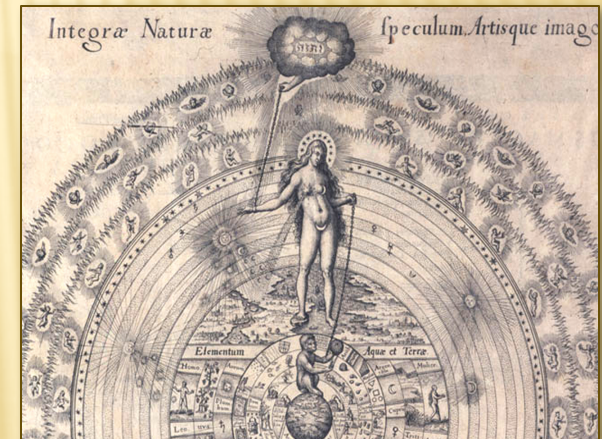
PLATO'S CAVE

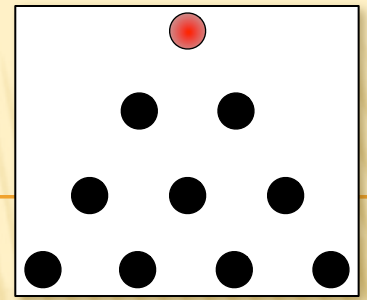


THE WORLD SOUL



- ✘ Mediates between:
 - + The World Mind: timeless/spaceless realm of Being
 - + The World Body: change/motion in realm of Becoming
- ✘ Brings Forms into manifestation in space and time in World Body — brings world to life
- ✘ Creates 3 spatial dimensions and time (past-present-future)
- ✘ Pagan Neoplatonists often put the *daimones* (angels, spirits mediating between gods and humans) here

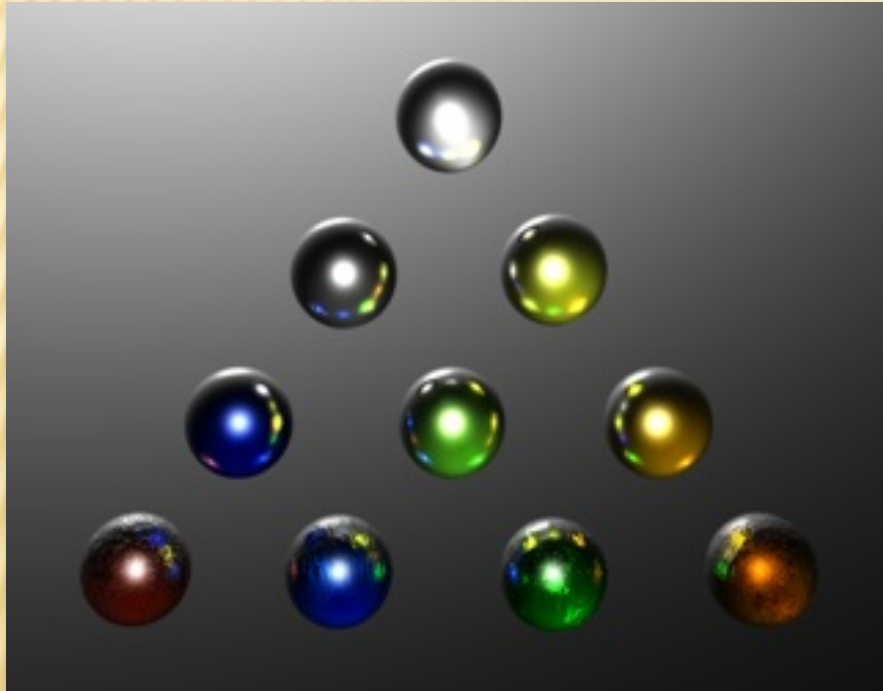




THE INEXPRESSIBLE ONE

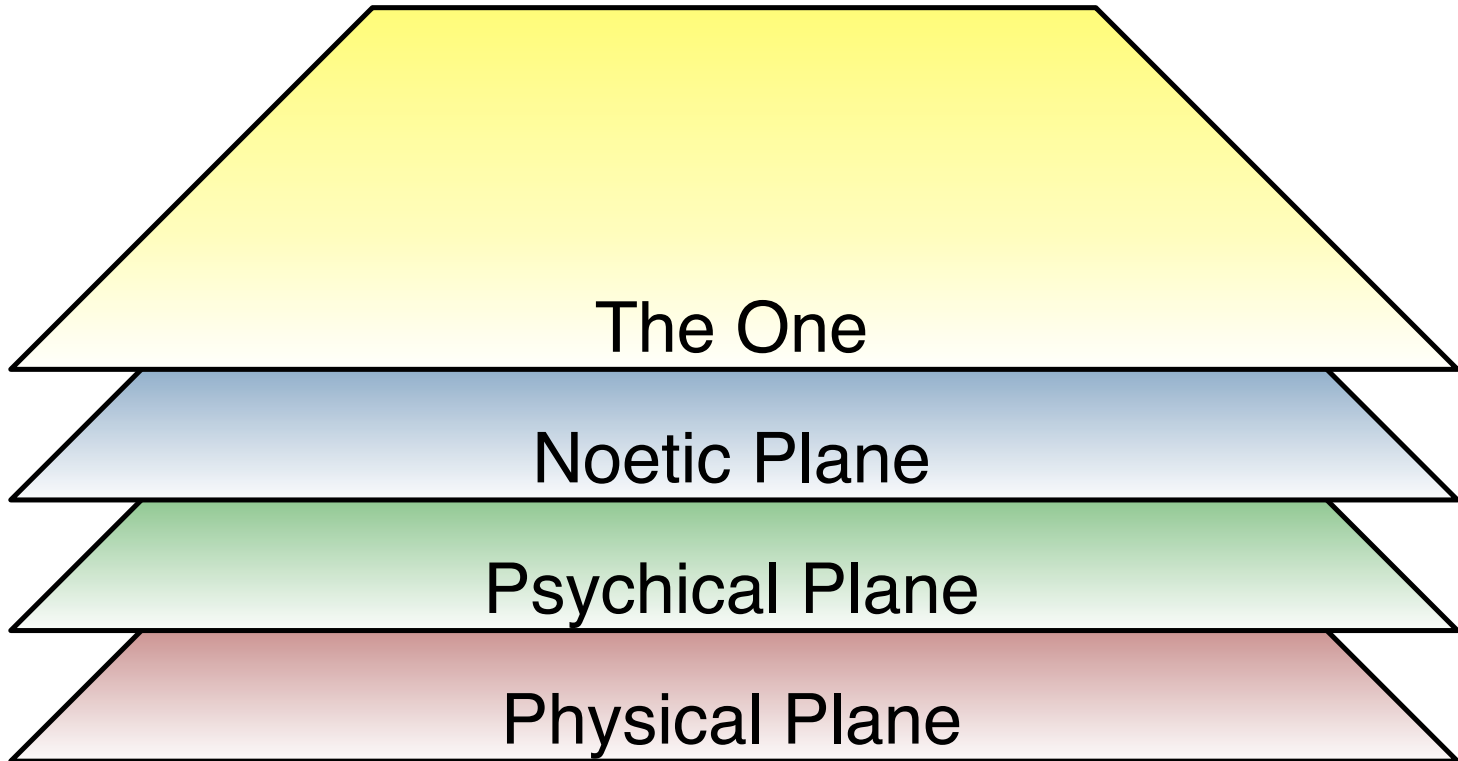
- ✘ The ultimate principal of unity
 - + necessary for anything to be something
- ✘ It unifies all the opposites, transcending duality
 - + it is paradoxical
- ✘ Since it cannot be described in words, it is called “inexpressible” or “ineffable”
- ✘ It can be known only through union (*henôsis*)
- ✘ Misleadingly called “God,” “the Good,” etc.

THE MACROCOSM



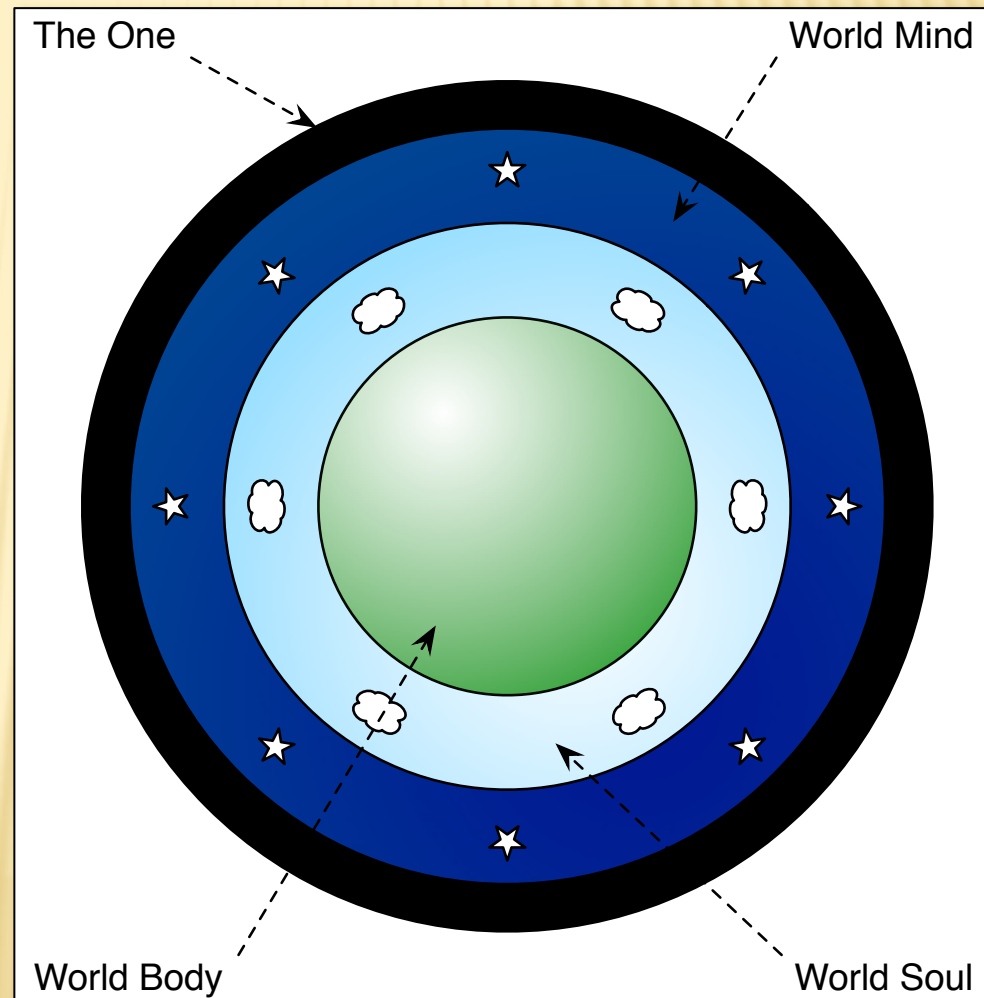
- I. The Ineffable One
- II. The World Mind
- III. The World Soul
- IIII. The World Body

THE PLANES OF REALITY

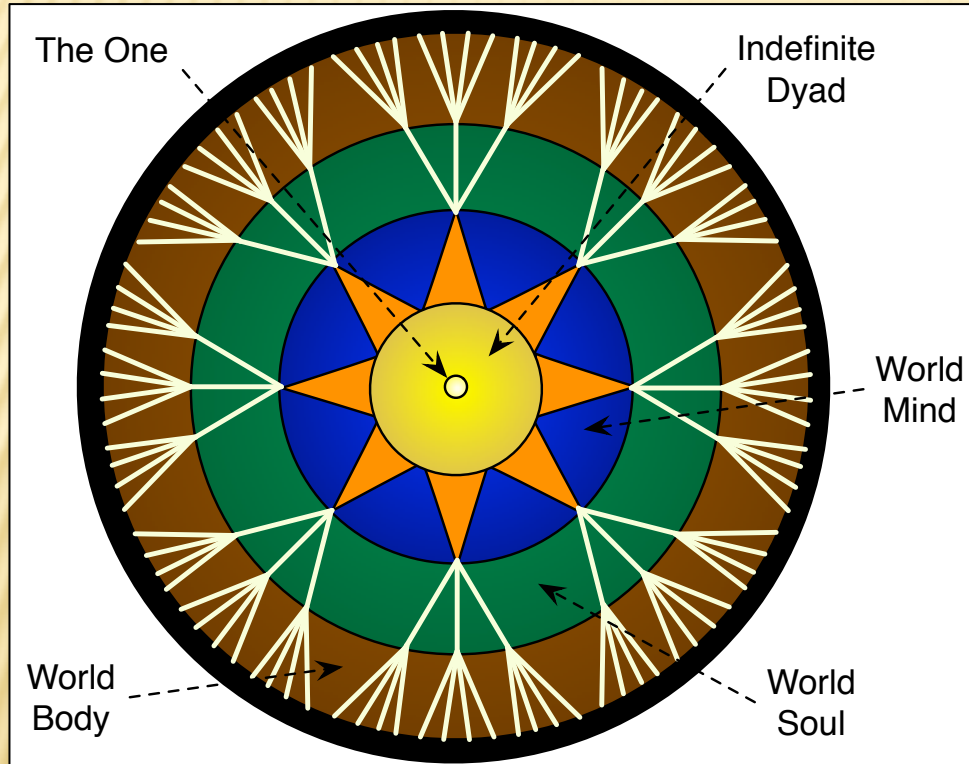


GEOCENTRIC IMAGE

- ✘ Earth symbolizes the World Body
- ✘ Air symbolizes the *spirit* that animates the natural world
- ✘ Stars symbolize the eternal perfect Ideas
- ✘ Black void symbolizes the Ineffable One



CENTRAL LIGHT IMAGE



- ✘ The One: point of illumination
- ✘ Indefinite Dyad: spreads into indeterminate field
- ✘ World Mind: divides into determinate Ideas
- ✘ World Soul: gives birth to instances of Ideas/Forms
- ✘ World Body: governs embodied motion & change

LINES OF PROJECTION & SYMBOLS

- ✘ Each level timelessly projects images to the level below
- ✘ Therefore everything exists in lines, chains, or lineages descending from the One
- ✘ Things at lower level are actualization (*enérgeia*) of potential (*dynamis*) at higher
- ✘ Therefore, lower things can be used as *symbols* of their principles at the higher levels

THE MICROCOSM

A reflection of the
Macrocosm

- iiii. Individual body
- iii. Individual soul
- ii. Individual nous
- i. The One within



INDIVIDUAL BODY AND SOUL

- ✘ Outermost is the individual body
- ✘ It is animated from within by the individual soul, which governs physiological processes
- ✘ Lower soul comprises:
 - + vegetative soul: governs growth & nutrition
 - + animate soul: governs perception & movement
- ✘ Upper soul: language & discursive reason

THE INDIVIDUAL NOUS



- ✘ Genetically-determined unconscious psychological structure
 - + innate Ideas and Forms of behavior
 - + phylogenetic
- ✘ Archetypes (Jung)
 - + unconscious psychological structures common to all humans
 - + regulate perception, affect, motivation, and behavior for biological ends
 - + constitute the collective unconscious
 - + may be personified (e.g., in mythology)

THE GODS WITHIN



COMPLEXES

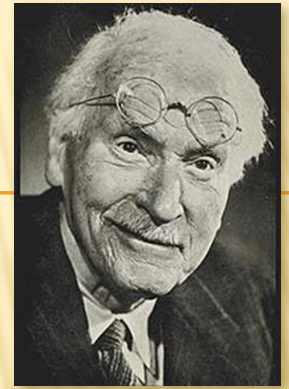
- ✘ Ontogenetic
- ✘ Reside in personal unconscious
- ✘ Mediating: adapt archetypes to individual lives
- ✘ Behave as autonomous subpersonalities
 - + Socrates' *daimonion*
 - + the Shadow
 - + possession and projection
- ✘ Normal components of a healthy psyche



THE INDIVIDUAL ONE

- ✘ Unifying principle of the unconscious
- ✘ Root of individuality
- ✘ “Highest” or “true” self
- ✘ Governs unconscious psychological development
- ✘ God-image within
- ✘ Paradoxical, like the Ineffable One

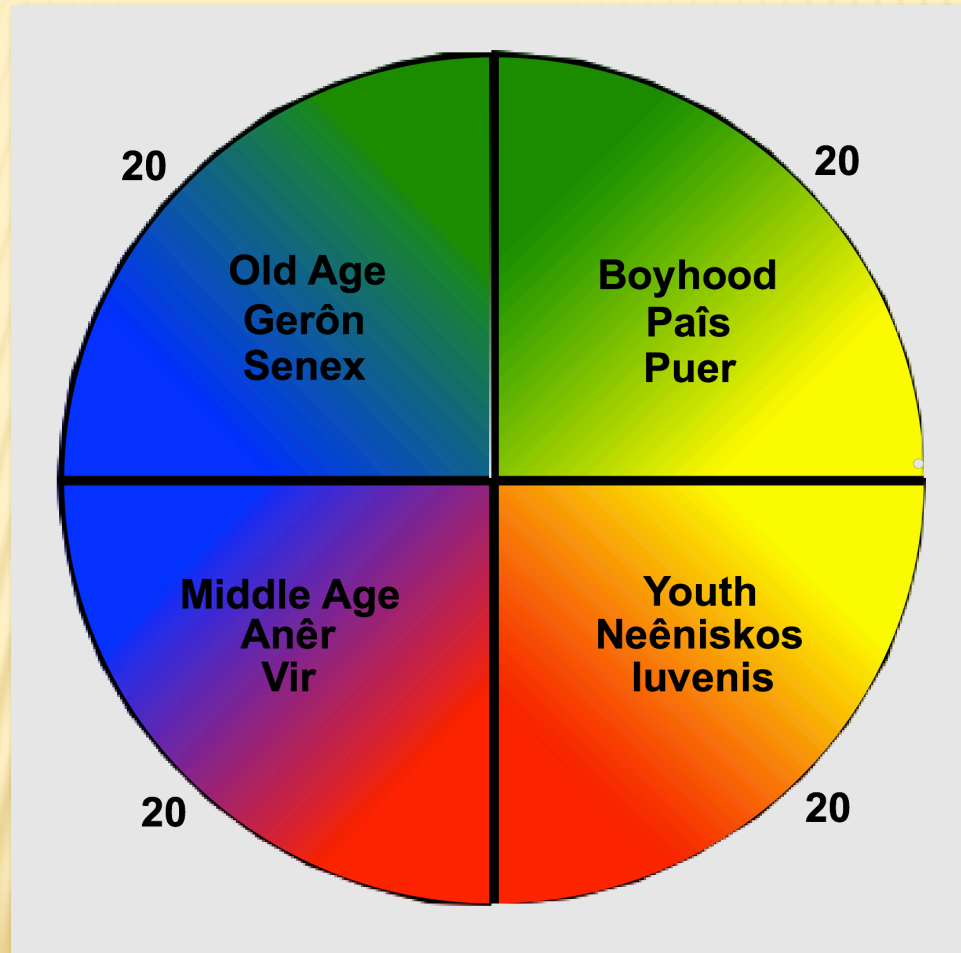




INDIVIDUATION

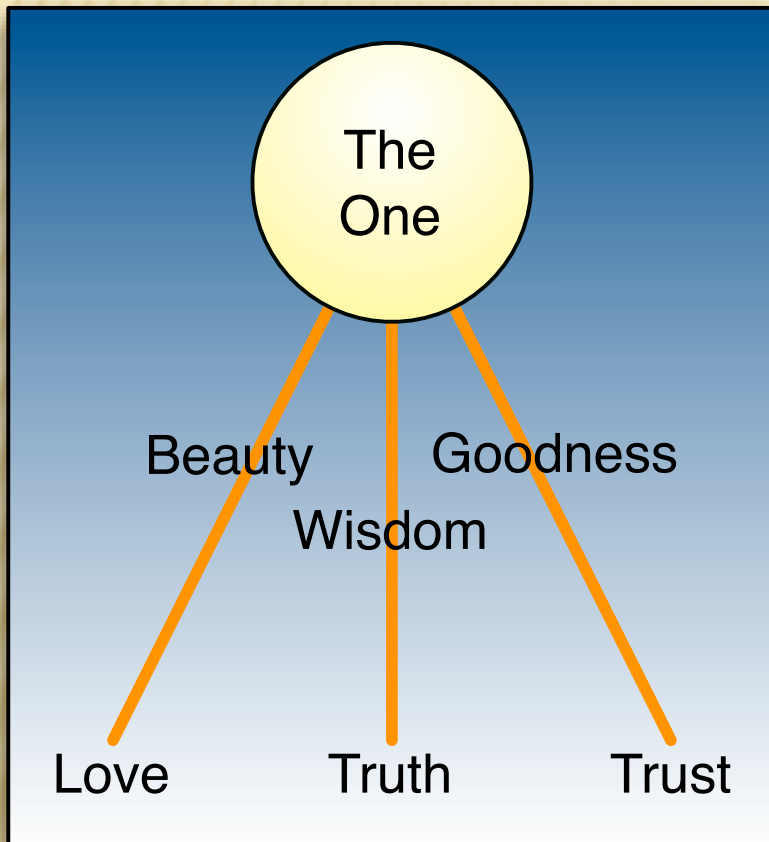
- ✘ Concept originated by C. G. Jung
- ✘ Lifelong process of psychological integration
 - + Latin *individuus* = undivided
- ✘ Discovering your destiny
- ✘ The unconscious (collective and personal) is integrated into consciousness
 - + involves conscious interaction with the unconscious
- ✘ Facilitated by Neoplatonic psychological practices

THE HUMAN LIFE CYCLE



IV. PATHS OF ASCENT

THREE PATHS OF ASCENT



- ✘ The One has three principal “virtues” (excellences):
 - + Beauty
 - + Wisdom
 - + Goodness
- ✘ There are three corresponding means of ascent to The One:
 - + Love
 - + Truth
 - + Trust (*Pistis*)

COMPARISON OF THREE PATHS

Path:	Trust	Love	Truth
Attribute of the One	Goodness	Beauty	Wisdom
Kind of ascent	Theurgic (Hieratic)	Erotic	Contemplative
Faculty of soul	Will	Desire	Reason
<u>Means of Ascent:</u> 1. sensible level 2. cognitive level 3. noetic level	<u>Ritual operations:</u> material mental unitive	<u>Desire for beauty in:</u> body soul spirit	<u>Contemplation by:</u> sense reason intuition

THE PATH OF TRUST

L'invocation à Neptune (detail)

Jean Jules Antoine Lecomte du Nouy (1866)



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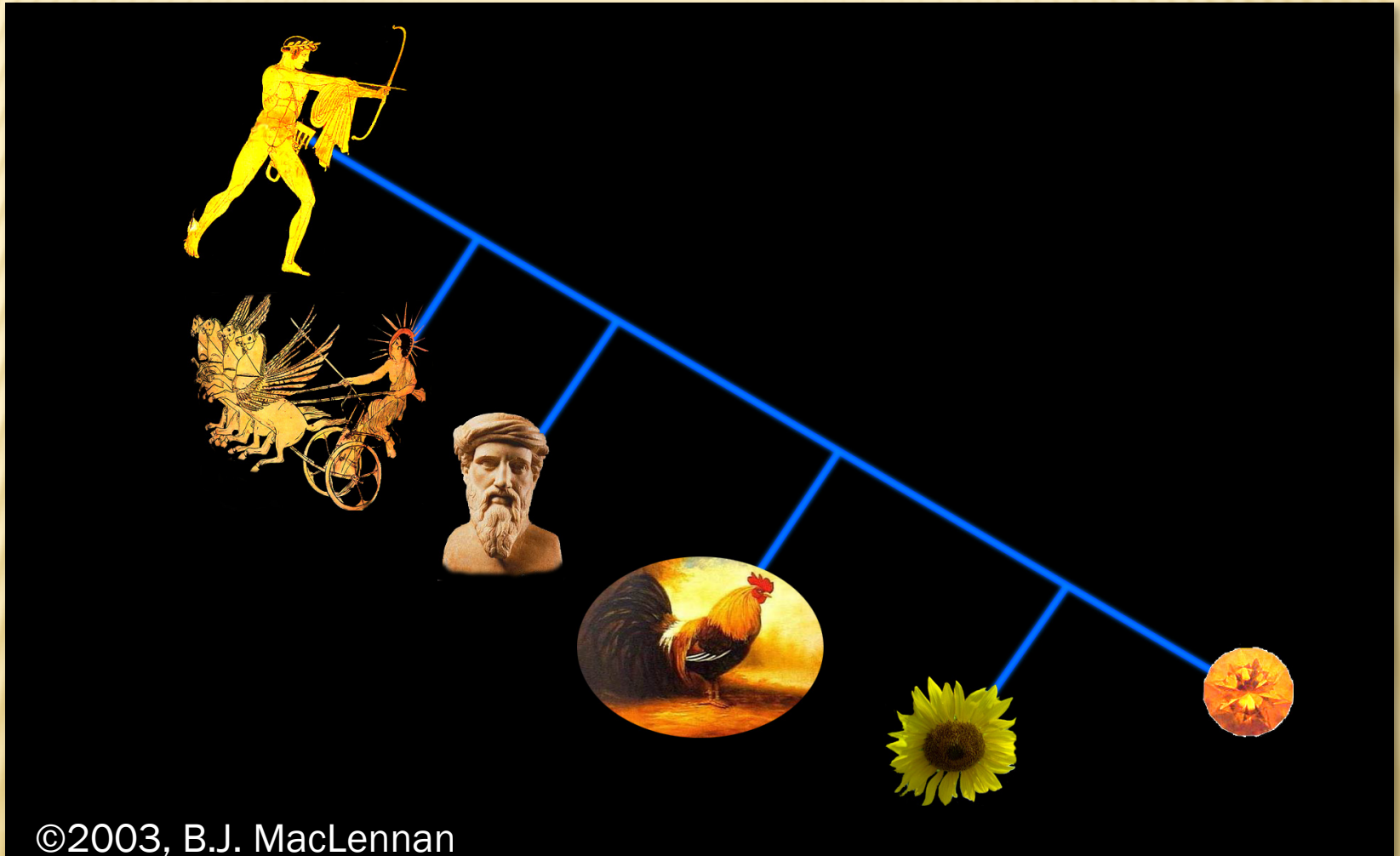
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SYMBOLS

- ✘ Symbols are the language of the unconscious
- ✘ Releasing-stimuli that activate archetype & cause it to manifest in consciousness
- ✘ Phylogenetic (innate): part of structure of an archetype
- ✘ Ontogenetic (learned): mediated by a complex
- ✘ Invoke inner personalities (archetypes, complexes) and invite them to possess or project



THE SEIRA (LINEAGE) OF APOLLO



THEURGY AND ACTIVE IMAGINATION

- ✘ “Theurgy” = “god work” as opposed to “theology” = “god talk”
- ✘ Active imagination: a process developed by Jung for engaging in dialog with unconscious archetypes and complexes
- ✘ Archetypes are universal and correspond to gods
- ✘ Complexes are personal and correspond to *daimones* (mediators)
- ✘ Good introduction: Robert Johnson, *Inner Work*

PRINCIPAL THEURGICAL OPERATIONS



- ✘ Liaison
 - + engages subconscious personalities in communication
- ✘ Dream incubation
 - + facilitates having a significant dream
- ✘ Icon animation
 - + prepares a divine image as medium of communication
- ✘ Binding & release
 - + uses another person as medium of communication
- ✘ Deification
 - + union with an archetype or the God-image within to achieve spiritual insight

THEURGICAL LIAISON

- ✘ Goals
 - + psychological balance & integration
 - + inspiration
 - + individuation
- ✘ Technique
 - + set and setting
 - + (1) invitation
 - + (2) negotiation
 - + (3) ethics
 - + (4) enactment
- ✘ Outcomes
 - + improved psychological integration
 - + living alternative lives
 - + visionary experience



TELESTIKÊ (ANIMATION)



HERMETIC “GOD MAKING”

- ✘ The “god making” passages in the “Asclepius,” the best-known text of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, captured the imagination of Renaissance Hermeticists
- ✘ “God making” = animation of statues
- ✘ animation = giving an *anima* (Lat. “soul”) to something = Greek *empsychosis*

-
- ✘ Hermes: “Just as the master and father is maker of the heavenly gods, so it is mankind who fashions the temple gods who are content to be near to humans. Not only is mankind glorified; he glorifies as well. He not only advances toward god; he also makes the gods strong...”
 - ✘ Asclepius: “Are you talking about statues, Trismegistus?”
 - ✘ H.: “Statues, Asclepius, yes. See how little trust you have! I mean statues ensouled and conscious, filled with spirit and doing great deeds; statues that foreknow the future and predict it by lots, by prophecy, by dreams and by many other means; statues that make people ill and cure them, bringing them pain and pleasure as each deserves.”

(Ascl. III.23–4; Copenhaver, pp. 80–1)

-
- ✘ Hermes: “What we have said about mankind is wondrous, but less wondrous than this: it exceeds the wonderment of all wonders that humans have been able to discover the divine nature and how to make it. Our ancestors once erred gravely on the theory of divinity; they were unbelieving and inattentive to worship and reverence for god. But then they discovered the art of making gods. To their discovery they added a conformable power arising from the nature of matter. Because they could not make souls, they mixed this power in and called up the souls of daimons or angels and implanted them in likenesses through holy and divine mysteries, whence the idols could have the power to do good and evil.”

(III.37; Copenhaver, pp. 89–90)

-
- ✘ Asclepius: “And the quality of these gods who are considered earthly — what sort of thing is it, Trismegistus?”
 - ✘ Hermes: “It comes from a mixture of plants, stones and spices, Asclepius, that have in them a natural power of divinity. And this is why those gods are entertained with constant sacrifices, with hymns, praises and sweet sounds in tune with heaven’s harmony: so that the heavenly ingredient enticed into the idol by constant communication with heaven may gladly endure its long stay among humankind. Thus does man fashion his gods.”

(III.38; Copenhaver, p. 90)

OPERATION OF ANIMATION

- ✘ Ensouling a sacred image
- ✘ Material tokens
- ✘ Immaterial tokens
- ✘ Does not compel god or *daimon*
- ✘ Preparation of suitable receptacle to receive projection of god or *daimon*
- ✘ Creates archetypal relation

FUNDAMENTAL RITUAL OUTLINE

I. Invitation

II. Dialogue

III. Negotiation

IIII. Physical Enactment

“Invite, Engage, the Pact, Enact”

DETAILED OUTLINE

- ✘ Preparation
 - + Robe & pentacles
 - + Circle of Art
 - + Circle or Triangle of Manifestation
- ✘ Enter & seal circle
- ✘ General prayer for understanding
- ✘ Invitation
 - + hymns, poetry & prayers
 - + offerings
- ✘ Formal Evocation
- ✘ Silence
- ✘ Quickening

DETAILED OUTLINE (CTU'D)

- ✘ Conversation
 - + Greeting
 - + Identification
 - + Negotiation
 - + Fixing in writing
- ✘ The Pact
- ✘ Blessings (when appropriate)
- ✘ Invocation into Magus (when appropriate)
- ✘ Dismissal
- ✘ Exit from Circle
- ✘ Beware residual possession!
- ✘ Physical enactment in mundane life

DEIFICATION



- ✘ Ascent to union with a god, the demiurge, or the Ineffable One
- ✘ “Like knows like”
- ✘ Separation as symbolic voluntary death
- ✘ Actualizing the energy of Death-and-Resurrection archetype



THE PATH OF LOVE

Focus on beauty and love as means of ascent.
Fundamental practice is described in Plato's *Symposium*.
(symposium scene by Nicias painter)

STRUCTURE OF THE ASCENT BY LOVE

Level of Reality		Love as Desire for ...	Mental Faculty		Stage of Ascent	
World Body		physical beauty	sensation	vision	Awakening	observed beauty
				imagination		imagined beauty
World Soul		universal beauty	reason		Purification	calm lower soul
						concept of perfect beauty of soul
						beautifi- cation of soul
World Nous	Being	Ideal Beauty	nous		Illumination	Contemplation of Ideal Beauty
	Goodness	The Good				Love of the Good
The One		Divine Beauty	the god within		Perfection (Union)	



THE PATH OF TRUTH

Focus on dialectics, contemplation of nature, mental quiet.

STRUCTURE OF THE ASCENT BY TRUTH

Macrocosm		Microcosm		Faculty	Stage of Ascent		Virtues		
World Body		body		sensation	Awakening	Change Of Mind	Practical	Ethical	
						Watchfulness			
						Discernment		Social	
						Guarding the Heart			
World Soul		soul	animal		belief	Purification	Purific. Virtues	Purifying	
			human	rational			reason	Dialectics	Contemplative
				noetic			contemplation	Physics	
World Nous	Det.	nous	archetypes		noetic intelligence	Illumination	Affirmative Way	Exemplary	
	Indet.		Self				Negative Way		
The One		the god within		union	Perfection		Hieratic		

CONCLUSIONS



- ✘ Hypatia taught a system of Neoplatonic philosophy that is compatible with:
 - + many religious beliefs (and unbelief)
 - + contemporary psychology
- ✘ Neoplatonic spiritual practices:
 - + promote psychological integration
 - + facilitate drawing inspiration and guidance from the deepest wellsprings of meaning