

task can be borne if you look at it closely enough; there is fascination and beauty to be found in the inner workings of anything.

Also interestingly Virgo-ish is the phrase "hanging a lantern on it"—to acknowledge a point of view in order to dismiss it. In conversation or argument, Virgo seeks to go beyond the obvious, preferring to hunt down finer nuances, subtler senses. This talent for fractal ramification can come across as nit-picking and critical. Not everyone wants to go there with Virgo!



The captive sun.

THE SUN'S PASSAGE THROUGH NIGHT

In Virgo, long summer days are dwindling; soon day and night shall hold equal sway as we arrive in Libra. It is no surprise that the Hermit seeks to conserve the remaining light. In Egyptian mythology, the Sun must travel through the darkness, carried by the dung beetle, until it reaches the eastern horizon to rise again. Just as consciousness abandons us in sleep, just as the light of the waking world deserts us when we die, so does the Sun pass into night and the kingdom of winter.

Our guide through these dark passages is none other than Hermes psychopomp, for Mercury is the night-time ruler of earthy Virgo. Much about his role is revealed in the beautiful *Orphic Hymn to Hermes Chthonios* ("chthonic" meaning "of the earth" or "underground"). He is linked to the sacrificed god Dionysus, but he also shares the realm of Persephone, who grants him equal access to Tartarus (ἱερὸν δόμον ἀμφοιπολεύεις). Into the lightless depths of the earth, Hermes guides the newly dead, for the Hermit knows even forsaken places well, and his ever-present lantern shows the way.

In some early versions of the card, the Hermit holds not a lantern but an hourglass, evoking the Saturn/Chronos archetype. The *Orphic Hymn to Chthonic Hermes* makes a point of emphasizing that souls descend into the earth when it is their fate to do so; when their time has come (ὁπότεν μοίρης χρόνος εἰσαφίκηται). But it also makes the point that this is in order to wake them up again later. The Sun also rises!

RITES OF DEMETER

The Hermetic connection to Persephone and the underworld comes to us via the Eleusinian mysteries, the great rites of death and rebirth which dominated the culture of Mycenaean Greece in the centuries before Christianity. This massive initiatory working reframed the cycle of mortality as an agricultural metaphor the human mind could grasp. It is said that at its climax an unripe