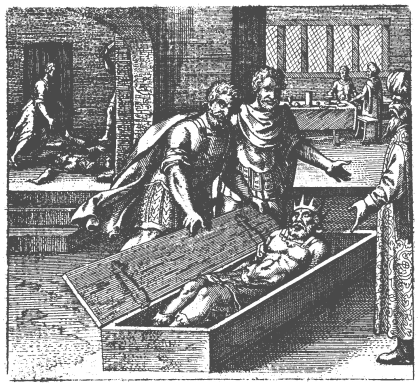
The Mystery Religions of the Ancients

http://www.GnosticStudies.org/Mysteries

Part 5 – The Symbolism of the Initiatic Path

The Symbolism concealing "THE SECRET DOCTRINE"

- All religions are vehicles for the Secret Doctrine (Esoteric Knowledge, Religious Principles)
- Esoteric Knowledge is concealed through Symbolism
- The Secret Doctrine is the knowledge of how to develop the Soul

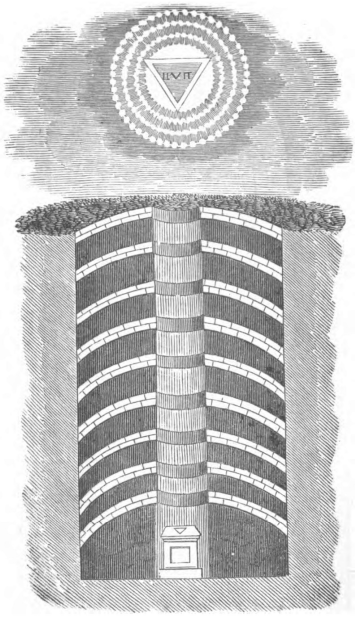


The Symbolic Teaching of the Mysteries

- The Descent of Spirit towards Matter
- God made the Human Being in order to Deify him
- Initiation means Death and Rebirth into Another Life
- The Philosophical Death of the Masters
  (The Annihilation of the Ego or Psychological "I")
- Initiation is Life Itself

Understanding the Path of Initiation

- The Tests, Trials or Ordeals of the Mysteries within Ourselves
- The Plan of the Church, Temple or Lodge which is the Tabernacle of the Human Soul (Temples for virtues, vaults for vices)
- The Symbolic Vault, Crypt or Grave and our Vices, Passions, Desires, Egos or "I's"
- The Work upon Oneself ("We must Descend in order to Ascend")
- Further Explanation of the Esoteric Symbolism of Arcanum 9



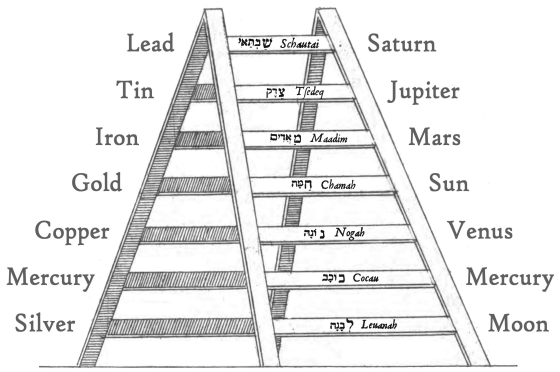
The Work upon Oneself

- Gnostic Psychology: Self-Study and Who We Really Are
- The Discovery of One's Defects
- Changing and Becoming a Better Person
  ("In order to start being someone we are not,
  we have to stop being the person that we are")
- Consciousness: the Key to Spiritual Progress

Our Psychological Trainer

- Our internal 'Tester' or 'Ordeal-Maker'
- The Reflection of the Logos or the Shadow of God
- Transforming Vices into Virtues
- Death as a symbol of the elimination of Vices

Philosophical Ladder arranged
according to Esoteric Correspondance



Esoteric Initiatic Symbolism

- Possessing the Lost Word of the Master
- To Change one's Being is to Apply the Higher Knowledge
- Masonic Catechism from the late 1700's
- The Three Traitors within Ourselves

The Tests, Trials or Ordeals of the Mysteries within Ourselves

As we mentioned in previous classes, all the ancient mystery schools tested their Initiates before allowing them to enter into their studies of the Esoteric side of Religion. In the ancient Egypt of the pharaohs these four trials had to be faced in the physical world. Now candidates have to pass these four trials in the supra-sensitive worlds. The Neophytes are submitted to the 4 Initiatic Ordeals which are verified in the Internal Worlds. They are for all men and women.

The Ordeal of Fire is to prove the serenity and sweetness of the candidate. The wrathful and angry inevitably fail this trial. The candidate is persecuted, insulted, wronged, etc. Many are those who react violently and return to the physical body having failed completely.

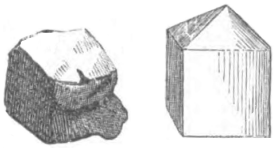
The Ordeal of Air is about attachment. Those who despair because they lose something or someone, those who fear poverty, those who are not willing to lose what they most love, fail in the ordeal of air.

The Ordeal of Water is about adaptability. The candidate is thrown into the ocean and believes themselves to be drowning. One must learn how to adapt to the various social conditions of life.

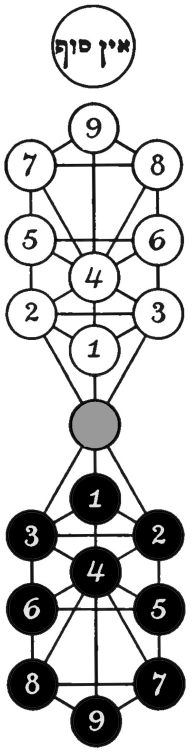
The Ordeal of Earth is to learn how to take advantage of the worst adversities. The worst adversities bring us the best opportunities. We should learn to smile before all adversities, then we will always triumph. In the superior worlds the candidate finds themselves between two enormous mountains that menacingly close in on them.

The Temple or House of God is the Human Soul

In all the Ancient Mystery Schools, the real Church or Temple is the Tabernacle of the Human Soul, and in Freemasonry this Temple is symbolized by the Masonic Lodge. Gnostic Kabalah teaches that the Soul (the vehicle of the Spirit) must be created, that we do not possess our Souls until we have crystallized them and that, right now, instead of the Soul, what we have are the 3 Rebels or 3 Traitors (Desire, the Subjective Mind and Ill-Will). What we do possess is the Seed of the Soul or the 'Essence', the building materials which we must use to manufacture the Soul, and this is the symbolism of the Rough Stone that must be converted into the Perfect Cubic Stone (with its 9 sides & 9 corners).



The Cortices (Bark or Shells), Temptation and the Shadow of God



The ancient kabalists called devils or demons: envelopes, shells, *cortices*, or bark because they have no inner life. The bark, they say, is formed as an outgrowth that shrivels on the exterior because the sap clots instead of circulating; so the bark dries and falls off. Similarly, the human being who is called to cooperate with God's work, and to complete himself by perfecting himself through the act of his liberty, if he instead lets himself clot in the divine sap which must serve to develop his faculties for the greater good, then that person accomplishes a retrograde process, he degenerates, and falls down like dead bark.

Remember that each one of us has a Divine, Virginal, Ineffable Spark (our own intimate Logos, our Seity) which projects its shadow into our psyche, and that shadow is Satan, Mephistopheles, or Lucifer. Satan, the shadow of the Eternal in each of us, must be transformed. Temptation is Fire, but triumph over temptation is Light. We must, then, transform the Devil into Lucifer. The word 'Lucifer' is derived from the Latin words *lucem ferre* and means "light-bearer". God does not tempt us (see James 1:13-15), the job of temptation is given to Satan, the Devil. Yet, if there are no temptations, then there are no virtues. The greater the temptation that is overcome, the greater the virtue which is established. **What is important is to not fall into temptation.** This is why we pray to our Father, saying, "Lead us not into temptation..." Only through struggle, contrast, temptation, and rigorous esoteric discipline, can the flowers of virtue sprout from within.