

Mystery Religions

Mystery religions were philosophical religious schools in the Greco-Roman world (600 BC–300 AD) in which participation was reserved for initiates. They were based on the idea that enlightenment is gained through obtaining hidden and mystical esoteric knowledge, which frees one from the bonds of the material realm.

History

The ancient world had been dominated by polytheism and the idea that the gods controlled the fate of everyone. People stayed within their ethnic community, remaining loyal to their city-state and local gods.

War, the Greek empire, and Hellenism (334 BC) began to erase the borders between countries. This brought religious doubt, cultural dissolution, and pessimism.

These changes led to syncretistic philosophies and religions and a desire to connect with God. This new way of thinking began with the elite and philosophers and trickled down to the common people through the arts (stories, theater, music, and art).

The mystery religions, starting in the 600s BC, began to anticipate this new worldview. This new thinking put man in the center of the cosmos and focused on how to escape death. Protagoras (490–420 BC) stated that “man is the measure of all things.” This shift meant the gods no longer controlled the nations, and art no longer honored them.

The mystery religions would come to an end by the 300s AD with the rise of Christianity.

Main Characteristics

Reason (the philosophers called “nature”) is supreme and brings salvation.

Therefore, God (Mind) is rational and constant.

The goal is to know truth through a mystical, esoteric connection to the Mind.

Exoteric is knowledge outside of and independent from experience. Can be ascertained by anyone. Surface meaning.

Esoteric is knowledge from the inner consciousness; the contemplative, mystical, or meditative perspective. Hidden or secret meaning.

Three main characteristics:

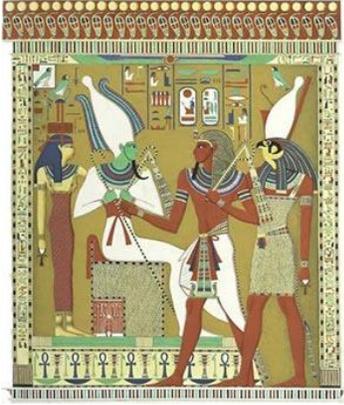
- Esoteric knowledge is necessary for enlightenment.
- Knowledge is kept secret from all others.
- Knowledge is earned.

The Mystery Religions were influenced by the Egyptian triad:

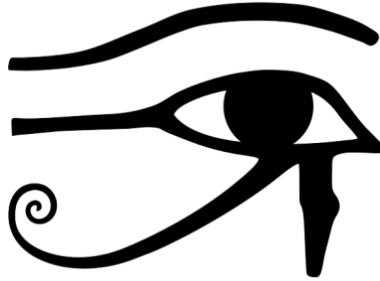
Osiris (father) was the god of the underworld and judge of the dead.

Isis (mother) was goddess of nature, fertility, and magic.

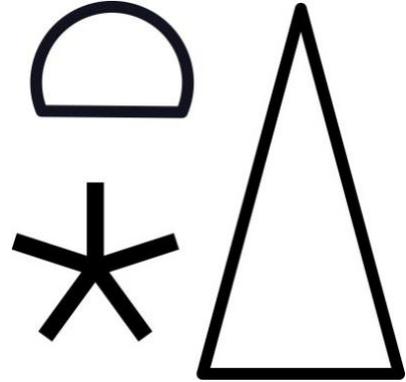
Horus (son) was the god of the sky and war. He was represented by the dog star Sirius.



Horus bringing a human to Osiris for judgment, with Isis next to Osiris.



The all-seeing eye of Horus.



The Egyptian Hieroglyphic for Sirius. The three most powerful occult symbols.

Beliefs About God

God is an unknowable and impersonal force.

God is monistic in being but dualistic in nature.

God is reason and logic and is constant.

The God force emanated lesser, more personal beings (angels/spirits).

The most prominent is the Demiurge, known as Reason, Nous, or the Dragon.

Beliefs About the Material Realm

Material realm was created by the Demiurge also known as the Dragon.

Material realm is real, orderly, and rational.

Material realm is good since the Demiurge created it.

Material realm is separate and inferior to the God force since it is not God.

Beliefs About Humanity

Humanity emanated from the God force.

Humanity is God and a part of God.

Humanity is a microcosm of God and the universe.

True godhood is found within.

Beliefs About the Problem with the World and Humanity

Humanity is trapped in the material realm and ignorant of their godhood.

Humanity is repeatedly reincarnated into the material realm.

Birth into the material realm is death.

Beliefs About the Solution to the Problem

Goal is the escape of the material realm.

Esoteric knowledge brings enlightenment.

The Dragon/Nous/Reason helps one shatter the embryonic egg of the material realm.

One is reabsorbed into the God force and loses all individuality.



The Eleusinians

Based on the cult of Demeter beginning in the 1600s BC.

Persephone (soul) is trapped in Hades (material realm).

She is allowed to return to the surface (spiritual realm), which restores life.

Life in the material realm is death, and liberation is the true life.

They reenacted the story in a festival of ritual and intoxication.

Pythagoreanism

Pythagoras (570–495 BC) was a philosopher and mathematician who led a philosophical commune that believed men were not ruled by fate.

He believed that mathematics was the language of God.

The key to unlocking the universe was an esoteric understanding of mathematics, music, and astronomy.

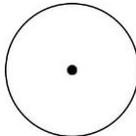
This knowledge would lead to the transmigration of the soul from the material realm back into the spiritual realm.

He believed numbers had esoteric meaning and were the key to unlocking the secrets to the universe.

Monad Is the Eternal All

Monad is the God force from which one comes and to which one is trying to get back.

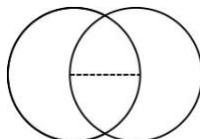
- Male and female
- Wisdom/reason
- Spiritual realm
- The sun/life



Duad Is the Material Realm

Duad is when the material realm is separated from the God force. It is still linked to the God force, but they must rejoin.

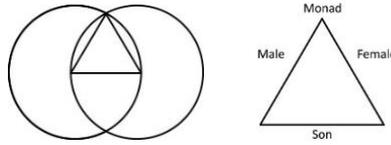
- Female splits from male
- Polarity
- Ignorance
- The female womb



Triad Is Unity

Triad is the emanation of the androgynous (both male and female) son who bridges the gap between the God force and the material realm. He unites the two back into oneness. As a person embraces and becomes one with the male and the female (the androgynous son), they achieve self-realization and ascend upward to godhood.

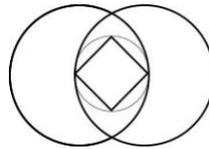
- Androgynous son
- Self-realization
- Reunification
- Salvation



Tetrad Is Nature

Tetrad is the four elements (earth, fire, water, and air) the dragon used to create the material realm. One as the emerging “androgynous son” must master the four elements in order to achieve enlightenment. Because they can control the four elements, they are able unite with the Dragon and rise up and out of the material realm into the God force.

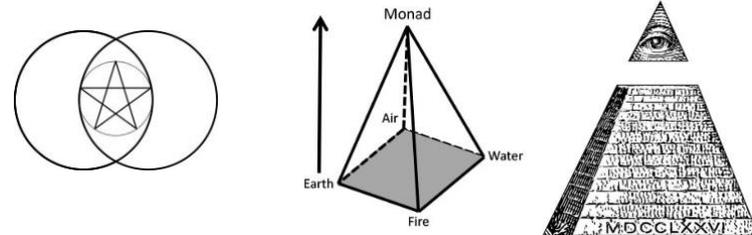
- The Dragon
- The four elements
- Nature
- $3+4=7$



Pentad Is Equilibrium

Pentad is when one has fully mastered the four elements and achieves enlightenment. This then awakens one’s third eye, allowing them to stand as king over the material realm, to begin to know the secrets of the universe, and to begin to master the spiritual realm.

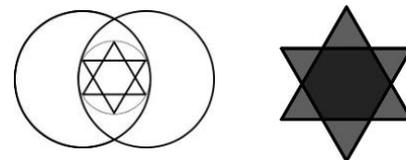
- Fifth element (ether)
- Ascension
- Monad and Dragon
- $1+4=5$



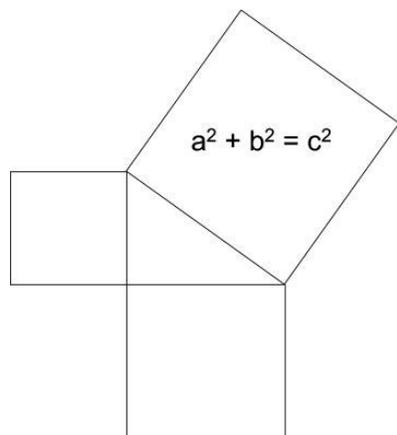
Hexad Is Harmony

Hexad is when one successfully unites the spiritual realm and the material realm together within themselves, achieving internal harmony. One can then escape the material realm, ascending into the spiritual realm and becoming one with the God force.

- Marriage
- Spiritual and Material
- Ascension
- Godhood



Pythagoras believed the Pythagorean theorem was esoterically pointing toward the Egyptian triad. This represents the male and the female coming together to create the androgynous son, also known as the Egyptian Triad of Osiris, Isis, and Horus.



Platonism

Aristocles/Plato (427–347 BC) was a philosopher.

He believed that this world did not contain true forms. Material realm is a shadow of the spiritual realm as illustrated through the analogy of the cave.

Therefore you cannot know reality through the five senses.

Because one is God in ignorance, one does not learn; you recollect. Concepts are something we discover rather than create.

The light that we need to see is “the Good.” If you know “the Good,” then you will act upon it.

Reason (nature) leads you back to the source. Irrationality leads to chaos and wickedness.

Thus the enlightened Philosopher-King is to be ruler.

The Use of Symbols

Symbols are used by the mystery religions and esotericism to conceal and communicate information in esoteric imagery. They believed cosmic meaning contained in the symbol gave the symbol power to be used in achieving mastery over the material realm and gain enlightenment.

“By symbols men have ever sought to communicate to each other those thoughts which transcend the limitations of language. Rejecting man conceived dialects as inadequate and unworthy to perpetuate divine ideas, the Mysteries thus chose symbolism as a far more ingenious and ideal method of preserving their transcendental knowledge. In a single figure a symbol may both reveal and conceal, for to the wise the subject of the symbol is obvious, while to the ignorant the figure remains inscrutable. Hence, he who seeks to unveil the secret doctrine of antiquity must search for that doctrine not upon the open pages of books which

might fall into the hands of the unworthy but in the place where it was originally concealed.”
(Manly P. Hall. *Secret Teachings of All Ages*, p. 40.)

The Purpose of Symbols

- To communicate a vast amount of meaning in a single image.
- To conceal meaning from those who are ignorant or unworthy.
- To reveal one’s identity or association to another who recognizes its significance.

There are three kinds of people who use symbols:

- Those who believe in the meaning and power of the symbol and use it to communicate meaning and control cultures and people
- Those who do not believe in the meaning or power of the symbol but know others do, so they use the symbol to communicate meaning and control cultures and people
- Those who do not know or believe in the meaning of the symbol but use it because it is aesthetically pleasing to them or someone they admire (who may or may not know the meaning) uses the symbol

The esoteric meaning of colors

- Purple: power, authority
- Blue: spiritual realm, spirit of man, protection
- Yellow: earth, mind, spirit, golden path
- Orange: pivot between two worlds, fertility
- Green: mature
- Red: body, sacrifice, blood, hell, irrational
- White: purity, innocence

Bibliography

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