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ORPHISM AND THE ARTS

Abstract - An erudite insight, corroborated by literary, archaeological, ethnological and other data, into the teachings and expressive forms of Orphism, not only at the time of its birth, but also through its subsequent, long-lasting influence

Some people have known since Heinrich Heine that "the perfection of the world is equivalent to the perfection of the spirit observing it." These same people would have liked to abide by this happy rule, though others - more numerous - prevent them from doing so, hence Plato had hinted in his unique way of dropping precious stones in his stride, that it would be good "to close the doors before the non-initiated."

This would have meant the end of that topic, though with screeching doors, but such games are not allowed in Europe, because we have been taught to think in terms of cause and effect. "If they hide behind closed doors, then there must be something fishy in this business" - this would tend to be the reaction of anyone using any of the Christian languages, and the academic definition which I cited only stirs curiosity and intrigues. Apparently such words sound outrageous both for politicians and for newspapermen, they are also offensive to us, free citizens, who firmly believe in human rights. Nevertheless, the whole problem could have been avoided by an elegant circumvention of the elementary distrust for anyone who is trying to teach us to think in terms of both cause and effect at the same time, and by peeping through the keyhole. Plato had not foreseen such a move on the part of his adult and mature readers, because he had not used the verb "explain".

So let us explain.

Stand before the stream which the mountain sends to you, take your clothes and weapons off, and bathe in its waters. Get up and cover your body with a cloak of linen cloth, pile your long hair at the back of your head and fasten it there with gold pins. Start climbing slowly towards the mountain peak, following the steps cut into the rock along the stream. When the steps come to an end, you would find yourself at a stone platform. At one end of that platform, facing the Sun in the east, you will see an open vaulted tomb, hewn by the people who had come here before you. A bed is cut into the rock below the vault. At sunrise, the rays of the Sun shine on the bed. On the rock platform in front of the bed there is a sacrificial basin. The priest would be standing next to the basin, waiting for you - and you would know him, because he is your king. But you know the others surrounding him as well, the small group of men who had left their weapons behind, just like you, so that you can all await together the first arrow of light. At that moment the king-priest, unique in his right, thrusts his short knife into the neck of the sacrificial horse, pushing it towards the basin that would collect its blood. In this way the principal figure in the rite dies and is born at the same moment

This scene could have taken place between Delphi, overhanging the Corinthian Gulf, and Kogaionon, the sacred mountain of the Getae in Northeastern Thrace. It can be reliably dated between the last centuries of the 2nd millennium and the 4th century BC. It was during that century, according to the legend, that the white-clad priests of Odessos (present-day Varna) went out to meet Philip II, king of Macedon, with the intention of stopping his march, because their melodeclamatory speech was believed to be stronger than his troops and even stronger than the temptation to win battles. According to the narrator, they succeeded in pacifying him with their incantations, with guitar accompaniment.

This is what these people who called themselves "Orphics" looked like and this is what they did. They had dedicated themselves to a teaching whose mystery consisted in the striving towards perfection. Then - let us hope - everything can take its due place: Heine, Plato, Varna and Philip, in spite of the slightly disturbing fact that dates do not coincide. True, there is no coincidence if they are in linear time, but fortunately they are not!

As the category of time is still undefined and will remain so, I try to compensate the loss by introducing different types of time. The

hands of the clock measure circular time in their motion, but the sand seeping through the sand-glass measures cyclic time. The figures of a digital watch may disappear and reappear. They are believed to appear rhythmically and the notion about regular pulsation time sets our minds at ease. However, it is sufficient to recall that the three Moirai spun the threads of the lives of each of us and that only they know the length of that life, which would have been a source of anxiety for us. Then everybody possesses two powerful impulses - the first and the intermediary one, provided he believes that death is a transition - and between these impulses it is one's duty to take up the lonely race. It would be hopeless to rush into that race following the straight line, because others on that track are always ahead of you and always behind you. The Moirai spin different threads.

However, there is a choice! Take mythological time, considered to be a thing of the past by those who have hastily swallowed some form of instant education, and create a myth, i.e. quality! Take heroic time and become a "hero", i.e. a man-deity, having won a victory over yourself! Take spiral time and rush along its twists in the hope of gaining insight!

Now I am defeated by the treacherous plot. My upbringing and education are a burden to me and I admit that the advice is false. People are not masters of their impulses, nor can they choose the type of time for the free agon (i.e. race) between them. Impulses are ideas and their time is predetermined by the type of cosmic energy invested in them. If that energy is scattered and lost over the rest of us, and we fail to sense its fiery drops, crowded in the buses of the city transport, it permeates others who are elect. Then the individual visited by that energy becomes its carrier, becoming tense like a bowstring, tortured in his aspirations to be worthy of what he or she is contemplating.

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Homer, Hesiod and Pindar created the Muses. And as pure classicism had not yet attained its full glory during this early ancient Greek period between the 8th and the late 6th century BC, and the exquisite Hellenic spiritual synthesis had not yet incarnated all earlier heritage, the rumbling rock echo of the visions from Delphi to the north reverberated in their poetry. The Muses lived in the Thracian Pieria near Olympos, where they inspired those who had gained an insight to praise Orpheus and Dionysos in song, but they also lived in Boeotia,

on the slopes of the Helicon Mountain, where they sang near the spring Hippocrene, protected by Apollo. Later, after Euripides, when learned men - mythographers, philologists and lexicographers - started writing in ancient Greek, the Muses had to be systematized like all other creatures. Then, in spite of the obvious fact that every inspiration has its own muse, the number of the bewitching creatures was fixed as being nine, with the good argument of the sacred number which armchair scholars are so fond of. Then they took upon themselves the following responsibilities. Calliope became Muse of heroic epic, Klio of history, Euterpe of flutes, Terpsichore of lyric poetry (dance), Erato of lyric poetry or hymns, Melpomene of tragedy, Thalia of comedy, Polyhymnia of the mimic art and Urania of astronomy

It is my hope that I shall deserve praise for refraining to comment why this list has left sculpture and painting without divine inspiration, while history, comedy and - quite intolerably! - astronomy have been fully provided for. To be fair, I do not promise that this would not happen before the end of the present text, but for the time being the antithesis is different, hidden in the verb "observe", used by Heine. Could it be that when you close your eyes you see how bright light pierces the clouds covering the Olympos, or when you open your eyes and try to gaze intently, you hasten to count nine barefooted women running in a meadow?

Since both efforts can be referred to as "observation", Goethe, who apparently understood everything there is to understand, wrote an angry letter to Newton in response to the latter's joy that he had succeeded in decomposing a ray of sunshine under a magnifying glass and had identified the seven colours that make it up. But then, the poet exclaimed, you are not observing the phenomena of Nature, you are changing them and you study the changes! Something that has been broken down into its components is no longer an entity!

The spirit is worthy of observing the world either through contemplation or through exultation. Its dignity does not touch what we refer to as knowledge, rushing instead towards cognition; knowledge refers to something individual, cognition - to Everything. Centuries later, during the vainglorious 19th century, one of those men who taught us to think in terms of cause and effect, and shut all other windows to the Universe - Hegel - started worrying whether we should not try to investigate the system first, so as to understand what it is made of, or whether in order to understand the system, we should study what it is

made of. Such a dilemma, which was due to extensive reading, was an invention that was fortunately unknown to the ancient poets and teachers from the time before Aristotle started classifying everything around him.

Cognition is a divine state of the spirit and of its mortal body until it is inhabitable. If the divine state is the constant closeness to God, i.e. to the immortal space energy and its reason, then one can choose between two paths, but not follow both at the same time. One of these paths is contemplation. If you choose it to go towards God, you rise to reach Him and to know Him! The other path is that of exultation. If you start along this path, call the God in you and give yourself to Him, because cognition is madness!

These two paths were called after Apollo and Dionysos by the priests in Delphi, the oldest Thracian sanctuary, when the two cults to the two deities became one cult in the 8th century BC. In the epic reverberation of that event - and I started with this - the "Thracian Muses" from Pieria near Olympos sang both about Orpheus and about Dionysos. They sang about contemplation, perceived as light, and about exultation, perceived as insanity.

This can be explained by the combining of the two principles in the son of the Great Goddess-Mother. According to the myth, she, i.e. the Universe, self-conceived and gave birth to her first son, who is Sun during the day and Fire during the night, dwelling in the upper hemisphere of the world during the day and in the lower hemisphere during the night. When the Greeks started mastering the oral culture of the population in the lands between Boeotia with Parnassos and Delphi, and upwards through Thessaly; in the north, towards the land which was to receive the name of Thrace from them, they Grecized in written form an entire **faith** and transformed it into religion with the help of the Delphic priests. This faith, provisionally referred to as "Thracian Orphism", knew no names, because beliefs in closed societies implied no names. Who could venture to give a name to the Great Goddess-Mother or to her dual son? However, a religion is bound together by its nomenclature, i.e. by "those called by their names", and it is certain that among those "called" were "Orpheus" or his complete Greek divine equivalent "Apollo", and "Zagreus" - the archaic local name of "Dionysos".

Then the Muses would withdraw and hide from the eyes of those who would start practising the two cults, because their mission was

over, they had started the fire and can occupy their minds with some genres in greater peace. The people professing the cults would split. Some would gather, unarmed, to taste "non-breathing food", to hear the Teacher and to attain a state of solitary concentration, without having the right to speak. Others would wait for the night to light their torches and to start roaming in the mountains of Parnassos and Thrace with their tympan, cymbals and flutes. The silent ones were the aristocrats, the raging group consisted of all the rest, men and women alike, the participants in the Orphic and Bacchic rites.

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Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius is an author writing in Latin from the late 4th and early 5th century AD. In Chapter 18 of the first book of his work *Saturnalia* Macrobius explains that in Thrace Apollo and Dionysos were considered to be the same deity. The mystery of that faith, according to the author, was for the Sun to be called Apollo when it is in the upper hemisphere, i.e. during the day, and Dionysos when it is in the lower hemisphere, i.e. during the night. The reader is already partly aware of this. However, what he still does not know is that the only name cited by Macrobius for this solar-chthonic deity was Sabazius.

Thousands of pages have been written about Sabazius, except the one page which I will propose just now. On St Athanasius' Day in January, every year, inhabitants of the small town of **Etropole**, "men and women", gather around 4 a.m. in the town square, carrying large amounts of brandy, spiced meat ready for grilling and empty kettles. They wait in silence for their leader - a man with a drum (a tympan, as Grecian scholars would prefer to call it) - and follow him without uttering a word to the mountain peak above the town, which is called **Cherni Vruh** (Black Peak). It takes them about an hour to reach the peak, where they dig holes into the snow, light fires in them and hang kettles over the fire to prepare hot brandy, while waiting for the barbecue to get ready. Until the first drink and the first morsels of meat become ready to be tasted, they gather ivy which has been growing in these places since time immemorial, and make wreaths over their foreheads. Then the tympanist finds himself in the company of a whole "band": one can hear the playful tunes of the clarinet (Grecian scholar would prefer to call it a flute), and the participants start to dance in circles around each of the fires. Then the most important development is

that the rhythm becomes quicker, the dancing faster, the tempo reaches its culmination, and at dawn, when the Sun starts rising over the horizon, everybody starts shouting: "Sabo, Sabo!"

If you are an ethnologist, if you know a little about the history of the non-literary ethnic and cultural communities, and if - heaven forbid! - you have heard about Thracian Orphism, your hair will stand on end. The problem of the so-called cultural and historical continuity would seem pointless to you and you would swear solemnly that you would never read any books, ever.

The same Macrobius, about whom no inhabitant of Etropole has ever heard about, describes the "temple of Sabazius." According to him, this temple was located on the mountain peak Zilmissus, it was round in shape and its roof was "open in the middle." In this way, the round sanctuary represented the Sun. The light penetrated from the top of the roof, the idea being to show that the Sun illuminates everything with rays which it sheds from the top of the firmament, and that when it rises, the entire Universe becomes visible. Other descriptions add what happened during the night: fires blazed, the priests drank wine and made libations with it over the glowing embers, in order to interpret the oracle asked by the visitor from the brightness and height of the flames shooting upwards.

All archaeologists who have heard about this temple of Dionysos-Sabazius dream about it. In their dreams they happily discover it in the course of their own archaeological excavations on "Zilmissus" peak, either in the Rhodope mountains, or in some other mountain in the Northern Aegean region. However, this dream will never come true, because the narrative of Macrobius is not the report of an archaeological expedition. It is a contamination created by a Neoplatonist about ten centuries after Plato, as a counter-attack against the bichromatic Christian monotheism, using a multicoloured theoretical pagan monotheism. "Zilmissus" is not an oronym, it was invented after "Zalmoxis" as a suggestion to the erudite reader about Plato's confirmation of the mythical king, priest, oracle, healer and god of the Getae, "the most just of all Thracians." Zalmoxis was the northern Orpheus. The construction reported by Macrobius would have been technically inconceivable at the time of the ancient Thracian Orphism until the end of the 4th century BC, which marked the beginning of the changes in the Balkans outside Hellas, including the changes in the construction of temples.

Let us hope that the most frequently visited sanctuary of Dionysos-Sabazius was probably located somewhere in the Thracian mountains, but it was very simple and not unique, because all who worshipped that deity built sanctuaries of their own. These sanctuaries were erected of roughly hewn stones, without any mortar, arranged in a circle so as to surround the sacred space in the open, under the sky. In its most ancient variant, the access to the sanctuary was not through any door, but through the actual wall which formed something like a corridor, because the last metres of the wall were built of two parallel rows of stone constructions. The circle was free and accessible to those who practised the cult, with a stone altar for sacrifices in the middle, which could also be hewn into a larger rock. Wine libations were performed over the fire lit in the altar, after the person who had asked for an oracle had already sacrificed - with the hand of the priest - the promised animal (bull, ram or he-goat) on the platform in front of the very entrance to the sanctuary and had waited until its blood had drained into the bosom of the Goddess-Mother.

Standing in front of an Indo-Iranian temple of the Sun-Fire, facing the perfection of the circle, we tell ourselves that at least one thing is certain: Thracian Orphism could not have prompted anyone to invent the rectangular shape, a Greek achievement. However, some even more heretic thoughts cross our minds as well. We tell ourselves that the Thracian Orphic Muses gave no grounds to the Hellenic muses to choose one who would be responsible for architecture, but they suggested to them not to forget the Universe. Urania is the name of the song praising "astronomy", i.e. the ordering of the stars, the only one that is accessible for contemplation, so that the World can become cognizable. Let us admire it by looking at it closely, why should we replace it by constructions!

During the time before Greek written culture covered everything with its vibrant embroidery, the Orphic-Bacchic mystery was performed outside walls and roofs: in caves, on mountain peaks and in forests. The temple is where there is solitude and where abandonment is complete.

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Nevertheless, Thracian Orphism gave spirit to a construction: the piling of the tumulus. Specialists who can count claim that there were 19,500 tumuli only on the territory of present-day Bulgaria in the pe-

riod between the 3rd millennium BC and the 3rd century AD - when the population began to adhere to the new faith and to its rites - though the real number was closer to 50.000, now destroyed. It was not possible to include in the estimates those tumuli which were seen in the lands of present-day **Romania and Turkey**, because nobody had taken the trouble to start counting there. Such numbers are very attractive, all the more that they could lead to calculations of the number of people buried inside or outside the tumuli, hence leading to social and demographic conclusions.

The tumulus was erected in order to reproduce the creation of the World according to the Orphic belief about **the Great Goddess-Mother** and about her Son, but also in order to demonstrate to everybody how moral categories can be transformed into material, i.e. political ones. This is why the tumulus first appeared as a circle traced on the ground, taking the four principal directions of the Universe, as well as the perfection in its solar-fiery form. Then, before doing **anything** else, the builders dug pits that in future archaeological excavations conducted today would appear to be below ground level. It has been written already that these pits in the ground had to symbolize the "nether world" or the first stage of the "world tree", which would rise symbolically as the axis of the vertical model of the Cosmos. The "nether world" and the "world tree" were probably familiar notions to Thracians and to all other Indo-Europeans alike, and not even the Indo-Europeans only, judging by the famous modern researchers: Orphism would not suffer from such conclusions. However, in the pits below the embankment it is possible to find human burials, or traces of fire that burned in the barrel-shaped trench, where offerings and gifts had been placed, and where the sacrificial animals had been killed.

Such is the pure first stage of heroic time. We all remain at this stage eternally, captives of the chthonic forces, not having wished to call the god in us.

The second stage was built after the pits were filled with earth. The dwelling of the deceased, who had fought for his tomb, was gradually being erected on the platform. The Orphic *mystes*, having known the aspiration towards perfection through abstention of the body, and with a spiritual **hope for** immortality and light, had overcome gravity, to be **reincarnated as god** and man. The faith that a "hero" is being buried has been documented much more expressively than the notion that the tumulus represented the "middle world" along the vertical axis of

the "world tree." This faith is expressed through the clay fireplaces and sacrificial platforms appearing in the embankment that was being piled up. Traces of animal sacrifices and even altars can be detected in that embankment. A horse was offered as a sacrifice at the central altar. And as the horse is equivalent to man in sacral terms, being at the same time a solar symbol, at the moment of its death the heroization was enacted before the crowd as a mysterial ritual performance

These sacred rites lead to the third stage of heroic time, when the Thracian Orphic king gained prominence. As a ruler and as a priest, he occupied his place in the social and ritual model of the world. If the cosmogonic model of Orphism comprised the Great Goddess who self-conceived and gave birth to her son, and if the mythological model consisted of the impulses of her Son-Sun and Son-Fire, the religious model being formed by the faith in him, the social-ritual model is suggested by the King's behaviour. He is the doctrinal son of the Great Goddess-Mother, who - according to the Orphic teaching - gave birth to him in a hierogamy with the Sun or with Fire. This is why the king is perfect by definition and hence also immortal.

The king's tomb would differ from other tombs for Orphic aristocrats, betraying different signs with similar messages. The royal tomb could be built of skilfully hewn stones, without any mortar between them, at the top of the tumulus. Before the spread of the Hellenistic fashion of painted decoration on the walls of tombs, such a tomb would have seemed rather dull to the archaeologist who discovered it, if he failed to note the colour of the stone: the red colour of wine and fire, or the white (yellowish) colour of the Sun. When the tomb was localized at the centre of the cone-shaped embankment and when earth had been trampled over it, "so that the world can be complete", then it could be crowned with a royal sign. At the top there would be the statue of that adversary which the ruler had to defeat in order to be initiated in his high rank - a lion or a boar, i.e. animals that put to the test the values and the virtues of those born from a sacred marriage. It appears that the royal deceased were honoured by regular visits, as in a mausoleum, above which sacred rites were performed on the tumular platform. Such tumuli containing tombs can already be referred to as Orphic sanctuaries, similar to the description given by Macrobius of Dionysos-Sabazius. If, as the Greeks believed, knowledge indeed gave birth to imagination - a rule that is unfortunately accepted today with scorn and ridicule - the reader is kindly asked to imagine how the leg-

end transforms an old burial into the centre of the cult of a hero, i.e. into a *heroon*. Then archaeologists would discover a sacral space surrounded by a stone fence in a circle, into which they would offer gifts. Priests would also appear and would erect an altar for libations over fire again in the centre, over the old tomb.

Other tumuli also exist, however, for the third supreme stage of heroic - ethical - time. They are "empty" and the professional term for them in ancient Greek is cenotaphs, and they give rise to explanations that are even more mysterious than the enigma that the actual tombs conceal. These are the tumuli containing the tomb of the deity himself, whose name the Orphic Thracians did not pronounce, because their doctrine prohibited it, but which the literate Greeks or the Hellenized followers of Orphism freely wrote in translation into their own language. Clay votive tablets are known with the following inscription: "Orphics [dedicate] to Dionysos."



After the industrial revolution and after so many and varied revolutions, everybody knows that culture is something that deserves to have its ministry and that this ministry would organize culture. By being organized more with recommendations than with money, culture appears and is manifested in exhibitions and concerts, in books and newspapers, on monuments of worthy men and women, and in enormous buildings which are called outright "palaces of culture." Before all the bloodshed aimed at bringing about a better life, during the Greek antiquity and during other - Thracian included - antiquities, the word "culture" did not exist, because it would have been pointless to invent it. The futility came from the fact that one did not learn artistic perception, let alone "artistic culture", but was busy sending messages from himself.

However, the messages emitted by an individual can indeed be understood by others only if they are metaphors. When they are not metaphors, the reaction of the recipient tends to be: "Just look at him!" and one might come to the conclusion that culture as a whole is a matter of organizing the people on its payroll.

Orpheus the Thracian sang verses which the early Christian author Clement of Alexandria ventured to cite. This recorded folklore lists the sacred objects of Dionysos-Zagreus, called "luring toys", according to the myth in which Hera incited the Titans to tear him to

pieces, because he was born from the love between Zeus and Semele. The myth is a ritual rendered in the ancient Greek language, but the "toys" keep cropping up during archaeological excavations in Thrace.

The "verses of Orpheus" mention a cone. The cone is semantically equivalent to the pine cone, and due to that closeness it can easily be transformed into the *thyrsos* of Dionysos, or into a phallus - the main attribute of the chthonic son of the Great Goddess-Mother. All objects having that shape and all ornaments with pine cone scales are a very expressive metaphor about the ubiquitousness of the deity - Dionysos-Zagreus or Dionysos-Sabazius - in Hellenized Thracian art. Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, who created their entire teaching by direct borrowings from Orphism, offered a mathematical rendering of the old beliefs in the Northern Balkan Peninsula. However, *mathema* means knowledge and not calculations, and the figures in mathematics only mean established order. Naturally, the Pythagoreans found the resemblance between the cone and the pyramid, invested in it the idea of the fire and even more naturally defined it as a "four." This "four" will be mentioned later as well, but to maintain the suspense, I shall mention immediately the second toy - the *rhombos* - which in Pythagoras is close to the diamond-square shape, i.e. to the idea of the Earth and of the figure 6. The four and the six are in harmony, because the Orphic Dionysos was either the fourth or the sixth after Phanes, i.e. light. When he was in fourth position, Dionysos was born. His mother, the Great Goddess, was initially in a state of rest while Chaos reigned. Then she self-conceived (second position), bore in her womb her First-born (third position) and gave him to the World. When he was in sixth position, Dionysos became a man, because he had grown up (fifth position). Then, at the seventh position, he would be ready to join the Goddess who gave him life in a hierogamy, so that the son and priest, the Orphic king, could be born.

After the cone (whipping-top) and the rhombos, Orpheus praised in song the dolls with moving arms and legs. The verse remained improbable, though clay human figurines have been unearthed during archaeological excavations. It became a fact of traditional folk culture, when an analysis was made of the ritual performance called *White Kouker* in the Strandja Mountain in Southeastern Bulgaria on the Monday after Cheese Shrovetide, 50 days before Easter, i.e. exactly at the time of the Dionysia in early spring. The *White Kouker*, the lonely subject of the rite, is different from his New Year's analogues in other

parts of Bulgaria, who chase away the evil spirits of the old year. Unlike them, the **White Kouker** leads his "retinue" in order to reproduce before the spectators his own death and his rebirth. He is dressed in seven sheepskins (with a peaked or "Phrygian" hat, one sheepskin on the back, one on the chest and four for each of his limbs), which he later scatters (buries) over the four directions in the world, just as the Titans had torn him into seven parts. A "priest" is also moving with the "retinue", substituting the ancient priest with his kamelaukion - ethnologists would qualify this disguise as "innovation" - and carrying a hermaphrodite-puppet, whose red-painted limbs and phallus are set in motion with the help of strings. The female puppet with a phallus is the profane image of the self-conceiving **Great Goddess-Mother**.

Then the poet spoke about the "marvellous golden apples" of the Hesperides, about the "nymphs of sunset" and "daughters of the night." According to the Greek myth, they guarded the golden apples in the garden of the gods, which was located beyond the Atlas mountains, at the western border of the Ocean, near the Island of the **Blessed**. The Hesperides guarded them with a dragon. But because in the ancient Greek language one word meant both "apples" and "small domestic horned animals, sheep", perhaps in his Hellenized version Orpheus sang about the "marvellous golden fleeces", i.e. about his distinctive sign as king-oracle, about the "golden fleece" which he set out to look for in Colchis in the Black Sea, together with the Argonauts.

Fortunately, after that "quotation by Orpheus", Clement of Alexandria also reported about his own observations in the vicinity of Thessaloniki, giving a list of seven toys of Zagreus: the astragalus (a bone used in a game), a ball (sphere), the whipping-top, the apples (sheep?), the rhombos, the strand of wool - here in its indisputable meaning! - and a mirror. The reader probably guesses already why the toys were seven in number, but why was there a mirror among them?

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At the seaside, near Sozopol, a colleague of mine decided to dig a tumular necropolis and found a splendid tomb which proved to be a cenotaph in its centre. The nice lady in question suffered for many years from her own discovery of a burial of **Dionysos-Zagreus** himself, allowing that deity to call her to him in spite of her youth. Thus the site will remain unpublished by the archaeologist who discovered it and as things go, it would remain unknown, except to some who are gone.

The Son of the Great Goddess-Mother has summoned those who have touched him.

The whole problem is in the mirror. The first reference to this toy of Zagreus in the written sources is dated to the 3rd century BC. It appeared on an Egyptian papyrus recording the myth about the birth, tearing to pieces and the rebirth of the deity. Six centuries after that evidence, the founder of Neoplatonism Plotinus began explaining the Dionysiac symbolism of the mirror, later his followers added to his explanations. Scholars today tend to think that "ancient man" believed in the force of the mirror to catch souls, because in learned heads of today that man appears like a hopelessly ignorant individual. As the theonym Zagreus can also be explained in translation as "hunter", then according to these views the deity was busy "hunting for souls." These modern scholars do not tell us whether the god ran after the victims he had spotted, mirror in hand, or whether they obediently found him and looked at his toy. With these two technologies of practical jokes, it is our turn to exclaim, as I wrote already, "Just look at that Zagreus!"

Fortunately, the "ancient scholars" knew that the myth was a message and that the message was a metaphor. The deity was born in the form of a horned snake, according to the oldest version, so that his worshippers could understand that he was the male terrestrial-fiery child of the goddess, who acquired a human image before experiencing his suffering, his "pathos." The Neoplatonists ridiculed the classical Greek version of the myth about Hera's fury about the new love child of Zeus, this time from Semele, which prompted her to send the Titans over whom she had power to tear him to pieces. The suffering caused by the dismembering is not a suffering of the body but of the essence, this is why the young god shuddered when he saw his image in the mirror for the first time "he started after it and in this way he was dismembered into Everything." Apollo=Orpheus gathered his pieces and buried them under the tripod in Delphi, where the new birth took place.

This story is unsuitable for research and for textbooks in which a distinction is made between "material" and "nonmaterial" culture. Walking after your image, being scattered in fiery drops over the entire Universe so that you can charge it with your energy, this is such a "far-fetched" story that the archaeologist with a permission to dig in his pocket even turns a deaf ear to it. In the tumulus near Sozopol this archaeologist discovered a small grave at the place of the main burial, containing only one mirror and two alabasters on either side of it. The

grave was built of crushed stone, without mortar, and was surrounded by three circles of amphorae which are arranged close to one another. If I remember correctly, all three circles were transected in the south-western part of the tumulus by a massive sarcophagus-type tomb, in which objects dated to the Hellenistic Age were found. In front of that sarcophagus there was a round clay vessel, lying bottom up, with curses incised on its surface against the desecrators of the tomb - undesired, but nevertheless expected - and the stone slab for the blood sacrifice was still in its place

Someone, sometime, when Sozopol was still called Apollonia, was initiated in the teaching about the dual son of the Great Goddess-Mother. He erected a sanctuary of his faith that Zagreus had become a part of each and everyone of us, and proved it with the mirror - the only trace of the deity left. This sanctuary, marked by the three circles, stood in its solar-fiery form at the high seashore, so that every day Orpheus can resurrect the one who tore himself to pieces for us, by touching him with his rays. Later another inhabitant of the city-colony appeared and he thought highly of himself, so he gave orders for his sarcophagus to cut into the sacred hill. This respected citizen was blind to see how the wind brought the Argonauts with Orpheus among them from the sea towards the shore, the eternal messengers, how they left their ship and built the sanctuary on the rocks. On the top of the sanctuary they made an altar, hewn into a big and heavy rock, and started waiting for the god to appear. Then from the interior of the land called Thrace a herd of crimson bulls rushed to the East, ready to be sacrificed. The strong animals were advancing, all in the image of Zagreus himself, while women from the shore called them with the song: "Come, Dionysos, hero, to the temple of the sea, to the pure temple ... come treading with your foot of a bull, of a worthy bull, a worthy bull!"

And he came - to lie down and to be dismembered, so that he can suffer his new birth. His crimson colour was the same as the colour of blood, wine and the sea - for those who waited for the voluntary sacrifice. The person chosen from among them thrust his short sword into the neck of the leader of the herd and did not release the bull before the deep throbbing of the animal's heart stopped. Then he cut its divine body and distributed pieces of raw meat to be tasted by the participants in the rite.

These visions first came to Pindar, the one among the early poets who could see things most clearly, and he described them in his Fourth *Pithyan Ode*. However, if you want to hear the thundering footsteps of the rushing crimson bulls, just sit for a while at the high seashore and wait for the ship of the Argonauts!

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Who believes poets, such early poets at that! This is why, a learned man who wrote about the names of rivers and of mountains nearly seven centuries after Pindar, explained Orphism very fully and clearly. Thracian women dismembered the singer, because he forbade them to take part in his mysteries, accessible only to men. They threw the pieces of his body into the Hebros river (pres. Maritsa). The will of the gods was his head to turn into a snake and Apollo's wish was his lyre to turn into a star. This is how the constellation Lyra appeared in the sky. The plant *kathara* grew from his blood. It blossomed in the Pangaion Mountain (near the Lower Strymon) and when its forests resounded with the Dionysia, it made a sound that resembled the guitar.

Soon after this text was written, an unknown craftsman made a clay bowl for the dinner table, currently kept in the Museum in Cologne. The vessel is decorated in relief on the inside: Orpheus is sitting on a rock, his legs are crossed, his left hand is lying over a guitar and his right hand is holding a plectrum for strumming on its strings. Orpheus is dressed in a long-sleeved tunic, tied at the waist, a *chlamys* is thrown over his right shoulder and falls freely on his back, he is also wearing trousers, boots and the peaked "Phrygian" hat. The clothing is Thracian, but the singer accompanies his song on a Greek instrument. All Nature - men, animals and birds alike, starting with the snail and ending with the eagle - are listening to him.

However, Nature is not a silent listener, it has many faces, and if Orpheus appealed to it to be pacified while he sang, it was because he addressed his song to its many aspects. The primary aspects are four - air, earth, water and fire - and they have been depicted several times on the bowl. Air is rendered zoomorphically through the image of the rooster, earth as a turtle, water as a duck and as all aquatic birds, and fire as a snake. These cosmogonic components form in their unity the visible world, above which the Sun reigns. The Sun, having acquired the image of a stag and of a horse, is also listening to its friend, to Orpheus. Among people, the king-priest is also listening intently and with

devotion to the song of Orpheus, because he is the singer's son from his hierogamy with the Great Goddess-Mother, in addition to being a strong supporter of his cult. The stylistic features of the bowl from Cologne has made it possible for this king-priest to be depicted through his symbol, i.e. the ram, though vase-painting dealt with direct messages during the high classical period in the second half of the 5th century BC.

A large bowl of the *krater* type (a vessel for mixing wine with water) has survived since that time. It was discovered in the Sicilian town of Gela, but it was produced in Athens. On its outer wall, Orpheus is also seated on a rock and that rock is at **the** top of Pangaion mountain. Gazing at the Sun and addressing his song to it, Orpheus sings under the accompaniment of his lyre, while four Thracian kings-priests are listening to him. The vase-painter depicted them with naked bodies in order to be true to his suggestion that even such barbaric men were gradually coming closer to Hellenism, though he had left their Thracian clothes and armament. The four men have *zeira*-type cloaks thrown over their shoulders and they are wearing the "foxskin hats" - in keeping with the famous evidence in Herodotus, which is valid of this scene as well. The most important feature which distinguishes the listeners can be seen in their spears - two for each of them. Two spears are specifically mentioned in the literary sources as the typical armament of Thracian kings, and an anonymous horseman is seen on another Attic vase with Thracian protagonists. **He is also a *dilonchos***, according to the definition in the formula, because **the Great Goddess-Mother herself**, the doctrinal mother of the royal horseman, is a *diloncha*, i.e. carrying simultaneously both images of her firstborn son.

On the bowl from Cologne the narrative continues with the row of animals which are the king's antagonists. **He** has to slay such an antagonist with his spears, in order to be considered worthy of taking the power and his priestly duty. The lion, the elephant, the rhinoceros and the panther will be chased during the royal hunt, which is a trial for the king's qualities. The king **has** proved to possess these qualities, and as the artist who made the vessel explains to the spectators - a peacock, i.e. the royal sign, appears on **the** relief. The boar **hunt will be the most** fateful event, because this animal devours the young of the sow - **the** symbol of pregnancy and fertility, the zoomorphization of **the Great Goddess herself**, of Mother-Earth. After his victory, the claimant to the **throne would be** protected by the eagle. The eagle circles high in the

sky in order to make the rounds of the terrestrial world over which the new ruler reigns, but also in order to be the link between the terrestrial and the "upper world." They are connected to the "lower world" as well, therefore by careful scrutiny we can also see a small mouse.

With a few more efforts it will be possible to explain all the other figures on this widely known Orphic bowl: the monkey, the dog, the donkey, the he-goat, the wolf, the camel, the bull (of course!), the bears, the pheasant, the rabbit, the squirrel, the weasel and the centaur. These efforts, however, require many words, because the epoch during which the vessel was made was quite verbose, and even Orphism itself started talking so as to compete with other teachings.

Words were scarce and artists were rather sparing during the Thracian antiquity. A small human figure made of two triangles with raised hands and head, around which tiny sunrays appear, was sufficiently expressive. A labrys was the sign of the dynast. A stag, a horse and an eagle were comprehensible to every spectator, though some perceived more meanings, others less: the ability to read signs depended on knowledge about them, knowledge about individual things depended on knowledge about the entity.

This is how Orpheus' song sounded. It charmed all living creatures, and they followed him docilely wherever he went. However, among the living there were some - perhaps very few - who were initiated and they heard other appeals, the appeals of the Universe.

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The *Manual of Harmony* of Nicomachus of Gerasa is dated ca. 100 AD. Nicomachus was a mathematician and a Neopythagorean, though Pythagoras himself - who had justly been universally recognized as one of the seven wise men - had not written anything. In the school which he founded in the town of Croton in Southern Italy he taught that one should first listen in silence. This method, which has regrettably been rejected by paedagogical practice today, compelled his few select students to follow the instructions of their teacher without even commenting on them for four years. During the subsequent three years, the students who were allowed to talk had the right to discuss the rules they had remembered with Pythagoras and even to venture their own thoughts on them.

Pythagoras did not like the order of the World, personified by the gods on Olympos and accepted by official Hellas. He is said to have

found inspiration in the "verses of Orpheus" which he interpreted, designating with numbers the components of the Orphic Cosmos and the correlations among them. Nicomachus of Gerasa wrote down the symbols and the correlations in accordance with the Pythagorean tradition, and when he wrote them it became clear that mathematics and music, music and mathematics, are the powerful hymn of the Universe. Only this hymn was complete and perfect.

Instead of peering into the images of Orpheus, which were the work of talented Greek vase-painters or of mediocre Roman potters, whoever could listen to the voice of the Universe just closed his eyes. Then he was to hear first the tone D, followed by the second tone E, the third tone F and finally the fourth tone G. These four tones are the voices of the four principal cosmogonic elements, whose combination created the visible Orphic world. Thus, D is the voice of Air, E - of the Earth, F - of Water and G - of Fire, because Air envelops the Earth, which is self-fertilized through Water to give birth to Energy.

Energy is fire, as well as the Sun. It is a Son in its two perfect round images of radiance. This is why a fifth tone - A - will be added to the four tones. The tone A is the voice of the Sun in its royal position. Then Zagreus or the Sun will ring with G, A being for Orpheus (Apollo, according to the Greek terminology) or the Sun.

The world seems to be complete, but it is not, because Orphism arranges earthly matters as well. The Firstborn Son will couple with the Great Goddess-Mother, with the Earth. This solemn and festive act takes place at sunrise and at sunset, when the rays of the Sun caress the womb, penetrating directly into the sanctuaries high in the mountain rocks, or peeking through the entrances of the caves. This magnificent fusion resounds in the tension of the tone B, rapidly followed by the serene C. The fruit ripens at that last tone in the first octave and breaks open with the mirth of the new tone D. The son of the Son is born, his child and servant, the king-priest, the marked Orphic, the organizer of perfection on Earth and in his kingdom, which he inspects during his regular rounds.

The first four tones comprise the perfection of the entire cosmic structure, because 4 contains 3, 2 and 1, and $4+3+2+1 = 10$, where the 10 consists of three rhythmic figures or phases: $4+3+3$. It is striking that the Orphic sage Pythagoras built an asymmetrical mathematical-musical model of his World, which was moreover hidden, unlike the classical Greek or Olympic world. The Pythagorean model is a tetrad,

the Olympic model is a triad, in which the almighty Father fertilizes the Mother, so that both of them can give life to a third new god. And since that fertilization took place many times, the new gods - the new generation of gods - acquired different functions which helped them balance human passions and the quarrels among the Olympian gods. This world is symmetrical and open.

Harmony is balance, hence we believe that it is symmetrical, having been taught by Aristotle to seek "the golden mean." However, harmony is the attained agreement on universally accepted order, it is negotiated among the participants and is not an essence. This is why Plato describes it only as a means in his famous phrase about words which allegedly served to harmonize thoughts. Then why should asymmetry not be harmonious, if we agree to recognize that it possesses that quality? Thus four-, seven- and ten-phase figures will make the evolution of the world rhythmic as well.

Its cosmogonic structure is in the grandiose dance of the ten identifications of the elements: the Sky, the Five Planets, the Sun, the Moon, the Earth and the Antichthone, which is the ideal and the main counterpoint. Life itself, which is generated and reincarnates its own beginning through a mythological model, owes its immortality to the four in the changing hypostases of the Great Goddess-Mother. This is why the Pythagoreans gave the following names to the four apices of the quadrangle: Rhea, Aphrodite, Demeter and Hestia (Hera) - each of them representing the divine image of the united Goddess-Progenitress. Movement outside this quartet is in three stages, as I have pointed out already, but its geometry is also personified in the three apices of the triangle, the names now being Hades, Dionysos and Ares, who cover the recognizable activity of the male principle: the entire fiery nature - through Ares, all life on Earth - through Hades, and the entire new birth - through Dionysos.

The 4+3+3-phase rhythm acquires a numerical meaning as a suggestion of the tones. *One* is the absolute unity and identity of itself, it sounds like the male principle, which has blended both even and odd. The *two* and the diad designate the female principle. The *three* is a monad and a diad, this number corresponds to the perfect symmetry and is the base of planes - triangles. The *four*, the sum of two pairs, is Nature raised to a power, the absolute equality between all relations, including among people. The *five* will resound with the sensuality of Nature, the *six* with its spirituality, the *seven* brings the bright grain of life, the

eight is balance (octave), friendship and love, the *nine* - obtained by the multiplying of two threes, i.e. of two perfect numbers, is fairness itself, whereas the *ten* is the sum of the male and the female beginnings of the World, their unity, reason and fairness.

Any objections?

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Homer's singers sang to the accompaniment of guitars, i.e. of zithers. The Orphic hymns sounded on the lyre, an instrument mentioned for the first time by Pindar, which initially had four strings, later seven. The reader may be expected to know that already. For his information I would like to add that other lyres with "barbaric" names, as the ancient writers defined them, were the barbiton (with many strings), the nabla, the magadis (with twenty strings, ten of which formed an octave) and the sambyke. Thracians and the people living in Asia played such instruments.

Strabo explains this with the festivities organized by the population of both Thrace and Asia in honour of the Great Goddess-Mother, who was called Kotoyto in Asia Minor and Bendis in Thrace. He also informed that the Orphic rites originated from these festivities. For the Edones (along the Lower Strymon), the name of the goddess was Kotos. Strabo, who is one of the most talkative authors, specifically testifies that "the entire music is considered to be Thracian and Asian, due to the melody, rhythm and instruments. This is also evident from the places in which the Muses were worshipped. Pieria, Olympos, Pimpleia and Leibethron were in the old times Thracian places and mountains, now ruled over by the Macedonians. These Thracians inhabiting Boeotia also dedicated Helicon to the Muses, as well as the cave of the Leibethrian nymphs. Besides, those who were fond of the old music, considered themselves to be Thracians, like Orpheus, Musaeus and Thamyris. The name of Eumolpos also originates from there [from Thrace - author's note, A.F.]."

Orphic songs had no words. But were words necessary? Only later, during the Roman period, when amateurs, dilettantes and parvenus had to learn "exactly what Orpheus was saying", did 58 hymns appear. They were devotional eulogies and appeals to Greek deities: Athena, Apollo, Ares, Zeus, Dionysos, Hekate, to Sabazius and Rhea, to heroes like Herakles, to the gods of Nature and of the forces of Nature, according to the profanely spread version about Orphism, such as,

e.g., Aether, the Winds, the Sea, Night, Dawn, the Sun, the Stars, and - finally - to typical newly-emerging allegorical images of Justice, Love, Victory, Wisdom and Fate.

In the old Thracian-Pythagorean Orphism words were superfluous, if the meanings of each tone - sounding alone or in a definite order, known in advance - were clear to the initiated, to the "white-clad" members of the secret male societies, or to the kings-priests, to whom Orpheus himself sang from the top of the Pangaion mountain. These men had no women around them, to whom it was necessary to explain something all the time, nor curious people peeking behind bushes. They listened in silence and never uttered the names that they heard, because this was considered to be sacrilege. "*Myo*" meaning "to close one's mouth and eyes" was the verb lying at the basis of "*mysteria*" and it is responsible for our ignorant interpretation of *mysticism*, it virtually resurrects the state of those who were initiated into the mysteries. They came closer to *ecstasis*, i.e. the rising to the deity through their inner voice and inner vision, attainable only by those who had purified their body and soul

The tones formed tetrachords in each of the four tonalities known from Plato and from the 4th century BC authors onward. They mentioned "*lydisti*", "*phrygisti*" (to play according to a Lydian tonality), "*doristi*" (to sing in a Doric mode - this is the explanation of Plato's expression in later dictionaries) and "*thrakisti*" (in the Thracian mode) - mentioned once by Theocritus.

The tetrachords of the first three tonalities have been described. The Lydian one consists of C-B-A-G/F-E-D-C, the Doric one of E-D-C-B/A-G-F-E and the Phrygian - D-C-B-A/G-F-E-D. Nicomachus of Gerasa, the Pythagorean mentioned earlier, claims that the "lyre of Orpheus" and its "Apollonian" variant (Apollo's lyre) had seven strings. The first was built on two descending tetrachords in D-C-B(or H)-A/A-G-F-E, while the second one, almost identical to the previous one, was apparently never tuned to H.

Incidentally, both were built from D in the second octave to D in the first one, with repetition of the central tone A. This was explained already, because I continue to throw light on what Heine said, through the "system of perfections" in which the four principal cosmogonic elements - air, earth, water and fire - resound from D to G, A reverberates with the triumph of the firstborn Son-Sun, B brings the tension of the hierogamy between that Son and the Great Goddess-Mother, to

reach through the peaceful C of the joyful fruit-bearing womb to the eighth tone **D**, at which the doctrinal son, the Orphic king-priest and the ruler over the terrestrial world appeared.

Fine, but why are the tetrachords descendent, if the "ecstasy", the elevation of the purified individual, required an ascending sequence of sounds? The ascending sequence, however, is a modern fallacy of our times, which is due to our virtuous conviction that everything good is "ahead and above": the deity is seated on its throne "above", and "ahead" the world will become a better place for all of us to live in like monozygotic twins.

Nothing of the sort. Music is anacrusis, according to the ancient Greek term, it is like rowing backwards, "sailing backwards", from the bottom upwards, i.e. from the end of the journey to its beginning, where the traveller will again become master of his feelings. In order to attain this state, which is the essential state, the wordless *mystes* (i.e. the person initiated in the mystery - author's note, A.F) took the journey back to his own beginning. And music is only guiding him to it! It is the prelude to silence.

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However, mysteries are Orphic-Bacchic, and Bacchic mysteries, i.e. those during which praise was given to Dionysos-Zagreus-Sabazius, were even noisier than the average pop music fan can imagine. But noise - a word used here to distinguish these festivities from the silence of the quiet lyre - was produced by the mountainous instruments of the Bacchic musicians. In his descriptions of the "servants of Dionysos", Strabo wrote: "One was holding a flute in his hands, the skilful work of a turner, his fingers playing a song that incites to wild cries."

Even Homer knew the dry reed, the syrinx. Pan's flute, formed by pipes of various lengths. The boxwood flute was *avlos pyxinos*. The Phrygian flute was called *keras* and its tip was made of horn. The "maiden flute" mentioned by Aristotle was similar to the Thracian double flute, different from the others, being made of wood. The Bacchic antiquity was also familiar with flutes having bags, the bagpipes, which were called *elymos* and *askaules*.

Strabo, who cited Aeschylus' description, went on: "Another one [a servant of Dionysos - author's note, A.F] thundered with copper cymbals... A merry song was heard. Awesome mimes, imitating bulls,

were roaring from a hiding place. The fearsome echo of the tympan spread like subterranean thunder."

The cymbals, the tympan, the *rhoptron* (the mace of Herakles, which gave its name to the little drum used during the sacred rites) and the *tityros* made up the orchestra of this folly. Its tonalities have not been described in the written sources, but can this be expected?

Then nothing is left to us, but to participate. Night has fallen. Pangaion and all the Rhodope mountains are quiet, covered by inky darkness. Torches made of pinewood flared one after another, tongues of flame crawling along the forest paths to gather for a dance in the clearings among the trees. The torch-bearers, men and women, ran up to illuminate the face of the Mother-Mountain that was to remain invisible to all. They illuminated the entrances to caves and their shouting announced that they had reached the mountain peak. Having drunk their undiluted wine until there was nothing left, the worshippers of the deity rushed in the direction of the bull's roar and chased it until they nearly collapsed in the thick forest. The sound of the drums, interspersed with the rumbling of the leather tympan and cut by the brass flashes of the cymbals, made the rhythm of the midnight running faster and faster, piercing rocks and forests with the blazing light of the torches.

Zagreus has been dismembered. On a stone slab in front of the entrance to the round sanctuary of Fire, the priest thrusts a knife into the neck of a three-year-old bull and leaves his blood to drain into the sacrificial basin below the altar. Pieces of its meat are distributed to all, they eat them raw and the body of the deity is absorbed. He dies, but is reborn on the same night under the shrill music of the flutes which hiss like snakes. Zagreus, the horned god, again starts roaring in the mountain, in the bosom of his mother, to disappear in the pale morning. Smoke rises from the torches trailing down the paths that lead to the towns and villages below.

The supreme moment in these festivities is to master the art of becoming immortal in your nocturnal contact with the deity. This is the art of the *enthusiasm*, of the ability to bring the deity into you. The classical Greek world outlook completely ruled out even the very thought about immortality, i.e. of trying to reach equality with the divine. On the contrary, the mythology of Zagreus is built on that premise, which inspires the "enthusiasm" of those who believe in it.

It can be believed that this mythology has not been scattered to the winds. After Pythagoras and Heraclitus, the Orphic influence passed to Empedocles and Parmenides, to be reinterpreted by Plato. Plato's genius, which closed the doors before the non-initiated, left them wide open for those who were willing to continue, jumping over symmetry which does not give birth to hope - it is sublime, but it has also sublimed, as I wrote once. Such are the doors that open for the insight about the killing of the deity, the tasting of his flesh and his re-birth, i.e. the reincarnation of the divine principle "from - into." It is precisely here, however, that this jump leads directly to the writings of Paul, the Apostle, in which the Zagreus motifs cannot be overlooked, irrespective of any components from Asia Minor, Egypt or Asia, which may be traced in Christianity. In his "Epistle to the Romans", Paul wrote that " ... we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." An addition to this text can be found in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, where in the words of the Apostle, the body that dies in degradation is reborn in immortality.

The great art of Orphism is probably to pass "from" and "into" a state of the spirit, because we are in the cloudy realm of ideas, where the so-called reality possesses, thank God, other measuring units, in other words, one only changes one's own presence in that state.

Translated by Nedyalka Chakalova

ОРФИЗАМ И УМЕТНОСТИ

Резиме

Реч је о вери, митолошки заснованој, која је у у периоду између последњих векова 2. миленијума и 4. века пре наше ере живела на простору између Делфа и североисточне Тракије. Тајна орфичког учења састојала се у тежњи ка савршенству. Пут који води спознаји божанства, универзума, може водити било кроз контемплацију, доживљену као светлост, или егзалтацију, доживљену као лудило. Делфијски свештеници су тим двама путевима наденули имена Аполона и Диониса, комбинујући два принципа у сину Велике Богње Мајке, који се појављује у два вида - као Сунце дању, и као Ватра поћу. Упознавши се с оралном културом попу-

лације северно од Беотије. Грци су грецизовали у писменој форми читаво једно веровање и преобразили га у религију(Орфеј-Аполон. Загреј-Дионис). О орфичком култу податке налазимо код античких писаца и песника (Хомер, Хеспод, Пиндар, Платон, Климент Александријски, Плотин, итд). Латински писац Макробије (IV-V век) објашњава у својим *Сатирналијама* да су у Тракији Дионис и Аполон сматрани једним божанством, чије је име било Сабазије. Макробијева приповест је неоплатоничарска контаминација. Савремена етнографска грађа (на пример, бугарско место Етропољ - прослава (св. Атанасија) указује на неоспорну везу са Сабазијевим култом. У археолошкој равни, орфизам није могао дати подстицај правоугаоном облику храма, али јесте дао подстицај форми тумулуса, којим је ваљало репродуковати стварање севта према орфичком веровању у Велику Богињу Мајку и њеног дуалног сина. Форма тумулуса, при том, одражава и политичке категорије друштва: од првог ступња херојског времена - једноставни тумули у којима се могу пронаћи људски остаци или трагови спаљених прилога; преко другог ступња, укопа "хероја"; до трећег ступња - доба у којем орфички краљ, као владар и свештеник, стиче посебно место у друштвеном и ритуалном моделу света као доктринарни син Велике Мајке; па и до највишег, етичког ступња - тумул који садржи гроб самог божанства. Одлучујућу улогу у продужавању орфизма имали су Питагора и школа која је ишла његовим трагом, усвојивши наук да су реч и слика сувишне, дајући предност хармонији, математици и музици - као моћној химни Универзуму. Кроз одређене хармоније (не и симетрију) тонова (мада је музика само увод у тишину, упућени се враћа својим почецима, овладава умећем бесмртности, тј. изједначавања са божанским.

На основу свих увида, можемо поверовати да орфичка митологија није у потпуности изгубљена. После Питагоре и Хераклита, осетан је њен утицај на Емпедокла и Парменида, да би ново тумачење које јој Платон дао вековима касније надахњивало индивидуалну мисао.