

THE POWER OF THEN

Volume 2: Hermetic Knowledge

“The universe is a giant mystery with no limits. To fall prey to the axiom ‘I believe only what I see’ is the dumbest stand one can possibly take.”

Carlos Castaneda

CHAPTER 11 HERMETICISM



80: Medici Villa-Careggi near Florence Italy, site of Ficino's Platonic Academy

Corpus Hermeticum

“At first glance there appears to be scant remains of what was once an abundant literature. But since it was mostly kept secret, it is amazing that so much has been preserved. Yet always remember that what we have is but a mere fraction of the original lot.” GRS Mead¹

What is called Hermeticism is a teaching or core of study that has its roots in the Greek text *Corpus Hermeticum*. This book was supposedly written by the Greek god Hermes. The text itself is claimed to be a Greek translation of the Ancient Egyptian Books of Thoth. The literature, all but destroyed by the Catholic Church in the 3rd and 4th century (attempting to hide the true Christian origins), resurfaced in Europe in the 15th century to spawn the Renaissance. It was the Hermetic teachings that inspired: Blake, Goethe, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Mann, Yates, Browning, Leonardo, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Da Vinci, Copernicus, Bacon, Kepler and Isaac Newton. While in fact all religions are Hermetic, meaning written in a specific form of symbolic code, this can only be understood by putting the teachings into practice. Today the word Hermetica usually refers to a specific group of books: 18 books of the Corpus Hermeticum, the Asclepius, The Stobaeus (a number of fragments written by John of Stobai), the Kyballion, and various other fragments.

One of the best Hermetic explanations for modern seekers comes from a group known as the Gnostics. Originally their original texts were lost to us (burned by the Catholic hierarchy opposed to the Gnostic symbolic understanding). In fact, for over 2000 years the only scholarly reference to the Gnostics was from church leaders who had written letters in opposition to them. That was until 1945 when a huge cache of hidden scrolls were found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt. Most believe they are an early Christian group based on certain translations, but that is far from the truth. There are the opposite of modern religion, more like deep Zen or Advaita. The main Gnostic teaching is that there is only one, an Absolute Reality. That Absolute split and got caught into matter where an external force- they called archons, created an artificial simulated reality (called Hal) and implanted a mind (they called a virus) to keep humans trapped. Their teachings claimed to be the way out of this trap, back to

the original nature.

When the Hermetic texts were banned and those who taught the direct teachings of enlightenment were run out of the Christian world, they found a home in the Islamic Hermetic city of Haran. Not only was the Corpus Hermeticum kept alive here, but so too was written the famed book Picatrix. Muslim Spain also became a holder of the ancient wisdom, with the Cordoba Library having some 400,000 books. In the 8th century many European nobles, with no books available to the masses (for even the Bible was forbidden to be read) pilgrimaged to Spain for books and wisdom. In the east, the city of Constantinople kept the Hermetic and Gnostic teachings alive. As well Buddhist, Taoist and Hindu teachings were beginning to make inroads into the Middle East.

In the 15th century scholars from the Christian east came to Italy where they arrived at Florence. They began teaching the words of Plato and Hermes there. Cosimo D'Medici was immediately impressed and set up a new Platonic academy at Florence, and led to the birth of the Renaissance in Europe. Academy master, Marsiglio Ficino, made the first Latin translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* in 1548. Of course I am simplifying all this, for those who wish more detail I suggest the book *Elixir and the Stone* by Michael Baigent.

The new academy in Florence, and its offshoots that were spreading across Europe, quickly became a real problem for the Catholic Church. The Bible could only be printed in Latin, but even if you could read Latin you were forbidden to read it anyway. Now all of sudden thanks to the translations of the Hermetic texts and the printing press, these ancient works were available in French, English, Spanish etc. People began to take to the teachings that told of speaking directly to God without the need of the Church, which had become a corrupt bully.

The original Gnostic teachers has claimed that the Hermetic literature was the background of Christianity, but the Church needed to step in hard to stop all this "wisdom." They found two well respected opposers. One was Rene Descartes (he of I think therefore I am, thus a man trapped in his mind) and Isaac Causabon. They claimed in 1614 that the Hermetic books were written in the 2-3rd century in Alexandria, thus had no Egyptian wisdom, and more importantly were written long after Christ, thus they were just a "plagiarism" of Jesus' true teachings. Causabon was held in great respect in many European circles, and his argument was enough to halt the spread of Hermetic thought, openly at least. It still continued in secret societies that formed to keep teaching the Hermetic wisdom.

By the 19th century with new world religious texts, the similarity between Buddhist, Taoist, Zen and Hindu philosophy was more than co-incidence. Once the Egyptian hieroglyphs were translated, many too began to see the similarity between Egypt and the Hermetica. A famous text appeared during the Middle Ages called the Kyballion, and relates what are known as the 7 Hermetic Principles. The first is that "All is Mind," or everything is just the mind or thought of God. Thus there is no difference between anything in creation for each is just a thought of God's mind. The second principle is "as above, so below," the idea of mirrors and of holograms (the part containing the whole).

The third principle is the "Everything vibrates" or makes a sound. The fourth is "everything has polarity," the fifth "everything has gender," which is different than polarity. The sixth is "everything has rhythm," while the seventh is "cause and effect," or the ideas of karma. I will explore some of these topics in the upcoming chapters, yet what I find most interesting is that the Hermeticists are teaching us these principles to tell us that this is how this reality works. Yet if you read closely, they are also telling you that these rules only apply to this reality, go beyond and these rules don't apply. Thus everytime we can understand a principle, then go beyond it, we in effect break the hold of this illusion of reality.

The Hermetic process, which became key to the teachings of alchemy, was said to occur in three stages, and each of these stages was symbolized by a particular colour. The first stage was the black and was called Nigredo or Calcination. The second stage was white and was called Solutio or Albedo. The final stage was red and was called Rubedo, though at times a fourth colour (yellow called Citrinus) was sometimes included. Each stage required the student to work on specific aspects of themselves, purify and transform their entire being until they could shine with the gold of the astral light. It is then they were ready for the final stage, the Gnosis (silent knowledge) of Tehuti/Hermes. Within the three main stages are seven component stages that are the similar to the Oriental teachings of transformation through the seven chakras. (A more detailed description of the alchemic process can be found in the appendix).

The main focus of the Hermetic work, as it is with all of paths of wisdom, is to teach that the conscious mind and our personal self-grasping must be systematically destroyed. They teach what keeps us from our true

divinity, the magical nature of humanity, is our own conscious mind. Our soul has a mind (our heart) but something else has provided us with another. This mind is never questioned, but the Hermetic work actually involves the questioning of our mind's importance, allowing the exercises and purification work to reach our hearts.

Myth of Hermes

“Mythology is an interior road map of experience, drawn by people who have traveled it.” -Bill Moyers-

It becomes somewhat of a detective mission to decipher the ancient Hermetic codes left in the texts, temples and tombs in order to uncover exactly what the ancient world wanted to pass on. This volume will focus on the serpent Apop, and how this serpent force has managed to subliminally control reality through the egoic mind. The good news is that the old texts and myths reveal how Ra (inner light or consciousness) can overcome this force of Apop, and allow all of creation to walk into a natural way of being and living.

All myths are shrouded in symbol- pointing to something that is best not said openly. An invitation for the reader to “come look for themselves.” Passed on for countless generations, this information was so potential damning to controlling organization that the writings had to be placed in secret code. Like any code they must be “code broken” to be understood and used. Without knowledge of symbolic language, it will be missed. I thought there was no better beginning to this volume than to offer up the Greek legend of Hermes, which came to Greece via Egypt. I will italicize key symbolic words in the legend. By the end of reading this book (Appendix 2 has some symbol definitions), you will be able to return to this myth and perhaps code break it yourself to see that this is no mythological tale but in fact describes the process of awakening. My symbolic code break will appear in Appendix 5.

The Legend of Hermes as it appeared in Greek myth:

Hermes was born in a *cave* on *Mount Cyllene* in *Arcadia*. Zeus had impregnated *Maia* in the dead of *night* while all the other gods *slept*. When *dawn* broke Hermes was amazingly *born*. *Maia* wrapped him in *swaddling bands*, then she fell back to *sleep*. Hermes however, *squirmed free* and ran off to *Thessaly*. There his *brother* *Apollo* grazed *cattle*. Hermes *stole* a number of the heard and drove them back to Greece. He kept them in a small *grotto* near the city of *Pylos*, then *covered his tracks*.

Before returning to the cave, he killed a *tortoise* and removed the entrails, using the intestines of a cow stolen from *Apollo* and the hollow tortoise shell he made the first *lyre*. When he returned to the cave, he *wrapped himself back* in the swaddling clothes. *Apollo* finally realized that he had been robbed and protested to *Maia* that it was *Hermes*, but she saw him sleeping in his bands that she could not believe it was him. All-powerful *Zeus* however had been watching the whole thing and acknowledged the theft and that *Hermes* should return the stolen cattle. An agreement was reached, but while it was happening, *Hermes* played his lyre and the *music enchanted* *Apollo*, and he offered to let *Hermes* keep the cattle in exchange for the lyre. *Apollo* later became the *grandmaster* of the instrument.

Hermes while *watching over his heard* also invented the pan-pipe and the flute. *Apollo* also wanted these instruments, so *Hermes* bartered with him and received a *golden wand* which became his famous staff (in some stories it is *Zeus* who gives him the golden wand.) Later *Hermes* liberated *Io* from *Hera's* servant the hundred-headed *giant* *Argus*. *Hermes* played his flute and the *giant slept*, so *Hermes cut off the giant's head* and released *Io*. *Hera* was so taken by her former giant servant that she placed his hundred eyes and put them on a *peacock's tail*.

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FAIRY TALES