

# Hermeticism

**Paper has been modified from the original presentation for members of Siminoff Council No 485 A.M.D.**



*Caduceus*

***This Paper or any part thereof may not be reproduced, copied, published, forwarded by Email or distributed in any way without the consent of Edgar W. Fentum.***

*There are two words that I have used that the usage over the past years has changed. They are 'Magic' and 'Occult'. 'Magick' or 'Magic' referred to the process of spiritual development through the individual act of will as opposed to the stage magic of entertainers. Occult is used to refer to the 'hidden' as opposed to what is often now considered 'evil' or 'satanic'.*



## HERMETICISM DEFINED

'Technical Hermetica: "The basic idea ... is the notion that all things that exist, both in the spiritual and in the material world, in some way or another are interconnected. This universal *sympatheia* could be the basis for quite different practices (e.g. magic and alchemy)." (Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism.

Internet: 'A system of theological and mystical philosophy that developed around the second century (CE). Believers came to accept that the texts were much older than they really were, possibly even predating Moses and the Old Testament. The Hermetical works are assigned to the authorship of Hermes Trismegistus (Hermes Trice Greatest0 but were composed by several anonymous individuals'.

Hermeticism is a philosophical concept ascribed to Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus. It is derived from Alexandria and considered a fusion of Greek

and Egyptian philosophy. There is a claim by St. Augustine (354 – 450 C.E.) that credited Hermeticism to be from the time of Abraham 1800 B.C.E. There is no evidence to support a claim of such antiquity.

Hermes is a mythological name of the messenger to the Greek Gods. He was worshiped as an Olympian god and patron to shepherds, athletes, orators, travellers and commerce. Mercury or Mercurius is the mythological name of the messenger to the Roman Gods. These two names came together during the Greco-Roman expansion of the Roman Empire and transition of Greco-Roman cultures.

Trismegistus means 'thrice great', 'Thrice greatest' or 'three times great' as explained in the Emerald Tablet.



Thoth<sup>1</sup> was one of the important Egyptian gods during the Hellenistic period from 350 B.C.E to about 30 B.C.E. Thoth was considered to be the seat of intelligence and the tongue (or messenger) of the sun god Ra. He is depicted as a man with the head of an ibis or sometimes with the head and body of a baboon. He is considered as the arbiter of the dead and judge of all moral and divine law. He is credited with the 365 day year, invention of writing and the cult of the Ogdoad<sup>2</sup> belief system.

The writing ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus originated in Egypt in the name of Thoth<sup>3</sup>. These writings by Thoth were claimed or added to by the Greeks under the name of Hermes Trismegistus, by which name Hermeticism became universally known.

---

<sup>1</sup> Thoth was considered one of the important Egyptian deities as the seat of intelligence and the tongue (or messenger) of the sun god Ra. He is depicted as a man with the head of an ibis or sometimes with the head of a baboon.

<sup>2</sup> EIGHT - Refers to Hathor and Thoth of Egyptian Mythology approximately 2500 B.C.E. In Gnosticism refers to the 7 Palaces of Heaven plus a special place called the Ogdoad. Found in the Ordo Aurum Solis as the 'Ogdoadic Tradition'

Hermeticism, therefore, is a fusion of Greek, Roman and Egyptian philosophical beliefs. In later years many of these precepts became absorbed into Rosicrucianism and some were adapted to Christian, Jewish, Islamic and Kabbalistic teachings<sup>4</sup>.

Literature is full of mythological references to the Greek Hermes, to the Roman Mercury and to the Egyptian Thoth. Hermes is linked to the culture of the Mycenaean era of 1600-1100 B.C.E. The mysteries of Thoth the 'Scribe of the Gods' in early Egyptian mythology relate to astronomy, astrology, religious incantations, rituals and prayers that helped the soul to pass into the afterlife<sup>5</sup>.

It is uncertain that Hermes/Thoth was an individual and it has been suggested that the philosophy developed or was created over centuries by a 'school'. Hermeticism incorporated:

1. Alchemy - Transmutation of base metal into gold but particularly the spiritual purification of the soul<sup>6</sup>. The 'Elixir of Life' and the 'Philosopher's Stone' were sought but never attained by early Alchemists. It is the forerunner of Chemistry. '*..the philosophical Elixir, whose divine virtues wise men so much admire and fools condemn because their blinded eyes cannot penetrate within to the centre of the mystery.*'<sup>7</sup>
2. Astrology - is a pseudo sciences which claims that the relative position of celestial bodies can influence and provide information about individuals, human affairs and other "earthly" matters. In Hermeticism both Astronomy and Astrology are integrated. The search of the fixed position of the planets and movements of celestial bodies is evidenced in the standing stones of Stonehenge, Avebury, Pyramids of Egypt, South America Mayan structures and pictographs, in the culture of China and India. Astrology was the core of the Hermetic Tradition.

---

<sup>4</sup> Prisca Theologia – concept of a primordial or universal tradition of wisdom that is an underlying theology in all religions that was given by God to man and can be seen in Freemasonry in 'Anderson's Constitution' of 1723

<sup>5</sup> Book of the Dead

<sup>6</sup> Atwood Pg. 98

<sup>7</sup> Atwood Pg. 101

3. Theurgy - Art of Divine works, prayer, ritual and contemplation that are invoked through the conscious will to assist in an improvement of 'self'. This may be manifested in both 'good' (white magick) and 'evil' (black magick). *'Magick' as stated at the beginning of this Paper. 'The six Keys of Eudoxus'*<sup>8</sup> Many practitioners of alchemy pursued it. The elixir of life was also said to be able to create life. It is related to the myths of Enoch, Thoth, and Hermes Trismegistus, all of whom in various tales are said to have drunk "the white drops" (liquid gold) and thus achieved immortality. It is also associated with the Qur'an's Al Khidr ('The Green Man'), and is mentioned in one of the Nag Hammadi texts *but particularly the spiritual purification of the soul. It is the forerunner of Chemistry*).

Dr. Carl Jung saw Alchemy as a spiritual improvement of the individual through discovery of self and psyche and the integration of the whole. In Freemasonry we refer to 'making good men into better men and better Masons'.

The Elixir of Life is equated with the Philosopher's Stone as a means of indefinitely prolonging life and even creating life. There are no such formulae known to exist yet the search spread worldwide.

In the middle ages Paracelsus disregarded much of the magic of Alchemy and brought Chemistry into medicine. He connected the three primus as Sulfur embodied the soul, (the emotions and desires); Salt represented the body; Mercury epitomized the spirit (imagination, moral judgment, and the higher mental faculties).

He considered that health was a balance of harmony between the body and Nature – thus aligning himself with Hermeticism and the Macrocosm /Microcosm concept.

Mary Ann Atwood states *"There are three things necessary for the attainment of Hermetic science: viz., study, experience and the divine benediction; and these depend upon each other; study is required for the theory and this for entering into the central experience, which in the Universal Spirit, is not found without God."*<sup>9</sup>

The only extant documents were the 'Corpus Hermeticum and Asclepius' that is made up of 15 tractates. 'The Divine Poimandres – the

---

<sup>8</sup> Atwood Pgs. 500-520

<sup>9</sup> Ch III Pg 105 'A suggestive Inquiry into Hermetic Mystery

Shepard of Men' and 'The Emerald Tablet or Tablets'. A later work known as 'Kybalion' was written in 1908 to explain Hermeticism by an anonymous group calling themselves 'The Three Initiates'. The most recent discovery of Hermetic material was in 1945 at Nag Hammadi with the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>10</sup>

The core to the Hermetic Mystery is a summation of 'As Above – So Below' contained in the Emerald Tablets. The actual text of that maxim, as translated by Dennis W. Hauck is *"That which is Below corresponds to that which is Above, and that which is Above corresponds to that which is Below, to accomplish the miracle of the One Thing"*.

One of the original translations of the 'Emerald Table or Tablets' is by Jabir ibn Hayyan (721-815 C.E.)<sup>11</sup>

- 1) *Truth! Certainty! That in which there is no doubt!*
- 2) *That which is above is from that which is below, and that which is below is from that which is above, working the miracles of one.*
- 3) *As all things were from one.*
- 4) *Its father is the Sun and its mother the Moon.*
- 5) *The Earth carried it in her belly, and the Wind nourished it in her belly,*
- 7) *as Earth which shall become Fire.*
- 7a) *Feed the Earth from that which is subtle, with the greatest power.*
- 8) *It ascends from the earth to the heaven and becomes ruler over that which is above and that which is below.*
- 14) *And I have already explained the meaning of the whole of this in two of these books of mine.*<sup>12</sup>

In the first, second and third Century C.E. Hermeticism was part of the abundance of religious and metaphysical philosophy that included

---

<sup>10</sup> James M. Robinson 'Nag Hammadi Library – Asclepius VI,8 21-29 & The Thunder - Perfect Mind V13, 1-21, 32'

<sup>11</sup> A chemist and alchemist, astronomer and astrologer, engineer, geologist, philosopher, physicist, and pharmacist and physician. He is considered by some to be the "father of chemistry."<sup>1</sup> His ethnic background is not clear; although some sources state that he was an Arab other sources introduce him as Persian.

<sup>12</sup> The Tablet probably first appeared in the West in editions of the pseudo-Aristotelean 'Secretum Secretorum' which was actually a translation of the Kitab Sirr al-Asar, a book of advice to kings which was translated into Latin by Johannes Hispalensis c. 1140 C. E. and by Philip of Tripoli c.1243 C. E. Other translations of the Tablet may have been made during the same period by Plato of Tivoli and Hugh of Santalla, perhaps from different sources. The date of the Kitab Sirr al-Asar is uncertain, though c.800 C. E. has been suggested and it is not clear when the tablet became part of this work.

Christianity, Gnosticism<sup>13</sup>, Rites of Mithras<sup>14</sup> and Neo-Platonism<sup>15</sup> (Saccas and Plotinius 205-270 C.E.) The teachings of Hermeticism are said to embody philosophy and basic concepts central to all religions. Hermeticism ascribes to God as 'the One' and mankind as part of the 'All'. The microcosm and the macrocosm

The interest in Hermes Trismegistus was subsequent upon writings and teachings rediscovered and translated from Aramaic<sup>16</sup> to Greek between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Century C.E. Sir Petrie Flinders (1853-1942 B.C.E.) claims the original writings to be from a period dated between 500 – 200 B.C.E. Walter Scott claims that they were written during the 1st Century C.E. G. S. Mead asserts the writings to be contemporary with Plato (428 – 328 B.C.E.). Isaac Casaubon (1559 – 1614 C.E.) examined the texts in 1614 and proclaimed them to belong to the first century of the current millennium. If any of these texts were copied from an older original source - this cannot be determined.

From the decline of the Roman Empire in about 450 C.E. to the period of Enlightenment in about 1300 C.E. during the Dark Ages Christianity became the dominant religion. Hermetic prophesies of a Messiah made Hermeticism acceptable to Christianity and during the Dark Ages there was an ambivalent attitude towards Hermeticism.

David Stevenson in 'First Freemasons' states it is possible that as Hermetic documents were written in the first or second Century C.E. it may have been infused with Christian ethics. However, it is also possible that the extant documents of the period may have been copied from documents that pre-date Christianity. It is chronicled that there may have been from 400,000 to 700,000 original documents, parchments, scrolls and inscriptions – some may have been related to Hermeticism – that were destroyed during

---

<sup>13</sup> Tobias Churton 'Gnostic Philosophy'. A reconciliation of many religious sects and concepts (including Valentinianism) with a belief in an oral tradition passed down by Jesus. Emanations of a superior God recognized as 'One or 'Monad'

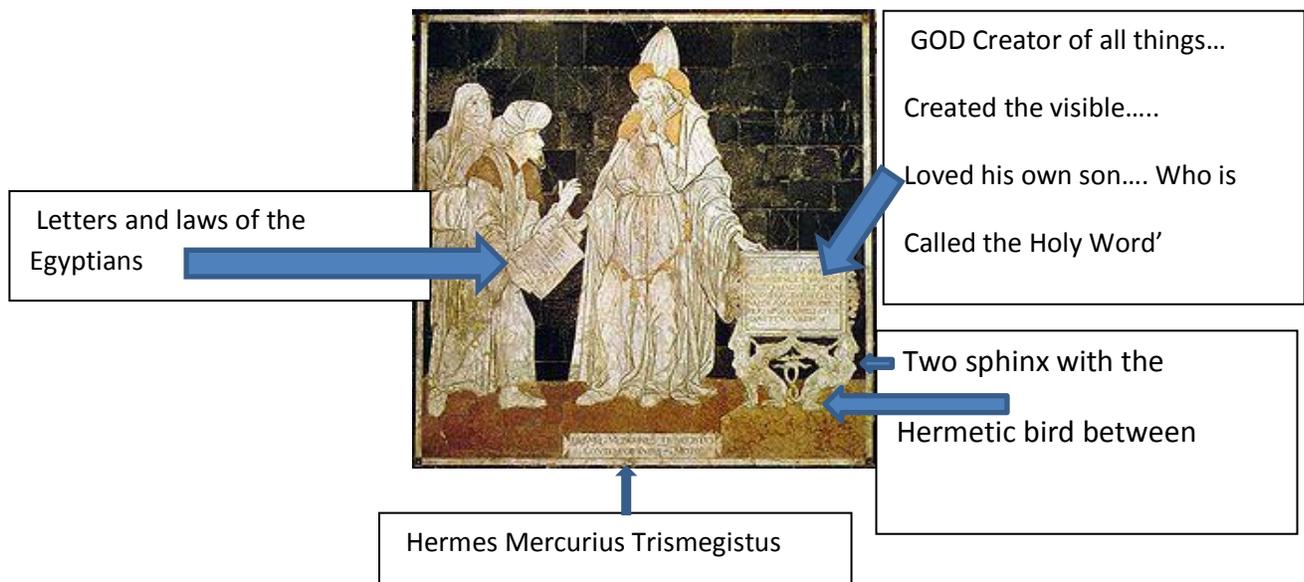
<sup>14</sup> Religion of the Roman military during the 1-3<sup>rd</sup> Century C.E. Mithras said to be born out of a rock. Many Temples survive

<sup>15</sup> Manly P. Hall. Neo-Platonism. The concept of 'ONE' as being the source of all life. A philosophy of Plato (428 – 348 B.C.E.) developed to include the mystical aspect and founded upon idealism through moderation and enlightenment to enable an individual to attain a higher consciousness. Neo-Platonism developed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century C.E.

<sup>16</sup> An ancient language of about 3000 years and the ancestral language of Arabic and Hebrew that was found in the N.E. Middle East in what is now Iraq, Iran, Israel and Turkey. It was the language at the building of the Second Temple (539 B.C.E.) of Jesus

the accidental conflagration of the Royal Library of Alexandria by Julius Caesar in 48 B.C.E.

The transference of Hermeticism from the Middle East to Europe is believed to have occurred through the expansion of the Moslem Empire into Spain, Southern France and Sicily. Islam had accepted aspects of Hermeticism, especially into Sufism. Hermeticism arrived in Florence, Italy through the endeavors of Cosimo Medici family in 1460<sup>17</sup>. It is a current popular belief that the Knights Templar brought ideas and material back to the west during the occupation of the Holy land. This claim is speculative.



*15<sup>th</sup> Century floor mosaic in 'Cathedrale di Santa Maria' better known as the Duomo, Italy shows Hermes<sup>18</sup>.  
An example of Hermeticism being accepted by Christianity*

From the Mosaic above it would seem that the Renaissance philosophers believed these works were pre-Christian and acceptable enough

<sup>17</sup> Fr. Tom Worrel VII° Golden State College in an Email to me. 'When the monk brought the "Corpus Hermeticum" to Cosimo Medici and Cosimo had Ficino translate it; it was a breath of fresh air. Ficino also translated most of Plato and Plotinus (Neo-Platonism) into Latin (as well as other important documents), the West woke up to the glories of the Classical World - thus, the seeds of the Italian Renaissance (at least by some scholars arguments).'

<sup>18</sup> **English:** Hermes Trismegistus Floor mosaic in the Cathedral of Siena Russian: Hermes Trismegistus. Mosaics on the floor of the cathedral of Siena, 1480-ies. Signatures on a mosaic: the bottom - "Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus, contemporary of Moses" on the left pages of the book . The letters and the laws of the Egyptians, on the stone, which are supported by two sphinx - "God, the creator of all things, with God himself created the visible and created the first and only person who was glad, and very loved his own son, who is called the Holy Word "

to warrant a place in a Cathedral in the 1400's C.E. The resurgence of Hermeticism was during the Renaissance (1300's to the late 1600's C.E.) and spread from Florence to Western Europe in what is known as the Western Mystical Tradition. A translation from Greek into Latin of the 'Corpus Hermeticum and Asclepius'<sup>19</sup> was by Marsilio Ficino 1433 – 1499 CE<sup>20</sup>.

Pico Della Mirandola<sup>21</sup>, was a master of combining different disciplines such as Neoplatonism, Astrology, Hermeticism, Christianity and the Kabbalah. His mentor was Marsilio Ficino. Mirandola added the mysteries of the Jewish Cabala to Christianity and as a mathematician was opposed to predictive Astrology.

Giordano Bruno (1540 – 1600),<sup>22</sup> a well-travelled scholar, physician, mathematician and student of Hermeticism was a supporter of Copernicus. Francis Yates states that Bruno went too far for his own good in claiming a return to Egyptian Hermeticism and preaching a moral reform of good works and religious tolerance. He advocated the reading of Hermetic philosophies in the Church and incurred the wrath of the Church of Rome.

Mary Anne Atwood (1817-1910) printed in 1850 "A suggestive Inquiry to Hermetic Mystery" that encapsulates, albeit, in expansive Victorian English the essence of Hermeticism. Her summation is that Hermeticism is that the Universal Spirit is manifest in each individual and in the 'All'. Hence, man through study, contemplation and prayer can manipulate the Universal Spirit to a transmutation of his spirit into 'pure gold'. *'In the last operation the union of the Philosopher's Stone is said to be finally cemented. ... It is the parts agreeing union or consummation of its transmutative virtue is called fermentation. Mark the harmonious mystery – that which in the Kabbalah is*

---

<sup>19</sup> Francis Yates 'The Art of Memory' Pg. 136

<sup>20</sup> Ordained Priest, Scholar to the Medicis and Physician. Believed that Hermeticism provided a bridge between Plato, Plotinus and Christianity. Thought that Plato should be read in Churches. Cosimo de Medici, the leading citizen of Florence, who selected Ficino as a boy to lead the Florentine Platonic Academy. Cosimo encouraged Ficino to study Greek and then to provide the first Latin translations of *On the Divine Wisdom* and *the Creation of the World*,

<sup>21</sup> Count Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-94) A prodigy at the age of ten he studied Canon Law. After his mother's death he renounced Canon law and studied philosophy. He had a phenomenal memory that enabled him to read Aramaic, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. It is believed he was poisoned.

<sup>22</sup> Francis Yates 'Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition'. His writings on Hermeticism and other subjects include *De Magia (On Magic)*, *Theses De Magia (Theses On Magic)* and *De Vinculis In Genere (A General Account of Bonding)*. All these were apparently transcribed or recorded by Besler (or Bisler) between 1589 and 1590.<sup>[13]</sup> He also published *De Imaginum, Signorum, Et Idearum Compositione (On The Composition of Images, Signs and Ideas, 1591)*.

*denominated the Monad, with God, that in a metaphysical-chemical is called fermentation.'*<sup>23</sup>

Some of the significant names that are associated with Hermeticism are: Mary Ann Atwood, Roger Bacon, Francis Bacon, John Dee, Robert Fludd, Raymond Lull, Michael Maier, (pseudonym was Eugenius Philalethes), Isaac Newton, Walter Scott<sup>24</sup>, Thomas Vaughan, Francis Yates, William Blake, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Carl Jung. It is simplistic to say that the above authors expanded the scope of Hermeticism but to enumerate or recount what each did would be beyond the scope of this Paper.

There is no evidence to support ritual created by Stonemasons. Matthew Cooke's Manuscript dated c. 1450 C.E. gives a discourse and Charges that sound very similar to some of the ritual we find today. In it there is a reference to Hermes<sup>25</sup>. This document is believed to have been in the possession of Grand Master Payne of the Grand Lodge of England in 1720. However, Masonic catechism was in use before that date.

On the other hand R.A. Gilbert in Gnosis #6 states "While such a wealth of symbolism has a very specific meaning within Freemasonry, its very richness has left it vulnerable to the most wild and extravagant interpretations on the part of occultists and of "esoteric" masons who ought to know better".

It is not the intention of this paper to explore the origins of masonic ritual<sup>26</sup>. Two degrees of Freemasonry existed before 1717 and it is remarkable that many rituals from different parts of England have similar words, content, continuity and phrasing. This suggests to me that there must have been some commonality for the concept. Could one group imbed profound symbolism, from so many arcane disciplines? Could this ritual then be disseminate 'mouth to ear' (as early ritual was not written) over the entire United Kingdom? I do not know but it seems doubtful!

---

<sup>23</sup> Atwood Pg. 520

<sup>24</sup> Walter Scott 'Hermitica' regarded by Francis Yates as inferior. NOT 'Sir Walter Scott' the Poet

<sup>25</sup> The second oldest document after the Regius Manuscript. Cooke Ms23198 UGLE Museum: 'And many years after the flood, according to the chronicle, these two pillars were found, and the chronicle says that a great clerk, Pythagoras, found the one, and Hermes the philosopher found the other, and they taught the sciences that they found written.'

<sup>26</sup> Refer to Lawrence Dermott 1751, Poole (AQC xxxvii (1924); Harry Carr 'The Early Masonic Catechisms' and Douglas Knoop 'The Genesis of Speculative Masonry' W.L. Wilmshurst. W. Kirk MacNulty and many others

*'If thou wilt thys worke begyn,  
Than sehrevy the clene off alle thy syne.'*<sup>27</sup>



Hence, without a prejudicial mind let's begin:

As the transmutation of Lead into gold and 'The Philosopher's Stone' or 'Elixir of Life' proved unobtainable so Alchemy turned towards philosophy and the transmutation of the human spirit or psyche.

Mary Anne Atwood states *'It is not species that they profess to transmute ; nor do they ever teach in theory that lead as lead, or mercury as mercury specificate can be changed into gold any more than a dog into a horse'*.<sup>28</sup> The theory of transmutation is in reference to the human spirit and begins with introspection. In old Hermetic terms it was called 'reduction' and 'fermentation'. This was achieved through the use of 'Sulfur'  $\hat{=}$  Truth. Thus through *reduction* we may distill the 'self' and probe the unconscious. Then through *fermentation*, meditation and the practice of prayer leads to a fuller understanding of oneself and life.

The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite 4<sup>th</sup> degree instructs the candidate to 'walk those ancient yet ever new paths that leads to a fuller understanding of oneself and the cosmos'.



Spiritual  
ABOVE  
Physical  
BELOW

that which is above is  
**Macrocosm - Microcosm**  
as that which is below'

<sup>27</sup> Pg. 212 Elias Ashmole 'Thetrum Chemicum Britannicum' 1617

<sup>28</sup> Pg. 73 Atwood 'A Suggestive inquiry into Hermetic Mystery'

Speculatively, we may symbolize the Square and Compasses as the square representing the material and physical world in which we have our being is 'below' and the compasses representing the Spiritual world as 'above'. As the positions of the compasses change in relations to the square we see the ascent of the Soul to attain the - spiritual world - 'that house not made with hands eternal in the Heavens'. The two pillars in a lodge are surmounted by two spheres (celestial and terrestrial world of God and man). These also allude to the Hermetic concept 'As above - so below' or Macrocosm (God) and Microcosm (man).

Dr. Carl G. Jung states that the synthesis is the conscious with the unconscious. *'Alchemy, as a nature philosophy of great consideration in the Middle Ages, throws a bridge to the past, the gnosis, and also to the future, the modern psychology of the unconscious. Only by discovering alchemy have I clearly understood that the Unconscious is a process and that ego's rapports with the unconscious and his contents initiate an evolution, more precisely a real metamorphoses of the psyche.'*<sup>29</sup>

In theosophy 'Universal Spirit' refers to the incorporeal or higher intelligence that is derived from the cosmic supreme intelligence. 'It is the inspiration of that great Divinity whom we adore and bears the nearest resemblance or affinity which pervades all nature and which will never, never, never die'<sup>30</sup>.

In a metaphysical sense there is a distinction between 'spirit', 'soul' / 'psyche'. Spirit is often regarded as the Universal Spirit or unquantifiable energy that pervades all nature and pre-exists the physical body. The Soul is that 'Elixir' given by God to the human physical being that will return when the body ceases to exist and return to the Universal Spirit. 'Physical' is the material world of our existence. In a Hermetic sense it is the microcosm of man in 'As above - so Below' or 'As all things are from One'. The Psyche is a primeval state of the unconscious as described by Dr. Jung.

In Freemasonry Kirk MacNulty in 'The Way of the Craftsman' depicts representation of four worlds<sup>31</sup>

- World of Divinity - Fire - calling
- World of Spirit - air - creation

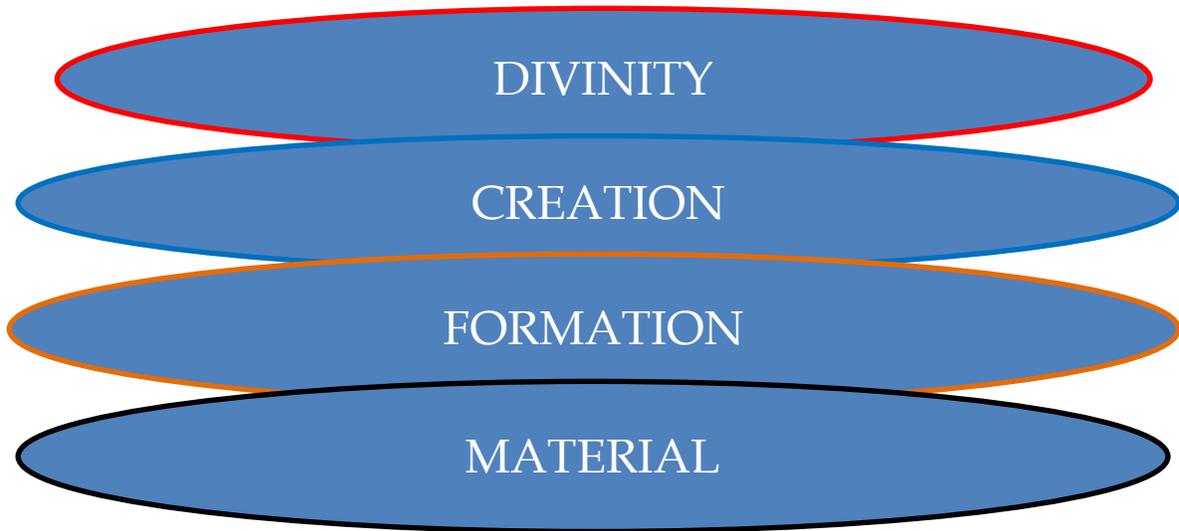
---

<sup>29</sup> C.G.Jung 'Psychology and Alchemy'

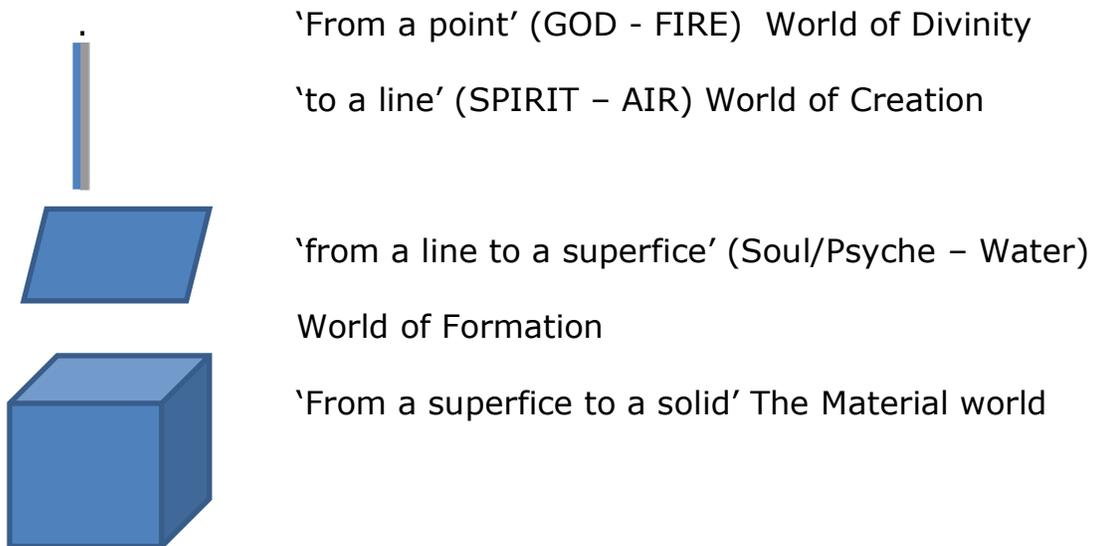
<sup>30</sup> Masonic ritual

<sup>31</sup> Pgs. 16-18 MacNulty

- World of Psyche – water – formation (*id, ego unconscious - Jung*)
- World of Physicality - earth – making



In Masonic ritual we learn from Neo-Platonism: 'From a point [*Creation – World of Divinity - God*] to a line, [*Spirit – World of Creation*] from a line to a superfice [*Soul/Psyche – world of Formation- unconscious*] and from a superfice to a sold [*earth – world of physicality*]<sup>32</sup>'.



Many disciplines train the human spirit through bodily and mental exercises to attain a higher level of consciousness, thereby sublimating the physical.  
'... the compass to circumscribe our passions and keep them in due bounds

<sup>32</sup> MacNulty Pg 15. 'Freemasonry' Pg. 17 'Way of the Craftsman'

to all mankind'<sup>33</sup>... thus to improve both the quality of life and the interaction with humanity. In Freemasonry we refer it to as taking good men and making them into better men and better Masons.

The tripartite aspect of man as Spirit, Soul and Body of the Christian is found in (1 Thessalonians 5:23)"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

From Genesis Ch 2. 7 "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground,[Earth] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;[Spirit] and man became a living being [Soul]. " Man is the living Soul [Soul] who is brought to life by the breath of God [Spirit] and lives in the body created from the dust of the earth [Earth].

Genesis I:I 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and was void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit [Spirit] of God moved upon the face of the waters...' [Earth] In Genesis I:27 'So God [Spirit] created man[Soul] in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them'.

Hermeticism 'True without error, certain and most true; , and that which is below is as that which is as above, for performing the miracle of the One Thing; and as all things were from one so all things arose from this One Thing by adaption; the father is the sun, the mother is the moon; the wind [Spirit] carries it [Soul] in its belly; the nurse thereof is the earth.[Earth] This is the father of all perfection or consummation of the whole world. The power of it is integral, if it be turned into earth." Athanasius Kircher (1620-1680) translation of the Emerald Tablet.

- No. 4) '*Its father is the sun and its mother is the moon*' The sun and the moon are represented in the Lodge.
- No. 8) The concept of Freemasonry is to make good men better and this is to be found in nearly all religions. *It ascends from the earth (the physical and material world) to the heaven (the spiritual world) and becomes ruler over that which is above and that which is below.* 'Taught to circumscribe our desires and keep our passions within due bounds..' so that we may become masters of our own will. As

---

<sup>33</sup> Masonic ritual

represented in Spiritual Alchemy in the search for the Philosopher Stone to purify the human spirit.

- **In the Royal Arch Degree** the veils represent the four elements Air (blue), Water (purple)<sup>34</sup>, Red (fire) and Earth<sup>35</sup> (white). The Tetragrammatons<sup>36</sup> of Yod, Heh, Vau, Heh as represented in the name of the Almighty. These appear in a different order from the Royal Arch Veils and the significance to the Royal Arch is shown in italics
- Yod – Red - Fire – Spirit – Mysticism – *Ox – Ephaim - Zeal*
- Heh – Purple - Water – Mind – Gnosis – *Man – Reuben - Union*
- Vau – Blue - Air – Soul – Magic – *Eagle – Dan - Friendship*
- Heh – White - Earth – Body – Hermetic Philosophy – *Lion – Judah – Purity*

These are obvious examples and you may find many others through your own study. Were these embedded in our ritual when the ritual was written? No one can say with certainty. Yet, when Freemasonry emerged in the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century C.E. Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism, Cabala, Alchemy, Gnosticism together with classical literature were as common day usage and part of the manifest of scholars as computer jargon is today.

Hermetic material used in esoteric and arcane assemblages:

Freemasonry – Craft, degrees and Appendant Orders

Scottish Rite - Ritual re-written by Albert Pike

Royal Arch Degree as derived from ritual of Thomas Smith Webb 1798

S.R.I.C.F – Masonic Rosicrucianism

'Theosophical Society' by Madam Helena Blavatsky and G.R.S. Mead<sup>37</sup>;

'Hermetic Society of the Golden Dawn'. Robertson, Westcott and Mathers 1888

'Ordo Templi Orientis' Kelner and Reuss 1895 and later by Aliester Crowley<sup>38</sup> and Israel Regardie<sup>39</sup>;

---

<sup>34</sup> Color of the dye derived from crushing sea urchin

<sup>35</sup> Derived from the flax grown in the earth and used to weave the fabric

<sup>36</sup> יהוה These four letters are usually transliterated from Hebrew as IHVH in Latin, JHWH in German, French and Dutch, and JHVH/YHWH in English. This has been variously rendered as "Yahweh" or as "Jehovah", based on the Latin form of the term, while the Hebrew text does not clearly indicate the omitted vowels.

<sup>37</sup> Theosophical Society G. R. S. Mead many of his works were printed through the Society

Order Aurum Solis' (1897) Stanton and Kingold and updated by Denning and Phillips<sup>40</sup>

'Ancient Mystical Order of Rosae Crucis'' W. Wynn Westcott,<sup>41</sup> and H. Spencer Lewis,<sup>42</sup> REMINDER – Membership in A.M.O.R.C. will disqualify membership in S.R.I.C.F.

In conclusion, I am not scholarly enough nor do I have the academic training to arrive at an academic conclusion. The cursory exploration of the material I have been able to access is based upon my desire of discovery and gleaning the findings of those who have researched and made conclusions. I do not have the facility to make my own research of original material. In this endeavor I am reliant upon Mary Anne Atwood 'A suggestive Inquiry into Hermetic Mystery' A book published in 1850. With that caveat let me state the following:

Hermeticism provides one source for the study of symbolism in Freemasonry. The authenticity of sources or antiquity is un-important! However, the content is! Was it used in Freemasonry to create the Degrees? I think it was one of a number of stimuli that were part of the ethos that existed during the era when Freemasonry was finding an identity. A time when Freemasonry relished the fraternal conviviality of a Lodge over the Pub, at the same time, when scholars sought gnosis and emancipation from suppression of beliefs and expression!

Finally, I am aware that there are some Freemasons who are profound scholars with an extensive knowledge of the esoteric. Regrettably, many of these Freemasons have learned nothing of the fundamental concepts of Freemasons. They are 'theoretical' Freemasons some with a profound

---

<sup>38</sup> Aleister Crowley (1895-1947) Trinity College Cambridge 1895-7 but left without a degree despite being rated with a 'First'. Member of the Outer Order of the Golden Dawn (Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn) 1898 and co-founder of the Order Templ Orientis (O.T.O.)1912. He was a man of great wisdom and disreputable character.

<sup>39</sup> Israel Regardie 1907-1985 Born in London and moved to Washington D.C in 1921. He resuscitated the Carley's 'Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn' and brought it to America where it thrives.

<sup>40</sup> 'Order Aurum Solis' founded in 1897 in England by George Stanton and Charles Kingold. 'The Foundation of High Magick' 1974 by Godfrey and Barynski also known as Denning and Phillips and updated in 2000. Denning and Phillips are recognized as leading authorities on the Western Mystical Tradition including Hermeticism, Kabbalah, Christianity in the Ogdadic Tradition (based upon three grades that embody profound symbolism).

<sup>41</sup> William Wynn Westcott (1848 – 1925) was a coroner, ceremonial magician, and Freemason born in Leamington, Warwickshire, England. He was a Supreme Magus (chief) of the S.R.I.A and went on to co-found the Golden Dawn.

<sup>42</sup> Founder in 1915 in New York of the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC). Now based in San Jose, California

knowledge of history, esotericism and ritual expertise but unaware that a Freemason is first made 'in his heart'<sup>43</sup>.

I am also aware of intellectual, scholarly Masons and some non-intellectual Masons who share the same characteristic of true humility, service and brotherly love to their fellow man. You will find them washing up in the kitchen, visiting the distressed, supporting their Lodge, pouring comfort and good counsel in the ear of a brother. Some are highly educated and some may not even have a High School Diploma but they all share a caring attitude. They are the first to come to the aid of a neighbor, a friend, a Lodge, a Mason, his wife, his child or his widow in distress. If you said to them - 'Hermeticism' - they might say 'What's that?' But! These are the true Freemasons and would seem to fulfill many of the ideals set out in Hermeticism.

*Edgar W. Fentum* P.S.M.

Past Sovereign Master  
Siminoff Council No 485  
Allied Masonic Degrees  
13<sup>th</sup> December 2010

*Mary Anne Atwood "And Life is the Key to the whole Hermetic Mystery and the Key thereof is light"*

#### **Terms and words with their meaning or interpretation**

Logos – varies according to context from 'word' to 'discussion' to 'principle' to 'Gods first creation of man' to 'Jesus'.

Gnosis - knowledge, Insight, Wisdom<sup>44</sup>

Nous - Mind<sup>45</sup>

Pisca Theologia – the belief that a single theology is inherent in all religions

Sophia – Love of Wisdom<sup>46</sup>

Emerald Tablets – The source is lost in antiquity but the first reference is found in Arabic in a letter from Socrates to Alexander the Great named '*Kitab Sirr al-Asrar*'. It was later translated by John of Saville in about 1140 C.E. and subsequently by Isaac Newton

Definitions:

---

<sup>43</sup> English Emulation Ritual. 'Questions before Passing. Q. Where were you first prepared to be made a Mason? A. In my heart. Q. Where next? A. In a convenient room adjoining the Lodge. etc.'

<sup>44</sup> Wikipedia - The spiritual knowledge or mystically enlightened human being or insight into the infinite, divine and uncreated in all and above all, intuitive knowledge including transcendental as well as mature understanding. Gnosis itself is obtained through understanding at which one can arrive via inner experience or contemplation such as an internal epiphany of intuition and external epiphany.

<sup>45</sup> Tobias Churton Gnostic Philosophy Pg 36

<sup>46</sup> Tobias Churton 'Gnostic Philosophy' Pg. 37 - 39

1. *B. A. Robinson of Ontario, Canada. Hermeticism: 'A Pagan religion that started in Egypt in the 2nd or 3rd century BCE. Its followers believed that its beliefs were revealed to their founder Hermes by his divine father. They taught that a person on earth is a mortal god and that God is an immortal man. It was one of the main competitors to early Christianity'.*
2. *Internet: 'A system of theological and mystical philosophy that developed around the second century, although believers came to accept that the texts were much older than they really were, possibly even predating Moses of the Old Testament. The Hermetic works are assigned to the authorship. of Hermes Trismegistus ("Hermes Thrice-Greatest"), but were, in fact, composed by several anonymous individuals'.*

**References:**

M.A.. Atwood 'A suggestive inquiry into Hermetic Mystery'  
 Francis Yates 'The Art of Memory'. 'Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition'. 'The Rosicrucian Enlightenment'.  
 Tobias Churton 'Gnostic Philosophy'. 'Elias Ashmole'  
 Denning & Phillips 'The Foundation of High Magick'  
 W. Kirk McNulty "The way of the Craftsman"  
 Manly P. Hall 'Secret Teachings of all Ages' . 'Lost Keys of Freemasonry'. 'The book of the Dead  
 Freemasonry and Hermetic R.A. Gilbert Gnosis #6  
 'Nag Hammadi Library'  
 G.R.S. Mead 'Plotinus'. 'Divine Pymander'  
 Aliester Crowley 'Magick without Tears' .  
 Margaret C. Jacobs 'The Radical Enlightenment'.  
 Clement Salaman 'Asclepius'  
 David Fontana 'Symbols'  
 Baigent & Leigh 'The Elixir and the Stone'  
 Wasserman 'The Mystical Tradition' O.T.O.

NO PART OR PORTION OF THIS PAPER MAY BE COPIED, PRINTER,  
 PUBLISHED OR TRANSMITTED WITHOUT THE WRITTEN CONSENT OF  
 Edgar W. Fentum.

**Alternative forms**

- Qabbala, Qabbālāh, Cabala, Cabalah, Cabbala, Cabbalah, Kabala, Kabalah, Kabbala, Qabala, Qabalah
- kabballah, qabbala, qabbālāh, cabala, cabalah, cabbala, cabbalah, kabala, kabalah, kabbala, qabala, qabalah, kabbalah, kaballah