

What was it about? Why all the controversy?

STARTING TO UNDERSTAND THE DINNER PARTY

A better look at the table:

- The three wings of the table represent three different periods in history:
- Wing one: Prehistory to Classic Rome
- Wing two: Christianity to the Reformation
- Wing three: American Revolution to Women's Revolution (modern time)

**All images and information was taken from the Brooklyn Museum website.*




Wing One

Prehistory to Classic Rome

This wing begins with one of the greatest kept secrets in history;

The first notion of “god”, was a woman;

“The original conception of the goddess is that of Mother Earth, the sacred female force responsible for the creation of the earth and all its flora and fauna.”*



Primordial Goddess



"Original depictions of the Primordial Goddess are symbolic and date back to the Paleolithic era (Lower Paleolithic 2,500,000 B.C. to 120,000 B.C.; Middle Paleolithic, from 300,000 to 30,000 B.C.; and Upper Paleolithic 30,000 to 10,000 B.C.). "Believed by many scholars to have been part of early goddess worship traditions, some have theorized that these images could be linked to early matrilineal or even gynocratic practices in which women, particularly mothers, were responsible for governing the community.*

Fertile Goddess



Many societies have worshipped the Fertile Goddess as the supreme site of fertility, motherhood, and the creation of life. The earliest proof comes from archaeological finds—paintings and figurines of women... Famous pieces, such as the *Venus of Lespugue* and the *Venus of Willendorf* are Upper Paleolithic (30,000–10,000 B.C.) examples that may have been worshipped as goddesses. These figures are assumed to be pregnant because Paleolithic and Neolithic (around 10,000 B.C.) people did not have enough fatty foods in their diet to be able to attain that weight. *

Ishtar



"Ishtar, called the Queen of Heaven by the people of ancient Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), was the most important female deity in their pantheon... Ishtar takes three paramount forms. She is the goddess of love and sexuality, and thus, fertility; she is responsible for all life, but she is never a Mother goddess. As the goddess of war, she is often shown winged and bearing arms. Her third aspect is celestial; she is the planet Venus, the morning and evening star." *

Kali



"Worship of Kali has roots in ancient East Indian belief systems from the first millennium B.C. Her name first appears in the holy Hindu text *Rg Veda*, 1700–1100 B.C. ... Today Kali is primarily worshipped in Bengal, eastern India, and throughout Southeast Asia in various forms. As she is associated with the opposing forces of destruction and death, as well as creation and salvation, she has been characterized as both vicious and nurturing.... As destroyer, Kali kills that which stands in the way of human purity and peace in both life and death, such as evil, ignorance, and egoism."*



Images of Kali



Snake Goddess



"In 1903, Sir Arthur Evans, excavating at the palace of Knossos on the island of Crete, discovered fragments of faience statuettes depicting female figures holding snakes. ... Two of these statuettes were extensively restored and identified by Evans as a "Mother Goddess" and a "Priestess." These figures became iconic images of Minoan civilization as soon as they were published,... The goddess is thought to have been worshipped in Crete from circa 3000–1100 B.C. "*"

Sophia



"Sophia, whose name in Greek means "wisdom," is connected to the different incarnations of sacred female knowledge and to those goddesses listed above."*

"Sophia is one of the central figures of Gnosticism, a Christian philosophical movement with uncertain origins that most likely originated in ancient Rome and Persia. Gnosticism emphasizes individual knowledge and wisdom as the path to salvation and oneness with God. Its followers worship Sophia as both divine female creator and counterpart to Jesus Christ. According to Gnostic beliefs, Christ was conceived of as having two aspects: a male half, identified as the son of God, and a female half, called Sophia, who was venerated as the mother of the universe. ""*

Image from the Sistine Chapel



“There has also been a scholarly effort to locate Sophia historically as the goddess of wisdom within the context of Christian religious practices, texts, and images. One of the most interesting theories relates to Michelangelo's paintings on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Some scholars and art historians believe that the female figure under God's left arm in the *Creation of Adam* is, in fact, Sophia, acting out her role as the female being in the creation of life and man. “*