

**EROS AND PSYCHE: A
FAIRY-TALE OF ANCIENT
GREECE. PP.1-94**

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Eros and Psyche: A Fairy-tale of Ancient Greece. pp.1-94 by Paul Carus

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PAUL CARUS

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PSYCHE AT NATURE'S MIRROR

BY PAUL THUMANN

EROS AND PSYCHE

A FAIRY-TALE OF ANCIENT
GREECE

RETOLD AFTER APULEIUS

BY
PAUL CARUS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL THUMANN

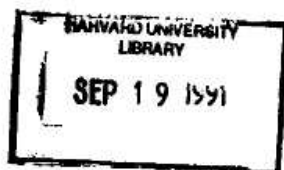


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PREFACE.

THE story of Eros and Psyche reflects the religious life of classic antiquity more strongly than any other book, poem, or epic, not excepting the works of Hesiod and Homer. The *Theogony* of Hesiod tells of the origin of the gods and invests them with definite shape; Homer introduces them as actors in his grand epics; but the popular tale of Eros and Psyche reflects the sentiment with which the gods were regarded, and describes the attitude of man toward the problems of life, especially that problem of problems—the mystery of death and the fate of the soul in the unknown beyond.

The orthodox Greek religion consisted in the performance of certain rites, which were administered by the priests in the name of the state for the public benefit. Neither faith nor morality was required; the sole thing of importance was to accord to the gods their due, according to established tradition, and thus to fulfil the duties men owe to the invisible powers, upon whose beneficence their welfare depends. But the performance of sacrifices and other ceremonies left

the heart empty; they were conducted in a perfunctory way by persons duly selected according to descent or station in life and were kept up simply from fear that some deity might be offended by the neglect. The people, however, demanded the satisfaction of the religious cravings of the heart, and this resulted



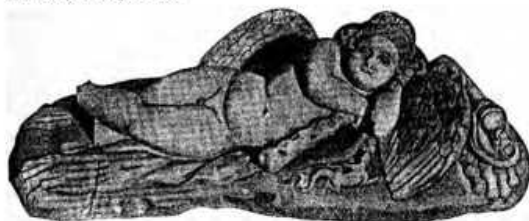
THE EROS OF PRAXITELLES.

Torso found in Centocelle; now in the Vatican. (After Springer, *Hdb. der Kunstgeschichte*, I, 181, cf. Baumeister, *Denkm. d. cl. Alterth.*, 497.)

in the origination of a new religious movement based on the new thoughts imported from Thrace, Egypt, Chaldæa, Phœnicia, and Syria, and finding at last definite expression in the mysteries and secret teachings of Orpheus, Dionysos, and other deities.

These innovations were not revolutionary. New gods, it is true, were introduced, but the old ones remained in power. Dionysos entered into an alliance with Demeter, Apollo, and Zeus. The ancient harvest festivals were not abolished, but enriched with ceremonial processions and symbolic rites of new significance. Thus the change was not in name, but in interpretation. As such, however, it was none the less radical, for

the very nature of the old gods underwent a thorough transformation, and their religious significance was greatly deepened.



SLLEEPING EROS.
Lateran Museum. Monument on a child's tomb. (Garrucci, plate 40, 1.)

Nor is it difficult—in spite of the mystery that surrounds them and the silence preserved concerning their rituals—to describe (at least in general outlines)



THE MARRIAGE-FEAST OF EROS AND PSYCHE.
Ancient sarcophagus. (After Combe, *Ancient Marbles in the British Museum*, Vol. V., plate 9, 3.)

the character of these innovations, for they became the dominant factors in the formation of the Greek type in its classic period and left an unmistakable imprint upon philosophers and poets as well as upon

the public life of ancient Hellas. The great problem of Greek thought was the riddle of the sphinx, finding its solution in the Greek conception of man's soul as worked out by Plato. The mysteries themselves were

a mixture of ancient traditions set in relief by the modern Greek thought of the days of Peisistratos and later of Pericles; and traces of antiquated folklore were thus displayed in the light of the greatest wisdom of the age.



EROS AND PSYCHE.

Antique marble group now in the museum of the Capitol at Rome.

That Plato and his doctrines affected Christianity is well known, and so we may, in the evolution of religion, regard the hopes and dreams of the mysteries, especially the Eleusinian mysteries, as one of the most important phases in the transition to Christianity.

All these views found expression in the fairy tale of Eros and Psyche—the only fairy tale of ancient Greece that has come down to us; and it is not an accident that Eros and Psyche should have appeared