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HERMES THRICE-BLESSED, or Roman Priests of Who?

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When looking at the rules and supplements to *Ars Magica*, one becomes aware of two great truths. The first is that the authors have put together an incredibly good role playing game that captures perfectly the feel of medieval magic, especially as seen through our 20th-century lenses. The second is that the authors have no idea who "Hermes" is, in the context of medieval magic. They seem to think that what is referred to as the "Hermetic tradition" descends from the worship of the Greek god Hermes through the cult of his Roman eidolon Mercury to the post-Roman survivals of knowledge in the Middle Ages.

This is incorrect. The "Hermetic tradition" of Western magic, which is one of the most powerful forces in the "underground stream" of Western culture, has less to do with the Roman god Mercury than it does with hermetic sealing.

The "Hermes" referred to is Hermes Trismegistos "Hermes the Thrice- Great", who was conflated with the Egyptian god Thoth. When the Greeks came to Egypt, they were incredibly impressed by the ancient wisdom of the Egyptian priests. So impressed, that they immediately plastered their gods' names all over the older Egyptian ones in the grand old syncretic Greek tradition. Hence Amon became Zeus-Amon and Thoth, god of letters and sciences, became Thoth-Hermes

(since Hermes invented the Greek alphabet, don't you know).

Here is where Game Truth and Historical Truth diverge. In Game Truth (where diseases are caused by an imbalance of humors and the sun goes around the Earth) Hermes Trismegistos was a very powerful ancient mage. He was not a god. No reputable medieval magus believed in polytheism -- most, like John Dee, were devout (if goofy) Christians. In his writings, collectively called the Corpus Hermeticorum, Hermes describes himself as "Philosopher, Priest, and King". Hence, he was human. An incredibly powerful sorcerer, to be sure, but not a god. His exploits included building the Pyramids, designing the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, teaching Pythagoras, and generally doing everything worth doing in antiquity. He also invented the Egyptian alphabet and while doing that and building the odd pyramid, became the inspiration for the legends of Thoth. After his death (or occultation) he was worshipped as a god, much as Alexander the Great was. Speaking of Alexander the Great, it was he who discovered the Emerald Tablet (on which was written the whole knowledge of magic in about two paragraphs -- apparently it wasn't what he said, it was how he said it) clenched in the mummified hands of Hermes Trismegistos him self. Other legends say he discovered it in the hands of the ancient magician Apollonius of Tyana, but since Apollonius was born four hundred years after Alexander died, most scholars doubt this theory. Still other legends say the Tablet was discovered by Sarah, wife of Abraham, which would make Hermes dead before he built the Hanging Gardens. Anyway, the knowledge on the Tablet and in Hermes T's other writings (17 or so known books plus commentary) was what was called "Hermetic Science". In Real History, the whole thing was faked up about 200 AD by the Gnostic community in Alexandria who were big with the alchemists who lived around there and then.

Either way, the Corpus survived in Greek libraries and later in the Arab world. It was, however, lost in the West except for the hints and allusions that bled through from Arabic contacts. The itinerant occultist adept al-Farabi (890?-954) is described as "Hermetic", and it is likely that the alchemical writings of Geber (721-766), Rhazes (850-924) and Avicenna (980-1036) draw on the _Corpus_ to some extent. The Arab alchemistic writings began to filter into Europe following the Papacy of Sylvester II (999-1003) and were eventually disseminated such that the legend of Hermes Trismegistos achieved a certain degree of recognition. The actual Corpus did not become available to the West until 1460, when the documents salvaged from Constantinople surfaced in Florence. Their translation in 1471, by Marsilio Ficino, set off the great explosion of Renaissance magic personified by Dee, Trithemius, Agrippa, and Paracelsus.

This then, in a nutshell, is the "Hermetic Tradition": either the Game Truth (2500 BC Hermes T builds Pyramids, is Thoth, lives until c 550 BC when he finished off the Hanging Gardens, trained Pythagoras, and died in a cave clutching his Emerald Tablet.

Discovered by Alexander, put in Library, alchemists study it, knowledge lost with Fall of Rome, rediscovered in Dark Ages by Vergil/Bonisagus/Aethelstan, spread by Order to this day) or the Real Truth (200 AD Heretical alchemists work out consistent philosophy, ascribe it to mythical figure to get credibility, knowledge survives in alchemical tradition in Arab lands, stored in Byzantium, filters into Europe c900-1250 AD from Spain, Crusades, Sicily, rediscovered in 1471, all hell breaks loose).

This is so much cooler that one wonders why anyone would drag those stuffy old Roman priests into it at all. "Hermetic sealing" by the way, comes from an alchemical practice named for Guess Who.

As above, so below.
Kenneth Hite, LHN

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HERMES TRISMEGISTOS

By Secretum Secretorum ©

Thoth was among the most diverse and popular of all the Egyptian gods. Like many of his colleagues he was a composite, even an accumulation, rather than a figure cast whole and unambiguously defined. In particular, Thoth was regarded even in the most primitive period as the moon-god; and from this lunar association arose many of his most distinctive functions. Just as the moon is illuminated by the sun, so Thoth derived much of his authority from being secretary and counselor to the solar divinity Re. The moon, 'ruler of the stars, distinguishes seasons, months and years';[83] and so Thoth became the lord and multiplier of time, and the regulator of individual destinies. Indeed, so important were the moon's phases in determining the rhythms of Egyptian life, that Thoth became regarded as the origin both of cosmic order and of religious and civil institutions. He presided over almost every aspect of the temple cults, law and the civil year, and in particular over the sacred rituals, texts and formulas, and the magic arts that were so closely related. To him, as divine scribe, inventor of writing and lord of wisdom, the priesthood attributed much of its sacred literature, including, for example, parts of the Book of the Dead. Of occult powers latent in all aspects of the cult of the gods, Thoth was the acknowledged source. By extension he became regarded as the lord of knowledge, language and all science-even as Understanding or Reason personified. Esoteric wisdom was his special preserve, and he was called 'the Mysterious,' 'the Unknown.' His magical powers made of him a doctor too; and when the body finally succumbed to mortality, it was Thoth who conducted the dead person to the kingdom of the gods, and sat in judgment on his soul. However, it was at Hermoupolis Magna, the main center of his cult, that Thoth attained the pinnacle of his glory-indeed, his distinctly Hermoupolitan character was recognized

throughout Egypt. Naturally enough his clergy were eager to aggrandize their patron; and the obvious way to do so was through the development of a distinct cosmogony, Hermoupolis being widely regarded as the oldest place on earth. So it was that Thoth acquired a leading role in the drama of creation itself, as a demiurge who called things into being merely by the sound of his voice. Besides the common near Eastern idea that speech has creative power, we can surely detect here the influence of Thoth the god of Magic.

Perhaps, though, it was to be his role as guide of souls and judge of the dead that Thoth most owed his popularity with ordinary people. He continued to inspire strong popular devotion throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.[84] His was an inescapable presence; and it is easy to see why foreign settlers in Egypt were tempted to try to establish some sort of link with him. The second-century BCE Jewish romancer Artapanus, for instance, wrote an account of the life of Moses in which he assimilated his hero to 'Hermes' (i.e. Thoth), making him responsible for introducing the Egyptians to ships, machines, weapons, and philosophy; for dividing the country up into nomes, each with its own divine patron; for inventing the hieroglyphs; and for assigning lands of their own to the priests. And the Greek settlers, also, identified Thoth with their god Hermes. Like Thoth the classical Hermes was associated with the moon, medicine and the realm of the dead. Furthermore, both had a reputation for inventiveness and trickery, and both functioned as messenger of the gods, which in Hermes's case prepared him as well for his characteristic function in the Hellenistic period, as the *logos* or 'word', the interpreter of the divine will to humanity. This Hellenistic Hermes-*logos* was a thoroughly cosmopolitan divinity: The Lycaonians, who were sufficiently un-Hellenized to have retained their native language, had no difficulty in recognizing the apostle Paul as Hermes come down to earth, 'because he was the chief speaker.'[85] The Stoics assigned Hermes a still more central role in their theology, magnifying his function

from the merely expressive to the creative, and regarding him as both *logos* and demiurge. It may even be that this development owed something to the Egyptian understanding of Thoth as creator.

Hermes Trismegistus, then, was the cosmopolitan, Hellenistic Hermes, Egyptianized through his assimilation to Thoth, and in fact known throughout the Roman world as 'the Egyptian' par excellence.[86] To some extent this intermingling of Egyptian and Greek theology and Hellenistic philosophy produced a sum that was greater than its parts, a divinity who could deservedly be placed among the *dei magni* of the pagan pantheon that presided over the Roman world.[87] Yet around and within the Egyptian Hermes there persisted serious tensions, mirroring the peculiarities of the Graeco-Egyptian milieu that had produced him.

In the beginning it had no doubt seemed enough to say that the Greek god Hermes was equivalent to the Egyptian god Thoth, and leave it at that. But the temptation to provide a mythological explanation could not be resisted forever; and that was one of the reasons why Cicero was eventually able to enumerate no less than five individuals who claimed the name Hermes, the third being the familiar offspring of Zeus and Maia,

while the fifth, who is worshipped by the people of Pheneus [in Arcadia?], is said to have killed Argus, and for this reason to have fled to Egypt, and to have given the Egyptians their laws and alphabet-he it is whom the Egyptians call Theyn [Thoth].[88]

In other words, the story that was produced-and widely circulated-to explain the emergence of Hermes Trismegistus invoked a relatively human Hermes who was recognized to be distinct from the messenger of the gods. So it is not surprising to find that people of Greek culture did not always envisage Trismegistus in the same terms as did those of a more Egyptian background.

It is in the Greek magical papyri, rather than in the *Hermetica*, that we most clearly discern the lineaments of Hermes Trismegistus, and that the Egyptian aspects of his identity are given the fullest rein.[89] In a country as renowned for its magic as was Egypt, that was only to be expected. The Papyri presents the new syncretistic Hermes as a cosmic power, creator of Heaven and earth and almighty world-ruler. Presiding over fate and justice, he is also lord of the night, and of death and its mysterious aftermath-hence his frequent association with the moon (Selene) and Hecate. He knows 'all that is hidden under the heavenly vault, and beneath the earth',[90] and is accordingly much revered as a sender of oracles-many of the magical spells that are addressed to Hermes aim to elicit arcane information, frequently by inducing the god to appear in a dream. In this capacity, Hermes often becomes involved in the minutiae of his devotees' everyday existence. The Hermes of the magical papyri is a cosmic deity, but one who may also dwell within the heart of individuals; and the magician often assumes towards him a tone of intimacy shading off into self-identification. One magical invocation begins: 'come to me, Lord Hermes, as fetuses into the wombs of women'; and after a shopping-list of gifts that the god is supposed to bestow, ends with the assertion that: 'I know you Hermes, and you know me. I am you and you are me.' On occasion the magician might even impersonate Thoth-Hermes (or any other god) to put pressure on one of his divine colleagues.[91] This self-identification with a god, common in the magical papyri, is an authentically Egyptian trait.[92] It highlights both the variety of the magician's approach to his gods, and the persistence of Egyptian ways of thought. The traditional Greek Hermes, clad in chlamys and winged hat and sandals, is not unknown to the magical papyri, but the autochthonous Thoth is commoner;[93] and if Hermes succeeded in becoming a dynamic element in Graeco-Egyptian popular religion, it was largely thanks to his alliance with his native counterpart, which allowed him to be thought of as more Egyptian than Greek. At first Hermes Egyptianized by

translating, either literally or metaphorically, the attributes of Thoth. One can see this in his titlature, as well as the celebration of the Hermaea that came to coincide exactly with one of the major festivals of Thoth.[94] With time, naturally enough, this carefulness bred of unfamiliarity came to seem less necessary. As far as Hermes was concerned, the popularity of his cult at Hermoupolis must have contributed a great deal to the dissolving of cultural barriers and the evolution of the composite Hermes Trismegistus of late antiquity. We can see the same process at work in the centuries-long accumulation of pious inscriptions and graffiti left by pilgrims Egyptian, Greek and Roman of all stations of life, at the temple of Thoth-Hermes Paotnouphis at Pselchis (al-Dakka) on the Nubian frontier;[95] and in a mid-third-century soldier's votive inscription at Panopolis to 'the Great god Hermes Trismegistus'. By the later Roman period there had emerged a *koine* of Graeco-Egyptian religious discourse; and of this *koine* Hermes Trismegistus was a central constituent.[96] But, for all that, the native Thoth as never wholly absorbed. He was too commanding a figure. Even in the Greek literary milieu there were those prepared to take the line of least resistance and propagate a version of Trismegistus that was scarcely Hellenized at all except in name. Cyril of Alexander quotes a good example of this approach from a Hermetic text that he says was composed at Athens.[97] The author presents 'our Hermes as seen through the eyes of an Egyptian priest. He is an adept of the temple cults, a law-giver and an authority on astronomy, astrology, botany, mathematics, geometry, the arts and grammar. He it was who divided the country into nomes and other units, measured it, cut irrigation canals and established the exchange of contracts. In short, the anonymous Athenian Hermetist depicts Hermes in the same unmistakably Egyptian terms as those in which Artapanus had envisaged Moses.[98]

However, most of those who looked at things from a Greek point of view had a rather different image of Hermes Trismegistus, which to some extent played down specifically

Egyptian elements and assumed that, in origin at least, Hermes had been human. After all, Plato had queried whether even Thoth was a god or just a divine man.[99] Ammianus Marcellinus mentions Trismegistus, alongside Appollonius of Tyana and Plotinus, as an example of a human endowed with a particularly strong guardian spirit;[100] and it is usually in human or at most heroic company that Hermes appears when cited as one of a string of authorities by late antiquity writers.[101] So too in the philosophical Hermetica. Hermes is a mortal who received revelations from the divine world and eventually himself achieves immortality through self-purification, but remains among men in order to unveil to them the secrets of the divine world.[102] It is significant how many of the philosophical Hermetica are presented in epistolary or dialogue form. In this way the Hermetist, while preserving the divine and revelatory character of his doctrines, imparts to their expositions a certain air of historical reality, stirring in his audience, perhaps, echoes of Socrates and his circle as depicted in the Platonic dialogues.

Yet if once Hermes had been mortal, that had been in remote antiquity,[103] and he had long since been assumed into the company of the gods. The technical Hermetica are studiously vague, usually envisaging Trismegistus as a sage who lived at a remote period and conversed freely with the gods, though on occasion they speak of him as a divine being. The *Kore kosmou*, which Stobaeus included in his selection of Hermetic philosophical texts for his Anthologium, but which was considerably influenced by technical Hermetism, treats Hermes straightforwardly as a god, and surrounds him with an unashamedly mythological narrative. The figure of Thoth, the divine author of the Egyptian temple literature, lurks only just below the surface of the *Kore's* Hermes, all-knowing revealer of wisdom to humanity-and in general Egyptian ideas are particularly prominent in this text.

The ambiguity of a figure who hovered between the divine and human worlds will have struck many as an advantage and

attraction. Late paganism cultivated with enthusiasm such figures as Heracles, Dionysus, Asclepius and Orpheus. Hermes was one more of these intermediaries, who were much in demand in a world increasingly fascinated by the transcendental quality of the divine. But not everybody relished such ambiguities. Just as what seemed to some the simplistic identification of Hermes with Thoth was eventually 'explained', so too the tension in Trismegistus's character between the venerable and remote figure of Thoth and the more human Hermes of the Greeks had to be accounted for, if only to clear up the doubts of those who, like the Christian writer Lactantius, were not sure whether to treat the Hermetic books as divine revelation or human speculation.[104] So at some point the Hermetists began to propagate the idea that there had been two Egyptian Hermes, grandfather and grandson.[105] In the *Perfect Discourse (Asclepius)*, Hermes Trismegistus refers to the tomb of his grandfather and namesake Hermes in Hermoupolis, 'the city where he was born (*patria*) and which is named after him'.[106] Clearly the author envisages Hermes I as identical with Thoth-and the Egyptians were indeed used to the idea that gods might be born and then die, not in the euhemeristic sense, but as part of a perpetual process of regeneration.[107] The identification is made explicit in a passage from a text attributed to the early Ptolemaic priest and historian Manetho, but certainly of a much later date, in which reference is made to 'stelae inscribed in the sacred languages and with hieroglyphic characters by Thoth, the first Hermes'.[108] Who was his grandson, the second Hermes?

The Hermetists, while insisting that their compositions had indeed been written in Egyptian, and inscribed on stelae in hieroglyphic characters, were also well aware that they could not have been rendered into Greek without losing the authority that attached to sacred texts in the native language-'for the very quality of the sounds and the [intonation] of the Egyptian words contain in itself the force of the things said'.[109] A translation would require, at the very least, the active assistance

of the priestly guardians of the originals. Iamblichus, for example, records that an Egyptian priest named Bitys was supposed to have translated some of the hieroglyphic texts of Thoth into Greek, and had made use of (Greek) philosophical vocabulary in doing so.[110] These texts Bitys had found 'in temples at Sais in Egypt', which of course is where Solon was supposed to have encountered Egyptian priests more learned in the history of Greece than any Greek, and to have translated parts of their archives.[111] Iamblichus also tells us that Pythagoras and Plato, during their visits to Egypt, 'read through' the stelae of Hermes with the help of native priests.[112] Whether these stories are true is not important for this discussion. What is important is first, that the Hermetists wished it to be believed that their compositions were books of Thoth rendered from Egyptian into Greek; and secondly that the legitimacy and prestige of these books depended on the finding of a plausible explanation of how this translation had been brought about. Hence the last twist in the evolution of the myth of the Egyptian Hermes, namely the presentation of none other than Hermes the younger as the translator of the Thoth texts. At any rate, this appears to be the idea underlying the obscure and corrupt pseudo-Manetho passage already mentioned. After referring to the hieroglyphic texts inscribed by Thoth, the first Hermes, pseudo-Manetho goes on to assert that 'after the Flood they were translated from the sacred language into Greek, and deposited in books in the sanctuaries of Egyptian temples by the second Hermes, the son of Agathos Daimon and father of Tat.[113] That the Thoth-literature was believed to have been rendered into Greek at such an early date has struck modern scholars as so improbable that they have emended the passage.[114] However, Plato had spoken of the translation of Greek records into Egyptian after the deluge(s); and anyway this was exactly the sort of claim that Hermetists had to make if they were to overcome the well-known inadequacies of translations from Egyptian into Greek.

Thus the two Hermes in the *Asclepius* now stand revealed as separate embodiments of the divine Egyptian and more human Greek dimensions of the composite deity Hermes Trismegistus. This not only provided a mythological explanation and sanction for the existence of a Hermetic literature in Greek, rather than in the sacred tongue of Egypt, but also left the Greek Hermes flexible enough to play his traditional role of intermediary between God and men.

THE HERMETIC TEXTS AND SCRIPTURES

By [J.R.M.] ©

Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus. Under this title we have a variety of writings of uncertain date and unknown authorship originating in Egypt. The name "Hermes Trismegistus" never belonged to any single writer. Iamblichus, at the beginning of his treatise *de Mysteries*, tells us that "Hermes, who presides over speech, is, according to ancient tradition, common to all priests; he it is who exists in all of them. That is why our ancestors attributed all discoveries to him, and issued their works under the name of Hermes." There was, in fact, a long-continued series of books called "hermetic," extending over several centuries. Tertullian, however (*cont. Valent.* c. 15), speaks of Hermes Trismegistus as a master in philosophy; and the extant hermetic books have, whatever their date, philosophical and spiritual relations of a very interesting kind. They belong, as is now generally agreed, to the neo-Platonic school; and gather up in a synthesis, the artificiality of which is not at first sight apparent, large elements of all the different factors of religious belief in the Roman world or the 2nd and 3rd cents. The two principal are the *Poimandrh*V (the "Shepherd of Men"), and the *teleio*V (or "Discourse of Initiation"), otherwise called "Asclepius." These two works, together with a variety of fragments, have been translated into French by M. Louis Mll rd (Paris, 1867), and accompanied with a preliminary

essay of much interest on the hermetic writings and their affinities generally. His most important fragments are from a work entitled *Korh kosmou* (the "Virgin of the World"), a dialogue between Isis and her son Horus on the origin of nature and of animated beings, including man. Other less noticeable works attributed to Hermes Trismegistus are named in *D. of G. and R. Biogr. (s.v.)*.

It is not to be assumed that these, the *PoimandrhV*, and *LogoV teleioV*, are by the same author; but from their great similarity of tone and thought, this is possible. Both works are quoted by Lactantius (who ascribed to them the fabulous antiquity and high authority which the early Fathers were wont to attribute to the Sibylline books); and must have been written before c. 330, when Lactantius died. The historical allusions in the *Asclepius* distinctly point to a time when heathenism was about to perish before the increasing power of Christianity. Hence both these works were probably written towards the close of the 3rd cent.

Three motives are discernible in them. First, the endeavour to take an intellectual survey of the whole spiritual universe, without marking any points where the understanding of man fails and has to retire unsatisfied; this is a disposition which, under different forms and at different times, has been called Pantheism or Gnosticism (though the Gnostic idea of an evil element in creation nowhere appears in these treatises). The ideas of the author are presented with a gorgeous material imagery; and, speaking generally, he regards the material world as interpenetrated by the spiritual, and almost identified with it. The power and divine character which he attributes to the sun and other heavenly bodies are peculiarly Egyptian, though this also brings him into affinity with Stoic, and even with Platonic, views. Secondly, this Pantheism or Gnosticism is modified by moral and religious elements which certainly some degree be paralleled in Plato, but to which it is difficult to avoid ascribing a Jewish and even a Christian origin. Great stress is laid on the unity, the creative power, the fatherhood and goodness of God. The argument from design also appears

(*Poemander*, c. 5). Even the well-known terms of baptism and regeneration occur, though in different connexions, and the former in a metaphorical sense. One of the chapters of the *Poemander* is entitled "The Secret Sermon on the Mountain." The future punishments for wrongdoing are described with emphasis, but there is no moral teaching in detail. Thirdly, these intellectual and religious elements are associated with a passionate and vigorous defence of the heathen religion, including idol worship, and a prophecy of the evils which will come on the earth from the loss of piety. They are thus the only extant lamentation of expiring heathenism, and one that is not without pathos. But for the most part the style is hierophantic, pretentious, and diffuse. See further Fabric. *Bibl. Graec.* vol. i. pp. 46-94; Baumgarten Crusius, *de Lib. Hermeticorum Origine atque Indole* (Jena, 1827); and Chambers, *The Theol. and Philos. Works of Her. Tris.* (Edin. 1882).

THE EMERALD TABLE

Tabula Smaragdina

By Hermes Trismegistos

Truly, without Deceit, certainly and absolutely —

That which is Below corresponds to that which is
Above,

and that which is Above corresponds to that which
is Below,

in the accomplishment of the Miracle of One Thing.

And just as all things have come from One, through
the Mediation of One,

so all things follow from this One Thing in the same
way.

Its Father is the Sun. Its Mother is the Moon.

The Wind has carried it in his Belly. Its
Nourishment is the Earth.

It is the Father of every completed Thing in the
whole World.

Its Strength is intact if it is turned towards the
Earth.

Separate the Earth by Fire: the fine from the gross,
gently, and with great skill.

It rises from Earth to Heaven, and then it descends
again to the Earth,

and receives Power from Above and from Below.

Thus you will have the Glory of the whole World.

All Obscurity will be clear to you.

This is the strong Power of all Power

because it overcomes everything fine and penetrates
everything solid.

In this way was the World created.

From this there will be amazing Applications,
because this is the Pattern.

Therefore am I called Thrice Greatest Hermes,
having the three parts of the Wisdom of the whole
World.

Herein have I completely explained the Operation
of the Sun.

THE VIRGIN OF THE WORLD

By Hermes Trismegistus

Translation by Dr. Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland, 1880's A.D.

The anthology of Stobaeus called the Kore Kosmu, variously translated as "The Virgin of the World". The record of a conversation between the goddess Isis and her son Horus, that explains the traditional belief held by the Egyptians that their "Gods" came from the heavens, being sent to Earth by the Father of all to bring about civilization.

I. The Universe, The World

II. Souls

III. Souls in Earth's Region, The Humans

THE VIRGIN OF THE WORLD

I. The Universe, The World

HAVING thus spoken, Isis first pours out for Horos the sweet draught of immortality which souls receive from the Gods, and thus begins the most holy discourse.

Heaven, crowned with stars, is placed above universal nature, O my son Horos, and nothing is wanting to it of that which constitutes the whole world. It is necessary, then, that all nature should be adorned and completed by that which is above her, for this Order could not proceed from below to above. The supremacy of the greater mysteries over the lesser is imperative. Celestial order reigns over terrestrial order, as being absolutely determined, and inaccessible to the idea of death. Wherefore, the things below lament, being filled with fear before the marvellous beauty and eternal permanence of the heavenly world. For, indeed, a spectacle worthy of contemplation and desire were these magnificences of heaven, revelations of the God as yet unknown, and this sumptuous majesty of night illumined with a penetrating radiance, albeit less than that of the sun, and all these other mysteries which move above in harmonious cadence, ruling and maintaining the things below by secret influences. And so long as the Universal Architect refrained from putting an end to this incessant fear, to these anxious investigations, ignorance enveloped the universe. But when He judged good to reveal Himself to the world, He breathed into the Gods the enthusiasm of love, and poured into their mind the splendour which His bosom contained, that they might

first be inspired with the will to seek, next with the desire to find, and lastly with the power to readjust.

Now, my wondrous child Horos, all this could not happen among mortals, for as yet they did not exist; but it took place in the universal Soul in sympathy with the mysteries of heaven. This was Hermes, the Kosmic Thought. He beheld the universe of things, and having seen, he understood, and having understood, he had the power to manifest and to reveal. That which he thought, he wrote; that which he wrote, he in great part concealed, wisely silent and speaking by turns, so that while the world should last, these things might be sought. And thus, having enjoined upon the Gods, his brethren, that they should follow in his train, he ascended to the stars. But he has for successor his son, and the heir of his knowledges, Tat, and a little later, Asclepios, son of Imouthé, by the counsels of Pan and Hephaistos, and all those for whom sovereign Providence reserved an exact knowledge of heavenly things.

Hermes then justified himself in the presence of those who surrounded him, in that he had not delivered the integral theory to his son, on account of his youth. But I, having arisen, beheld with mine eyes, which see the invisible secrets of the beginnings of things, and at length, but with certainty, I understood that the sacred symbols of the Kosmic elements were hidden near the secrets of Osiris, Hermes returned to heaven, having pronounced an invocatory speech.

It is not fitting, O my Son, that this recital be left incomplete; thou must be informed of the words of Hermes when he laid down his books. "O sacred books," he said, "of the Immortals, ye in whose pages my hand has recorded the remedies by which incorruptibility is conferred, remain for ever beyond the reach of destruction and of decay, invisible and concealed from all who frequent these regions, until the day shall come in which the ancient heaven shall bring forth instruments worthy of you, whom the Creator shall call souls."

Having pronounced upon his books this invocation, he wrapped them in their coverings, returned into the sphere which belonged to him, and all remained hidden for a sufficient space.

And Nature, O my Son, was barren until the hour in which those who are ordained to survey the heavens, advancing towards God, the King of all things, deplored the general inertia, and affirmed the necessity

of setting forth the universe. No other than Himself could accomplish this work.

"We pray Thee," said they, "To consider that which already is, and that which is necessary for the future."

At these words, the God smiled benignant, and commanded Nature to exist. And, issuing with His voice, the *Feminine* came forth in her perfect beauty. The Gods with amaze beheld this marvel. And the great Ancestor, pouring out for Nature an elixir, commanded her to be fruitful; and forthwith, penetrating the universe with His glance, He cried, "Let heaven be the plenitude of all things, and of the air, and of the ether." God spake, and it was done. But Nature, communing with herself, understood that she might not transgress the commandment of the Father, and, uniting herself to Labour, she produced a most beautiful daughter, whom she called Invention, and to whom God accorded being.

And having differentiated created forms, He filled them with mysteries, and gave the command of them to Invention.

Then, not willing that the upper world should be inactive, He saw fit to fill it with spirits, in order that no region should remain in immobility and inertia; and in the accomplishment of His work He used His sacred art. For, taking of Himself such essence as was necessary, and mingling with it an intellectual flame, He combined with these other materials by unknown ways. And having achieved by secret formulas the union of these principles, He endowed with motion the universal combination. Gradually, in the midst of the protoplasm, glittered a substance more subtle, purer, more limpid, than the elements from which it was generated. It was transparent, and the Artist alone perceived it. Soon, it attained its perfection, being neither melted by the fire, nor chilled by the breath, but possessing the stability of a special combination, and having its proper type and constitution. He bestowed on it a happy name, and, according to the similitude of its energies, He called it Self-Consciousness.

Of this product he formed myriads of Souls, employing the choicest part of the mixture for the end which He had in view, proceeding with order and measure, according to His knowledge and His reason. The souls were not necessarily different, but the choicest part, animated by the Divine motion, was not identical with the rest. The first layer was

superior to the second, more perfect and pure; the second, inferior truly to the first, was superior to the third; and thus, until sixty degrees, was completed the total number. Only, God established this law, that all equally should be eternal, being of one essence, whose forms He alone determines.

He traced the limits of their sojourn on the heights of nature, so that they might turn the wheel according to the laws of Order and of wise discretion, for the joy of their Father.

Then, having summoned to these splendid regions of ether the souls of every grade, He said to them: "O souls, beautiful children of my breath and of my care, you whom I have produced with my hands, in order to consecrate you to my universe, hear my words as a law:—Quit not the place assigned to you by my will. The abode which awaits you is heaven, with its galaxy of stars and its thrones of virtue. If you attempt any transgression against my decree, I swear by my sacred breath, by that elixir of which I formed you, and by my creative hands, that I will speedily forge for you chains and cast you into punishment."

Having thus spoken, God, my Master, mingled together the rest of the congenial elements, earth and water, and pronouncing certain powerful and mystic words—albeit different from the first—He breathed into the liquid protoplasm motion and life, rendered it thicker and more plastic, and formed of it living beings of human shape. That which remained He gave to the loftiest souls inhabiting the region of the Gods in the neighborhood of the stars, who are called the Sacred Genii. "Work," said He, "my children, offspring of my nature; take the residue of my task, and let each one of you make beings in his image. I will give you models."

Therewith He took the Zodiac and ordained the world in conformity with vital movements, placing the animal signs after those of human form. And after having given forth the creative forces and generative breath for the whole range of beings yet to come, He withdrew, promising to unite to every visible work an invisible breath and a reproductive principle, so that each being might engender its similar without necessity to create continually new entities.

And what did the souls do, O my Mother?

And Isis answered:—They took the mingled material, O my Son Horos, and began to reflect thereon, and to adore this combination, the work of the Father. Next, they sought to discover of what it was composed, which indeed, it was not easy to find. Then fearing that this search might excite the anger of the Father, they set themselves to carry out His commands. Therefore, taking the upper portion of the protoplasm, that which was lightest, they created of it the race of birds. The compound having now become more compact and assuming a denser consistency, they formed of it the quadrupeds; while of the thickest part which needed a moist vehicle for its support, they made fishes. The remainder, being cold and heavy, was employed by the souls in the creation of reptiles.

Forthwith, O my Son, proud of their work, they were not afraid to transgress the Divine law, and, in spite of the prohibition, they receded from their appointed limits. Not willing to remain longer in the same abode, they moved ceaselessly, and repose seemed to them death.

But, O my Son—thus Hermes informed me—their conduct could not escape the eye of the Lord God of all things; He minded to punish them, and to prepare for them hard bonds. The Ruler and Master of the universe resolved then for the penance of the souls, to mould the human organism, and having called me to Him, said Hermes, He spoke in this wise:—"O soul of my soul, holy thought of my thought, how long shall earthly Nature remain sad? How long shall the creation already produced continue inactive and without praise? Bring hither before me all the Gods of heaven."

Thus God spake, quoth Hermes, and all obeyed His decree. "Look upon the earth," He said to them, "and upon all things beneath."

Straightway they looked, and understood the will of the Lord. And when He spoke to them of the creation of Man, asking of each what he could bestow upon the race about to be born, the Sun first replied:—"I will illumine mankind." Then the Moon promised enlightenment in her turn, adding that already she had created Fear, Silence, Sleep, and Memory. Kronos announced that he had begotten Justice and Necessity. Zeus said, "In order to spare the future race perpetual wars, I have generated Fortune, Hope, and Peace." Ares declared himself already father of Conflict, impetuous Zeal, and

Emulation, Aphrodite did not wait to be called upon: "As for me, O Master," she said, "I will bestow upon mankind Desire, with voluptuous Joy and Laughter, that the penalty to which our sister Souls are destined may not weigh on them too hardly." These words of Aphrodite, O my Son, were welcomed gladly. "And I," said Hermes, "will endow human nature with Wisdom, Temperance, Persuasion, and Truth; nor will I cease to ally myself with Invention. I will ever protect the mortal life of such men as are born under my signs, seeing that to me the Creator and Father has attributed in the Zodiac, signs of Knowledge and Intelligence; above all, when the movement which draws thereto the stars is in harmony with the physical forces of each."

He Who is Master of the world rejoiced at hearing these things, and decreed the production of the human race. As for me—said Hermes—I sought what material ought to be employed in the work, and invoked the Lord. He commanded the Souls to give up the residue of the Protoplasmic substance, which having taken, I found it entirely dried up. Therefore, I used a great excess of water wherewith to renew the combination of the substance, in such wise that the product might be resolvable, yielding, and feeble, and that Force should not be added therein to Intelligence. When I had achieved my work it was beautiful, and I rejoiced in seeing it. And from below I called upon the Lord to behold what I had done. He saw it, and approved. Straightway He ordained that the Souls should be incorporated; and they were seized with horror on learning what should be their condemnation.

These words, said Isis, struck me. Harken, my son Horos, for I teach thee a mystery. Our ancestor Kamephes had it also from Hermes, who inscribes the recital of all things; I, in turn, received it from the ancient Kamephes when he admitted me to the initiation of the black veil; and thou, likewise, O marvellous and illustrious child, receive it from me.

The Souls were about to be imprisoned in bodies, whereat some sighed and lamented, as when some wild and free animal suddenly enchained, in the first moment of subjection to hard servitude and of severance from the beloved habits of the wilderness, struggles and revolts, refusing to follow its conqueror, and if occasion presents itself, slaying him. Others, again, hissed like serpents, or gave vent to

piercing cries and sorrowful words, glancing aimlessly from height to depth.

"Great Heaven," said one, "principle of our birth, ether, pure airs, hands, and sacred breath of the sovereign God, and you, shining Stars, eyes of the Gods, unwearied light of Sun and Moon, our early brethren, what grief, what rending is this! Must we quit these vast, effulgent spaces, this sacred sphere, all these spendors of the empyrean and of the happy republic of the Gods, to be precipitated into these vile and miserable abodes? What crime, O wretched ones, have we committed? How can we have merited, poor sinners that we are, the penalties which await us? Behold the sad future in store for us—to minister to the wants of a fluctuating and dissoluble body! No more may our eyes distinguish the souls divine! Hardly through these watery spheres shall we perceive, with sighs, our ancestral heaven; at intervals even we shall cease altogether to behold it. By this disastrous sentence direct vision is denied to us; we can see only by the aid of the outer light; these are but windows that we possess—not eyes. Nor will our pain be less when we hear in the air the fraternal breathing of the winds with which no longer can we mingle our own, since that will have for its dwelling, instead of the sublime and open world, the narrow prison of the breast! But Thou, Who drivest us forth, and causest us from so high a seat to descend so low, assign a limit to our sufferings! O Master and Father, so quickly become indifferent to Thy handiwork, appoint a term to our penance, deign to bestow on us some last words, while yet we are able to behold the expanse of the luminous spheres!"

This prayer of the Souls was granted, my son Horos, for the Lord was present; and sitting upon the throne of Truth, thus He addressed them:—

"O Souls; you shall be governed by Desire and Necessity; after me, these shall be your masters and your guides. Souls, subjected to my sceptre which never fails, now that inasmuch as you remain stainless you shall inhabit the regions of the skies. If among you any be found to merit reproach, they shall inhabit abodes destined to them in mortal organisms. If your faults be light, you shall, delivered from the bond of the flesh, return to heaven. But if you become guilty of graver crime, if you turn away from the end for which you have been formed,

then indeed you shall dwell neither in heaven nor in human bodies, but thenceforth you shall pass into those of animals without reason."

Having thus spoken, O my son Horos, He breathed upon them and said, "It is not according to chance that I have ordained your destiny; if you act ill, it will be worse; it will be better if your actions are worthy of your birth. It is myself and not another who will be your witness and your judge. Understand that it is because of your past errors that you are to be punished and shut up in fleshly bodies. In different bodies, as I have already told you, your re-births will be different. Dissolution shall be a benefit, restoring your former happy condition. But if your conduct be unworthy of me, your prudence, becoming blinded and guiding you backwards, will cause you to take for good fortune that which is really a chastisement, and to dread a happier lot as though it were a cruel injury. The most just among you shall, in their future transformations, approximate to the divine, becoming among men, upright kings, true philosophers, leaders and legislators, true seers, collectors of salutary plants, cunning musicians, intelligent astronomers, wise augurs, instructed ministrants: all beautiful and good offices; as among birds are the eagles which pursue not nor devour those of their own kind, and do not permit weaker ones to be attacked in their presence, because justice is in the nature of the eagle; among quadrupeds, the lion, for he is a strong animal, untamed by slumber, in a mortal body performing immortal toils, and by nothing tired nor beguiled; among reptiles, the dragon, because he is the powerful, living long, innocent, and a friend of men, allowing himself to be tamed, having no venom, and, leaving old age, approximating to the nature of the Gods; among fishes, the dolphin, for this creature, taking pity on those who fall into the sea, will carry them to land if they still live, and will abstain from devouring them if dead, although it is the most voracious of all aquatic animals."

Having spoken these words, God became an Incorruptible Intelligence (i.e., resumed the unmanifest).

After these things, my son Horos, there arose out of the earth an exceeding powerful Spirit, unencumbered with any corporeal envelope, strong in wisdom, but savage and fearful; although he could not be ignorant of the knowledge he sought, seeing the type of the human body to be beautiful and august of aspect, and perceiving that the souls were about to enter into their envelopes:—

"What are these," said he, "O Hermes, Secretary of the Gods?" "These are men," replied Hermes. "It is a rash work," said he, "to make man with such penetrating eyes, such a subtle tongue, such a delicate hearing that can hear even those things which concern him not, such a fine scent, and in his hands a sense of touch capable of appropriating everything. O generating Spirit, thinkest thou it is well that he should be free from care—this future investigator of the fine mysteries of Nature? Wilt thou leave him exempt from suffering—he whose thought will search out the limits of the earth? Mankind will dig up the roots of plants, they will study the properties of natural juices, they will observe the nature of stones, they will dissect not only animals but themselves, desiring to know how they have been formed. They will stretch forth their daring hands over the sea, and, cutting down the timber of the wild forest, they will pass from shore to shore seeking one another. They will pursue the inmost secrets of Nature even into the heights, and will study the motions of heaven. Nor is this enough; when nothing yet remains to be known than the furthest boundary of the earth, they will seek even there the last extremities of night. If they apprehend no obstacles, if they live exempt from trouble, beyond reach of any fear or of any anxiety, even heaven itself will not arrest their audacity; they will seek to extend their power over the elements. Teach them, then, desire and hope, in such wise that they may know likewise the dread of accident and of difficulty, and the painful sting of expectation deceived. Let the curiosity of their souls have for balance, desire and fear, care and vain hope. Let their souls be a prey to mutual love, to aspirations and varied longings, now satisfied, now deceived, so that even the sweetness of success may be an allurement to draw them towards misfortune. Let the weight of fevers oppress them, and break in them all desire."

Thou sufferest, Horos, in hearing this thy mother's recital? Surprise and wonder seize thee in presence of the evils which now fall upon poor humanity? That which thou art about to hear is still more sad. The speech of Momos pleased Hermes; he deemed his advice good, and he followed it.

"O, Momos," said he, "the nature of the divine breath which enwraps all things shall not be ineffectual! The Master of the universe has charged me to be His agent and overseer. The Deity of the penetrating eye (Adrastia) will observe and direct all events; and for my part, I will design a mysterious instrument, a measure inflexible and

inviolable, to which everything shall be subject from birth even to final destruction, and which shall be the bond of created entities. This instrument shall rule that which is on the earth, and all the rest."

It is thus—quoth Hermes—that I spoke to Momos; and forthwith the instrument operated. Straightway the souls were incorporated, and I was praised for my work.

Then the Lord summoned anew the assembly of the Gods. They gathered together, and He thus addressed them:—

"Gods, who have received a sovereign and imperishable nature, and the sway of the vast eternity, ye whose office it is to maintain unceasingly the mutual harmony of things, how long shall we govern an empire unknown? How long shall creation remain invisible to the sun and moon? Let each of us undertake his part in the universe. By the exercise of our power let us put an end to the cohesion of inertia. Let chaos become a fable, incredible to posterity. Inaugurate your great labours; I will direct you."

He said, and immediately the Kosmic unity, until now obscure, was opened, and in the heights appeared the heavens with all their mysteries. The earth, hitherto unstable, grew more solid beneath the brightness of the sun, and stood forth adorned with enfolding riches. All things are beautiful in the eyes of God, even that which to mortals appears uncomely, because all is made according to the divine laws. And God rejoiced in beholding His works filled with movement; and with outstretched hands grasping the treasures of nature. "Take these," He said, "O sacred earth, take these, O venerable one, who are to be the mother of all things, and henceforth let nothing be lacking to thee!"

With these words, opening His divine hands, He poured His treasures into the universal font. But yet they were unknown, for the souls newly embodied and unable to support their opprobrium, sought to enter into rivalry with the celestial Gods, and, proud of their lofty origins, boasting an equal creation with these, revolted. Thus men became their instruments, opposed to one another, and fomenting civil wars. And thus, force oppressing weakness, the strong burnt and massacred the feeble, and quick and dead were thrust forth from the sacred places.

Then the elements resolved to complain before the Lord of the savage condition of mankind. For the evil being already very grievous, the elements hastened to God the Creator, and pleaded in this wise—the fire being suffered to speak first:—

"O Master," he said, "Maker of this new world, Thou whose name, mysterious among the Gods, has hitherto been revered among all men; how long, O Divinity, hast Thou decreed to leave human life without God? Reveal Thyself to the world which calls for Thee, correct its savage existence by the institution of peace. Grant unto life, law, grant unto night oracles; fill all things with happy auguries; let men fear the judgment of the Gods, and no man shall sin any more. Let crimes receive their just punishment, and men will abstain from unrighteousness. They will fear to violate oaths, and madness will have an end. Teach them gratitude for benefits, so shall I devote my flame to pure offerings, and libations, and the altars shall yield Thee exhalations of sweet savours. For now I am polluted, O Master, because the impious temerity of men forces me to consume flesh. They will not suffer me to remain in my nature; they pervert and corrupt my purity!"

The air spoke in its turn:— "I am defiled by the effluvium of corpses, O Master; I am becoming pestilent and unwholesome, and from on high I witness things which I ought not to behold."

Then the water took up the word, and spoke on this wise, O my illustrious son:—

"Father and wondrous Creator of all things, Divinity incarnate, Author of Nature who brings forth all through Thee, command the waters of the streams to be always pure, for now both rivers and seas are compelled to bathe the destroyer and to receive his victims!"

Then at the last the earth appeared, O my glorious son, and thus began:—

"O King, Chief of celestial choirs and Lord of their orbits, Master and Father of the elements which lend to all things increase and decrease, and into which all must return; behold how the impious and insensate tribe of man overspreads me, O venerable One, since by Thy commands I am the habitation of all beings, bearing them all and receiving into my bosom all that is slain; such is now my reproach.

Thy terrestrial world in which all creatures are contained is bereft of God. And because they revere nothing, they transgress every law and overwhelm me with all manner of evil works. To my shame, O Lord, I admit into myself the product of the corruption of carcasses. But I, who receive all things, would fain also receive God. Grant to earth this grace, and if Thou comest not Thyself—for indeed I cannot contain Thee—let me at Least receive some holy efflux of Thee. Let the earth become the most glorious of all elements; and since she alone gives all things to all, may she revere herself as the recipient of Thy favours."

Thus the elements discoursed, and forthwith God filled the universe with His divine voice. "Go," said He, "sacred offspring, worthy of your Father's greatness, seek not to change anything, nor refuse to my creatures your ministry. I will send you an efflux of myself, a pure Being who shall investigate all actions, who shall be the dreadful and incorruptible Judge of the living; and sovereign justice shall extend its reign even into the shades beneath the earth. Thus shall every man receive his merited deserts."

Thereupon the elements ceased from their complaints, and each of them resumed its functions and its sway.

And in what manner, O my mother, said Horos, did the earth afterwards obtain this efflux of God?

I will not recount this Nativity, said Isis; I dare not, O powerful Horos, declare the origin of thy race, lest men in the future should learn the generation of the Gods. I will say only that the Supreme God, Creator and Architect of the world, at length accorded to earth for a season, thy father Osiris and the great Goddess Isis, that they might bring the expected salvation. By them life attained its fulness; savage and bloody wars were ended; they consecrated temples to the Gods their ancestors, and instituted oblations. They gave to mortals law, nourishment, and raiment. "They shall read," Hermes said, "my mystic writings, and dividing them into two parts, they shall keep certain of them, and inscribe upon columns and obelisks those which may be useful to man." Institutors of the first tribunals, they established everywhere the reign of order and justice. With them began the faith of treaties, and the introduction into human life of the religious duty of oaths. They taught the rites of sepulcher towards

those who cease to live; they interrogated the horrors of death; they shewed that the spirit from without delights to return into the human body, and that if the way of entry be shut against it, it brings about a failure of life. Instructed by Hermes, they engraved upon hidden tables that the air is filled with genii. Instructed by Hermes in the secret laws of God, they alone were the teachers and legislators of mankind, initiating them in the arts, the sciences, and the benefits of civilised life. Instructed by Hermes concerning the sympathetic affinities which the Creator has established between heaven and earth, they instituted religious representations and sacred mysteries. And, considering the corruptible nature of all bodies, they ordained prophetic initiation, so that the prophet who lifts his hands to the Gods should be instructed in all things, and that thereby philosophy and magic might provide nourishment for the soul, and medicine might heal the sufferings of the flesh.

Having performed all these things, O my son, and seeing the world arrived at its fulness, Osiris and I were recalled by the inhabitants of heaven; but we could not return thither without having first praised the Lord, so that the celestial Vision might fill the expanse, and that the way of a happy ascension might open before us, since God delights in hymns.

O my mother, said Horos, teach me this hymn, that I also may be instructed in it.

Hearken, my son, answered Isis.

THE VIRGIN OF THE WORLD

II. Souls

O my illustrious son, if thou wilt know anything further, ask it of me. And Horos said, Revered Mother, I would fain know how royal souls are born. And Isis answered:—Herein, my son Horos, lies the distinctive character of royal souls. There are in the universe, four regions, governed by a fixed and immutable law: heaven, the ether, the air, and the most holy earth. Above, in heaven, dwell the Gods, ruled as are all the rest, by the Maker of the universe; in the ether are the stars, governed by the great fire, the sun; in the air are the souls of the genii, governed by the moon; upon earth are men and other animals governed by the soul who, for the time, is their king. For the

Gods themselves engender those who shall be kings befitting the terrestrial race. Princes are the issue of kings, and he who is most kingly, is a greater king than the rest. The sun, nearer to God than is the moon, is greater and stronger than she, and to him she is subject as much by rank as by power. The king is the last of the Gods and the first of men. So long as he sojourns upon earth, his divinity is concealed, but he possesses something which distinguishes from other men and approximates him to God. The soul in him comes from a loftier region than that from which descend the souls of common men. Souls destined to reign upon the earth descend thither for two causes. There are those who in former lives have lived blameless, and who merit apotheosis; for such as these royalty is a preparation for the divine state. Again, there are holy souls who, for some slight infringement, of the interior and divine law, receive in royalty a penance whereby the suffering and shame of incarnation are mitigated. The condition of these in taking a body resembles not that of others; they are as blessed as when they were free.

As to the various characters of these kings, the variety is not in the souls, for all are royal, but it is due to the nature of the angels and genii who assist them. For souls destined to such offices are not without ministers and escort. Heavenly justice, even while exiling them from the abodes of the Blessed, treats them as their nature befits. When, then, O my son Horos, the ministering angels and genii appointed are warlike, the soul in their charge takes that character, forgetting its own, or rather laying it aside until some future change of condition. If the guardian angels are of a gentle order, then the soul follows its path in peace; if they are friends of judgment, the soul loves to judge; if they are musicians, then the soul sings; if they love truth, the soul is that of the philosopher. Thus the souls necessarily follow the teaching of their guardians; falling into human bodies they forego their proper estate, and while exiled from it they approximate to those intelligences by whom they have been embodied.

Thine explanation is complete, my mother, said Horos, but thou hast not yet informed me in what manner noble souls are born.

There are upon earth, O my son, different offices. So also is it among souls; they occupy different stations, and that soul which issues from a more exalted sphere is nobler than the rest; even as he who is free

among men, is nobler than the slave. Exalted and royal souls are necessarily the masters of men.

How are souls born male or female?

Souls, my son Horos, are all equal in nature, since they come from one region wherein the Creator has formed them. There are not among them either males or females; this distinction exists only between bodies, and not between incorporeal beings. But some are more energetic, some are gentler; and this belongs to the air in which all things are formed. For an airy body envelopes the soul; in it are the elements of earth, water, air, and fire. Among females this combination contains more of cold and of moisture than of dryness and heat, and the soul which is enfolded therein is watery and disposed to softness. The contrary happens among males; their envelope contains more of dryness and of heat, less of cold and of moisture; hence in bodies so formed the souls manifest greater vivacity and energy.

And how, O my mother, are born the souls of the wise?

And Isis answered:—The organ of vision is enveloped in tunics. When these tunics are thick and dense, the sight is dull; when they are fine and subtle, the sight is penetrating. Even so is it with the soul; she likewise has her coverings, incorporeal as herself. These coverings are the interior airs; when they are subtle, clear, and transparent, then the soul is perspicuous; when, on the contrary, they are dense, thick, and turgid, then she cannot see far; and discerns only, as though in cloudy weather, that which lies immediately before her steps.

And Horos said:—For what reason, my mother, are the minds of men who are not of our holy country less open than the minds of those who belong to it?

And Isis replied:—The earth is set in the midst of the universe like a man lying on his back and gazing into heaven, and the various regions of earth correspond to the different members of the man. The earth turns her gaze towards heaven as towards her father, following in her changes the changes of the skies. Her head lies to the south, her right shoulder to the east, her left is turned towards the Lybian wind, her feet are under the constellation of the Bear, the right beneath the tail, and the left beneath the head of the Bear; her loins are under the

regions of heaven nearest to the Bear; the midst of her body is beneath the centre of heaven. Behold as a proof of these things, how they who dwell in the South have a beautiful countenance and plentiful hair, while the orientals have hands hardy in conflict and ready with the bow, for they are right-handed; the westerns are strong and fight with the left hand, attributing to the left side the functions which belong in others to the right; those who dwell beneath the Bear are distinguished by the attributes of their feet, and by the beauty of their legs; those who inhabit beyond the Bear in the climate of Italy and of Greece are remarkable for the beauty of their loins, and hence their tendency to prefer males. This part of the body also, being whiter than the rest, produces men of a whiter hue. The hallowed region of our ancestors is in the midst of the earth, and since the midst of the human body is the seat of the heart, and the heart of the soul, this is why, my son, the men of this land, beside the qualities which all men possess in common, have also loftier intelligence and wisdom, because the heart of the earth brings them forth and nourishes them.

Moreover, my son, the south is the storehouse of the clouds; it is there they assemble, and thence, it is said, flows our river (Nile), when the cold becomes abundant. Now, where the clouds descend, the air grows thick and is filled with vapours which spread themselves as a veil not only over the sight, but over the intelligence. The east, my son Horos, is continually disturbed and glowing under the sunrise, as is the west under the sunset; therefore, they who dwell in these regions can hardly preserve a clear perception. The north, by means of its icy temperature, thickens the mind even as it does the body. The central land alone, clear and serene, is favoured as are those who inhabit her. She brings forth in a perpetual tranquillity, she adorns and completes her offspring, she contends alone against all others, she triumphs, and like a worthy ruler partakes with the vanquished the fruits of victory.

Explain to me further, my august Mother, what it is that causes in living men during long maladies, an alteration of discernment, of reason, even of the soul itself.

And Isis answered:—Among animals there are those who have affinity with fire, others with water, others with earth, others with air, others again with two or three elements, or with all the four. Or, inversely, some have an antipathy for fire, some for water, some for earth, some for air, or again for two, three or four elements. Thus, the

locust and all kinds of insects flee from the fire; the eagle, the hawk, and other birds of flight fear the water; the fish dread the air and earth; the serpent abhors the open air, and like all crawling creatures loves the ground; all fishes delight in the deep, the birds in the air where they pass their lives; those who fly highest delight in the fire (of the sun) and sojourn in its vicinity. There are even certain creatures who disport themselves in the fire, such are the salamanders who have their abode in it. The elements enfold the body, and every soul inhabiting a body is weighed down and enchained by the four elements; wherefore, it is natural that the soul should have affinity with certain elements and aversion for others, for which reason she cannot enjoy perfect happiness. Nevertheless, as the soul is of divine origin, she struggles and meditates even beneath this bodily covering; but her thoughts are not what they would be if she were free from the body. And if the body be disturbed and troubled by sickness or by terror, the soul herself is tossed about like a man in the midst of tempestuous waves.

THE VIRGIN OF THE WORLD

III. Souls in Earth's Region, The Humans

THOU has given me admirable instruction, O my most powerful Mother Isis, concerning the marvellous creation of Souls by God, and I am filled with wonder; but thou hast not yet shewn me wither souls depart when set free from bodies. Fain would I contemplate this mystery, and thank only thee for the initiation.

And Isis said:—Hearken, my son, for thy most necessary enquiry holds an important place, and may not be neglected. Hear my reply.

O great and marvellous scion of the illustrious Osiris, think not that souls on quitting the body mix themselves confusedly in the vague immensity and become dispersed in the universal and infinite spirit, without power to return into bodies, to preserve their identity, or to seek again their primeval abode. Water spilt from a vase returns no more to its place therein, it has no proper locality, it mingles itself with the mass of waters; but it is not thus with souls, O most wise Horos. I am initiated into the mysteries of the immortal nature; I walk in the ways of the truth, and I will reveal all to thee without the least omission. And first I will tell thee that water, being a body without reason, composed of myriads of fluid particles, differs from the soul

which is, my son, a personal entity, the royal work of the hands and of the mind of God, abiding herself in intelligence. That which proceeds from Unity, and not from multiplicity, cannot mingle with other things, and in order that the soul may be joined to the body, God subjects this harmonious union to Necessity.

Souls do not, then, return confusedly, nor by chance, into one and the same place, but each is despatched into the condition which belongs to her. And this is determined by that which the soul experiences while yet she is in the tenement of the body, loaded with a burden contrary to her nature. Hear: therefore, this comparison, O beloved Horos, suppose that there should be shut up in the same prison, men, eagles, doves, swans, hawks, swallows, sparrows, flies, serpents, lions, leopards, wolves, dogs, hares, oxen, sheep, and certain amphibious animals, such as seals, hydras, turtles, crocodiles, and that at the same moment all the creatures should be liberated. All at once would escape; the men would seek cities and the public places, the eagles the ether, where nature teaches them to live, and doves the lower air, the hawks the higher expanse; the swallows would repair to places frequented by men, the sparrows to the orchards, the swans to districts where they could sing; the flies would haunt the proximity of the ground as high only as human exhalations extend, for the property of flies is to live on these and to flit over the surface of the earth; the lions and leopards would flee to the mountains, the wolves to the solitudes; the dogs would follow the track of man; the hares would betake themselves to the woods, the oxen to the fields and meadows, the sheep to the pastures; the serpents would seek the caves of the earth; the seals and the turtles would rejoin their kind in the shallows and running waters, in order to enjoy, conformably to their nature, alike the proximity of the shore and of the deep. Each creature would return, conducted by its own interior discernment, into the abode befitting it. Even so every soul whether human or inhabiting the earth under other conditions, knows whither she ought to go; unless, indeed, some son of Typhon should pretend that a bull may subsist in the waters or a turtle in the air. If, then, even when immersed in flesh and blood, souls do not infringe the law of order, although under penance—for union with the body is a penance—how much more shall they conform thereto when delivered from their bonds and set at liberty!

Now this most holy law, which extends even unto heaven, is on this wise, O illustrious child: behold the hierarchy of souls! The expanse between the empyrean and the moon is occupied by the Gods, the stars, and the powers of providence. Between the moon and ourselves, my son, is the abode of the souls. The unmeasured air, which we call the wind, has in itself an appointed way in which it moves to refresh the earth, as I shall by and by relate. But this movement of the air upon itself impedes not the way of the souls, nor does it hinder them from ascending and descending without obstacle; they flow across the air without mingling in it, or confounding themselves therewith, as water flows over oil. This expanse, my son, is divided into four provinces, and into sixty regions. The first province from the earth upwards comprehends four regions, and extends as far as certain summits or promontories, which it is unable to transcend. The second province comprises eight regions in which the motions of the winds arise. Be thou attentive, my son, for thou hearest the ineffable mysteries of the earth, the heavens, and of the sacred fluid which lies between. In the province of the winds fly the birds; above this there is no moving air nor any creature. But the air with all the beings it contains distributes itself into all boundaries within its reach, and into the four quarters of the earth, while the earth cannot lift itself into the mansions of the air. The third province comprehends sixteen regions filled with a pure and subtle element. The fourth contains thirty-two regions, in which the air, wholly subtle and diaphanous, allows itself to be penetrated by the element of fire. Such is the order which, without confusion, reigns from depth to height;—to wit, four general divisions, twelve intervals, sixty regions, and in these dwell the souls, each according to the nature thereof. They are indeed all of one substance, but they constitute a hierarchy; and the further any region is removed from the earth, the loftier is the dignity of the souls which dwell therein.

And now it remains to be explained to thee, O most glorious Horos, what souls they are who abide in each of these regions, and this I shall set forth, beginning by the most exalted.

The expanse which stretches between earth and heaven is divided into regions, my son Horos, according to measure and harmony. To these regions our ancestors have given various names; some call them zones, others firmaments, others spheres. Therein dwell the souls who are freed from bodies, and those who have not yet been incorporated.

The stations which they occupy correspond with their dignity. In the upper region are the divine and royal souls; the baser souls—they who float over the surface of the earth—are in the lowest sphere, and in the middle regions are the souls of ordinary degree. Thus, my son, the souls destined to rule descend from the superior zones, and when they are delivered from the body, thither they return, or even higher still, unless indeed they have acted contrary to the dignity of their nature and to the laws of God. For, if they have transgressed, the Providence on high causes them to descend into the lower regions according to the measure of their faults; and in like manner also it conducts other souls, inferior in power and dignity, from the lower spheres into a more exalted abode. For on high dwell two ministers of the universal Providence; one is guardian of the souls, the other is their conductor, who sends them forth and ordains for them bodies. The first minister guards them, the second releases or binds them, according to the will of God.

In this wise the law of equity presides over the changes which take place above, even as upon earth also it moulds and constructs the vessels in which the souls are immured. This law is supplemented by two energies, Memory and Experience. Memory directs in Nature the preservation and maintenance of all the original types appointed in heaven; the function of Experience is to provide every soul descending into generation with a body appropriate thereto; so that passionate souls should have vigorous bodies; slothful souls sluggish bodies; active souls active bodies; gentle souls gentle bodies; powerful souls powerful bodies; cunning souls dexterous bodies;—briefly, that every soul should have a befitting nature. For it is not without just cause that winged creatures are clothed with feathers; that intelligent creatures are gifted with finer senses and superior to others; that beasts of the field are furnished with horns, with tusks, with claws, or other weapons; that reptiles are endowed with undulating and flexible bodies, and lest the moisture of their natures should render them feeble, are armed wither with teeth or with pointed scales, so that they are, even less than others, in peril of death. As for fishes, these timid souls have allotted to them for a dwelling-place that element in which light is bereft of its double activity, for in the water, fire neither illuminates nor burns. Each fish, swimming by the help of his spiny fins, flies where he wills, and his weakness is protected by the obscurity of the deep. Thus are souls immured in bodies

resembling themselves; in human shape, those souls who have received reason; in flying creatures, souls of a wild nature; in beasts, souls without reason, whose only law is force, in reptiles, deceitful souls, for they attack not their prey face to face, but by ambush; while fishes enshrine those timid souls who merit not the enjoyment of other elements.

In every order of animals there are individuals who transgress the laws of their being.

In what way, my Mother? said Horos.

And Isis answered: In this wise:—A man who acts against reason, a beast which eludes necessity, a reptile which forgets its cunning, a fish which loses its timidity, a bird which renounces freedom. Thou hast heard what was to be said concerning the hierarchy of souls, their descent, and the creation of bodies.

O my son, in every order of souls there are found a few royal souls, and of divers characters: some fiery, some cold, some proud, some gentle, some crafty, some simple, some contemplative, some active. This diversity belongs to the regions from whence they descend into bodies. From the royal zone the royal souls go forth, but there are many royalties; the royalty of spirit, of the flesh, of art, of science, of the virtues.

And how, said Horos, dost thou name these royalties?

O my son, the king of souls who have hitherto existed is thy father Osiris; the king of bodies is the prince of each nation, he who governs. The king of wisdom is the Father of all things; the Initiator is the thrice great Hermes; over medicine presides Asclepios, the son of Hephaistos; force and power are under the sway of Osiris, and after him, under thine, my son. Philosophy depends on Arnebaskenis; poetry, yet again, on Asclepios, Imouthé's son. **So that, if thou thinkest thereon, thou wilt perceive that there are indeed many royalties and many kings.**

But the supreme royalty belongs to the highest region; lesser kingships correspond to the spheres which bring them forth. Those who issue from the fiery zone handle fire; those who come from the watery zone frequent liquid spheres; from the region of art and

learning those are born who devote themselves to art and science; from the region of inactivity, those who live in ease and idleness. All that is done and said upon earth has its origin in the heights, from whence all essences are dispensed with measure and equilibrium; nor is there anything which does not emanate from above and return thither.

Explain to me this that thou sayest, O my Mother.

And Isis answered:—An evident token of these exchanges has been stamped on all creatures by most holy Nature. The breath which we indraw from the upper air we exhale and again inbreathe by means of the lungs within us which perform this work. And when the way destined to receive our breath is closed, then no longer do we remain on earth; we depart hence. Moreover, O my glorious son, there are other accidents by which the balance of our combination may be destroyed.

What is, then, this combination, O my Mother?

It is the union and admixture of the four elements, whence emanates a vapour which envelops the soul, penetrates into the body and communicates to both its own character. Thus are produced varieties among souls and bodies. If in the composition of a body, fire dominates, then the soul being already of an ardent nature, receives thereby an excess of heat which renders it the more energetic and furious, and the body the more vivacious and active. If the air dominates, the body and soul of the creature are thereby rendered unstable, errant and restless. The domination of the water causes the soul to be mild, affable, bland, sociable, and easily moulded, because water blends and mixes itself readily with all other things, dissolves them if it be abundant, moistens and penetrates them if it be less in quantity. A body softened by too much humidity offers but a weak resistance, a slight malady disintegrates it, and little by little dissolves its cohesion. Again, if the earthy elements be dominant, the soul is obtuse, because the body lacks subtlety, nor can she force a way through the density of its organism. Therefore, the soul remains indrawn upon herself, borne down by the burden she supports, and the body is solid, inactive, and heavy, moving only with effort.

But if the elements be all in just equilibrium, then the whole nature is ardent in its actions, subtle in its motions, fluent in its sensations, and of a robust constitution. Of the predominance of air and fire birds are born, whose nature resembles that of the elements which generate them. Men are endowed with an abundance of fire united with but a little air, and of water and earth equal parts. This excess of fire becomes sagacity, seeing that intelligence is indeed a kind of flame, which consumes not, but which penetrates. The predominance of water and earth with a sufficient admixture of air and but little fire engenders beasts; those endued with more fire than the rest are them are the more courageous. Water and earth in equal quantities give birth to reptiles, which, being deprived of fire, have neither courage nor truthfulness, while the excess of water renders them cold, that of earth, sordid and heavy, and the lack of air makes all their movements difficult. Much water with but little earth produces fishes; the absence of fire and air in them causes their timidity, and disposes them to lie hidden, while the predominance of water and earth in their nature approximates them by natural affinity to earth dissolved in water. Moreover, by means of the proportional increase of the elements composing the body is the body itself increased, and its development ceases when the full measure is attained. And so long, my beloved son, as equilibrium is maintained in the primitive combination and in the vapours arising therefrom, that is, so long as the normal proportion of fire, air, earth, and water remains unchanged, the creature continues in health. But if the elements deviate from the proportion originally determined—(I speak not now of the growth of activities, nor of that resulting from a change of order, but of a rupture of equilibrium whether by addition or diminution of fire or of other elements)—then malady supervenes. And should air and fire, whose nature is one with that of the soul itself, prevail in the conflict, then, through the dominance of those elements, destroyers of the flesh, the creature abandons its proper state. For the earthy element is the pabulum of the body, and the water wherewith it is permeated contributes to consolidate it; but it is the aerial element which confers motion, and the fire engenders all energies. The vapours produced by the union and combination of these elements blending with the soul, as it were by fusion, bear her along with them, and clothe her in their own nature, whether good or evil. So long as she remains in this natural association the soul keeps the rank she has attained. But if a change should occur either in the combination itself or in any of its parts or

subdivision, the vapours, altering their condition, alter likewise the relations between soul and body; the fire and air, aspiring upward, draw with them the soul, their sister, while the watery and terrestrial elements, which tend earthwards like the body, weigh it down and overwhelm it.

THE GOLDEN TRACTATE OF HERMES TRISMEGISTOS

By Hermes Trismegistus

Aureus or the Golden Tractate of Hermes

Concerning the Physical Secret of the Philosopher's Stone. In Seven Sections

[The Translation here used and followed is from that notable work, "A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery," (London, 1850.)]

SECTION I

Even thus saith Hermes: Through long years I have not ceased to experiment, neither have I have spared any labour of mind And this science and art I have obtained by the sole inspiration of the living God, who judged fit to open them to me His servant, who has given to rational creatures the power of thinking and judging aright, forsaking none, or giving to any occasion to despair. For myself, I had never discovered this matter to anyone had it not been from fear of the day of judgment, and the perdition of my soul if I concealed it. It is a debt which I am desirous to discharge to the Faithful, as the Father of the faithful did liberally bestow it upon me.

Understand ye, then, O Sons Of Wisdom, that the knowledge of the four elements Or the ancient philosophers was not corporally or imprudently sought after, which are through patience to be discovered, according to their causes and their occult operation. But, their operation is occult, since nothing is done except the matter be decomposed, and because it is not perfected unless the colours be thoroughly passed and accomplished. Know then, that the division that was made upon the water by the ancient philosophers separates it into four substances; one into two, and three into one; the third part of which is colour, as it were-a coagulated moisture; but the second and third waters are the Weights of the Wise.

Take of the humidity, or moisture, an ounce and a half, and of the Southern redness, which is the soul of gold, a fourth part, that is to say, half-an-ounce of the citrine Seyre, in like manner, half-an-ounce of the Auripigment, half-an-ounce, which are eight; that is three ounces. And know ye that the vine of the wise is drawn forth in three, but the wine thereof is not perfected, until at length thirty be accomplished Understand the operation, therefore. Decoction lessens the matter, but the tincture augments it; because Luna in fifteen days is diminished; and in the third she is augmented. This is the beginning and the end. Behold, I have declared that which was hidden, since the work is both with thee and about thee - that which was within is taken out and fixed, and thou canst have it either in earth or sea.

Keep, therefore, thy Argent vive, which is prepared in the innermost chamber in which it is coagulated; for that is the Mercury which is separated from the residual earth.

He, therefore, who now hears my words, let him search into them; which are to justify no evil-doer, but to benefit the good; therefore, I have discovered all things that were before hidden concerning this knowledge, and disclosed the greatest of all secrets, even the Intellectual Science.

Know ye, therefore, Children of Wisdom, who enquire concerning the report thereof, that the vulture standing upon the mountain crieth out with a loud voice, I am the White of the Black, and the Red of the White, and the Citrine of the Red, and behold I speak the very truth.

And know that the chief principle of the art is the Crow, which is the blackness of the night and clearness of the day, and flies without wings. From the bitterness existing in the throat the tincture is taken, the red goes forth from his body, and from his back is taken a thin water.

Understand, therefore, and accept this gift of God which is hidden from the thoughtless world. In the caverns of the metals there is hidden the stone that is venerable, splendid in colour, a mind sublime, and an open sea. Behold, I have declared it unto thee; give thanks to God, who teacheth thee this knowledge, for He in return recompenses the grateful.

Put the matter into a moist fire, therefore, and cause it to boil in order that its heat may be augmented, which destroys the siccidity of the

incombustible nature, until the radix shall appear; then extract the redness and the light parts, till only about a third remains.

Sons of Science ! For this reason are philosophers said to be envious, not that they grudged the truth to religious or just men, or to the wise; but to fools, ignorant and vicious, who are *without self-control* and benevolence, least they should be made powerful and able to perpetrate sinful things. For of such the philosophers are made accountable to God, and evil men are not admitted worthy of this wisdom.

Know that this matter I call the stone; but it is also named the feminine of magnesia or the hen, or the white spittle, or the volatile milk, the incombustible oil in order that it may be hidden from the inept and ignorant who are deficient in goodness and self-control; which I have nevertheless signified to the wise by one *only* epithet, viz., the Philosopher's Stone.

Include, therefore, and conserve in this sea, the fire and the heavenly bird, to the latest moment of his exit. But I deprecate ye all, Sons of Philosophy, on whom the great gift of this knowledge being bestowed, if any should undervalue or divulge the power thereof to the ignorant, or such as are unfit for the knowledge of this secret. Behold, I have received nothing from any to whom I have not returned that which had been given me, nor have I failed to honour him; even in this I have reposed the highest confidence.

This, O Son, is the concealed stone of many colours, which is born and brought forth in one colour; know this and conceal it. By this, the Almighty favouring, the greatest diseases are escaped, and every sorrow, distress, and evil and hurtful thing is made to depart; for it leads from darkness into light, from this desert wilderness to a secure habitation, and from poverty and straits to a free and ample fortune.

SECTION II.

MY SON, before all things I admonish thee to fear God, in whom is the strength of thy undertaking, and the bond of whatsoever thou meditatest to unloose; whatsoever thou hearest, consider it rationally. For I hold thee not to be a fool. Lay hold, therefore, of my instructions and meditate upon them, and so let thy heart be fitted also to conceive, as if thou wast thyself the author of that which I now teach. If thou

applied cold to any nature that is hot, it will not hurt it; in like manner, he who is rational shuts himself within from the threshold of ignorance; lest suddenly he should be deceived.

Take the flying bird and drown it flying and divide and separate it from its pollutions, which yet hold it in death; draw it forth, and repel it from itself, that it may live and answer thee; not by flying away into the regions above but by truly forbearing to fly.

For if thou shalt deliver it out of its prison, after this thou shalt govern it according to Reason. and according to the days that I shall teach thee; then will it become a companion up to thee, and by it thou wilt become to be an honoured lord.

Extract from the racy its shadow, and from the light its obscurity, by which the clouds hang over it and keep away the light; by means of its construction, also, and fiery redness, it is burned

Take, my Son, this redness, corrupted with the water, which is as a live coal holding the fire, which if thou shalt withdraw so often until the redness is made pure, then it will associate with thee, by whom it was cherished, and in whom it rests.

Return, then, O my Son, the coal being extinct in life, upon the water for thirty days, as I shall note to thee - and henceforth thou art a crowned king, resting over the fountain and drawing from thence the Auripigment dry without moisture. And now I have made the heart of the hearers, hoping in thee, to rejoice even in their eyes, beholding thee in anticipation of that which thou possessest.

Observe, then, that the water was first in the air, then in the earth; restore thou it also to the superiors by its proper windings, and not foolishly altering it; then to the former spirit, fathered in its redness, let it be carefully conjoined.

Know, my Son, that the fatness of our earth is sulphur, the auripigment sirety, and colcothar, which are also sulphur, of which auripigments, sulphur, and such like, some are more vile than others, in which there is a diversity, of which kind also) is the fat of gluey matters, such as are hair, nails, hoofs, and sulphur itself, and of the brain, which too is auripigment; of the like kind also are the lions' and cats' claws, which is sirety; the fat of white bodies, and the fat *of* the

two oriental quicksilvers, which sulphurs are hunted and retained by the bodies.

I say, moreover, that this sulphur doth tinge and fix, and is held by the conjunction of the tinctures; oils also tinge, but fly away, which in the body are contained, which is a conjunction of fugitives only with sulphurs and albuminous bodies, which hold also and detain the fugitive ens.

The disposition sought after by the philosophers, O Son, is but one in our egg; but this, in the hen's egg, is much less to be found. But lest so much of the Divine Wisdom as is in a hen's egg should not be distinguished, our composition is, as that is, from the four elements Adapted and composed. Know, therefore, that in the hen's egg is the greatest help with respect to the proximity and relationship of the matter in nature, for in it there is a spirituality and conjunction of elements, and an earth which is golden in its tincture. But the Son, enquiring of Hermes, saith, The sulphurs which are fit for our work, whether are they celestial or terrestrial ? To whom the Father answers, Certain of them are heavenly, and some are of the earth.

Then the Son saith, Father, I imagine the heart in the superiors to be heaven, and in the inferiors earth. But saith Hermes, It is not so; the masculine truly is the Heaven of the feminine, and the feminine is the earth of the masculine.

The Son then asks, Father, which of these is more worthy than the other; whether is it the heaven or the earth? Hermes replies, Both need the help one of the other; for the precepts demand a medium. But, saith the Son, if thou shalt say that a wise man governs all mankind? But ordinary men, replies Hermes, are better for them, because every nature delights in society of its own kind, and so we find it to be in the life of Wisdom where equals are conjoined. But what, rejoins the Son, is the mean betwixt them ? To whom Hermes replies, In everything In nature there are three from two: the beginning, the middle, and the end. First the needful water, then the oily tincture, and lastly, the faeces, or earth, which remains below But the Dragon inhabits in all these, and his houses are the darkness and blackness that is in them and by them he ascends into the air, from his rising, which is their heaven. But whilst the fume remains in them, they are not immortal. Take away, therefore, the vapour from the water, and the blackness

from the oily tincture, and death from the faeces; and by dissolution thou shalt possess a triumphant reward, even that in and by which the possessors live.

Know then, my Son, that the temperate unguent, which is fire, is the medium between the faeces and the water and is the Perscrutinator of the water. For the unguents are called sulphurs, because between fire and oil and this sulphur there is such a chose proximity, that even as fire burns so does the sulphur also.

All the sciences of the world, O Son are comprehended in this my hidden Wisdom; and this, and the learning of the Art, consists in these wonderful hidden elements which it doth discover and complete. It behoves him, therefore, who would be introduced to this hidden Wisdom, to free himself from the hidden usurpations of vice; and to be just, and good, and of a sound reason, ready at hand to help mankind, of a serene countenance, diligent to save, and be himself a patient guardian of the arcane secrets of philosophy.

And this know that except thou understandest how to mortify and induce generation, to vivify the Spirit, and introduce Light, until they fight with each other and grow white and freed from their defilements, rising as it were from blackness and darkness, thou knowest nothing nor canst perform anything; but if thou knowest this, thou wilt be of a great dignity so that even kings themselves shall reverence thee. These secrets, Son, it behoves thee to conceal from the vulgar and profane world.

Understand, also, that our Stone is from many things, and of various colours, and composed from four elements which we ought to divide and dissever in pieces, and segregate, in the veins, and partly mortifying the same by its proper nature, which is also in it, to preserve the water and fire dwelling therein, which is from the four elements and their waters, which contain its water; this, however, is not water in its true form, but fire, containing in a pure vessel the ascending waters, lest the esprits should fly away from the bodies; for by this means they are made tinging and fixed.

O, blessed watery form, that dissolvest the elements: Now it behoves us, with this watery soul, to possess ourselves of a sulphurous form, and to mingle the same with our Acetum. For when, by the power of the water, the composition is dissolved, it is the key of the restoration;

then darkness and death fly away from them, and Wisdom proceeds onwards to the fulfillment of her Law.

SECTION III.

Know my Son, that the philosophers bind up their matter with a strong chain, that it may contend with the Fire; because the spirits in the washed bodies desire to dwell therein and to rejoice. In these habitations they verify themselves and inhabit there, and the bodies hold them, nor can they be thereafter separated any more.

The dead elements are revived, the composed bodies tinge and are altered, and by a wonderful process they are made permanent, as saith the philosopher.

O, permanent watery Form, creatrix of the royal elements; who, having with thy brethren and a just government obtained the tincture, findest rest. Our most precious stone is cast forth upon the dunghill, and that which is most worthy is made vilest of the vile. Therefore, it behoves us to mortify two Argent vives together, both to venerate and be venerated, viz., the Argent vive of Auripigment, and the oriental Argent vive of Magnesia

O, Nature, the most potent creatrix of Nature, which containest and separatest natures in a middle principle. The Stone comes with light, and with light it is generated, and then it generates and brings forth the black clouds or darkness, which is the mother of all things.

But when we marry the crowned King to our red daughter, and in a gentle fire, not hurtful, she doth conceive an excellent and supernatural son, which permanent life she doth also feed with a subtle heat, so that he lives at length in our fire.

But when thou shalt send forth thy fire upon the foliated sulphur, the boundary of hearts doth enter in above, it is washed in the same, and the purified matter thereof is extracted.

Then is he transformed, and his tincture by help of the fire remains red, as it were flesh. But our Son, the king begotten, takes his tincture from the fire, and death even, and darkness, and the waters flee away.

The Dragon shuns the sunbeams which dart through the crevices, and our dead son lives; king comes forth from the fire and rejoins with his

spouse, the occult treasures are laid open, and the virgin's milk is whitened. The Son, already vivified is become a warrior in the fire and of tincture super-excellent. For this Son is himself the treasury, even himself bearing the Philosophic Matter.

Approach, ye Sons of Wisdom, and rejoice; let us now rejoice together, for the reign of death is finished, and the Son doth rule. And now he is invested with the red garment, and the scarlet colour is put on.

SECTION IV.

Understand, then, O Son of Wisdom, what the Stone declares; Protect me, and I will protect thee; increase my strength that I may help thee ! My Sol and my beams are most inward and secretly in me my own Luna, also, my light, exceeding every light, and my good things are better than all other good things. I give freely, and reward the intelligent with joy and gladness, glory, riches, and delights; and them that seek after me I make to know and understand, and to possess divine things. Behold, that which the philosophers has concealed is written with seven letters; for Alpha and Yda follow two; and Sol, in like manner, follows the book; nevertheless, if thou art willing that he should have Dominion, observe the Art, and join the son to the daughter of the water, which, Jupiter and a hidden secret.

Auditor, understand, let us use our Reason; consider all with the most accurate investigation, which in the contemplative part I have demonstrated to thee, the whole matter I know to be the one only thing. But who is he that understands the true investigation and enquires rationally into this matter? It is not from man, nor from anything like him or akin to him, nor from the ox or bullock, and if any creature conjoins with one of another species, that which is brought forth is neutral from either.

Thus saith Venus: I beget light, nor is the darkness of my nature, and if my metal be not dried all bodies desire me, for I liquefy them and wipe away their rust, even I extract their substance. Nothing therefore is better or more venerable than I, my brother also being conjoined.

But the King, the ruler, to his brethren, testifying of him, saith: I am crowned, and I am adorned with a royal diadem: I am clothed with the royal garment, and I bring Joy and gladness of heart; for being

chained, I caused my substance to lay hold of, and to rest within the arms and breast of my mother, and to fasten upon her substance; making that which was invisible to become visible, and the occult matter to appear. And everything which the philosophers have hidden is generated by us. Hear, then, these words, and understand them; keep them, and meditate thereon, and seek for nothing more. Man in the beginning is generated of nature, whose inward substance is fleshy, and not from anything else. Meditate on these plain things, and reject what is superfluous.

Thus saith the philosopher: Botri is made from the citrine which is extracted out of the Red Root, and from nothing else; and if it be citrine and nothing else, Wisdom was with thee: it was not gotten by the care, nor, if it be freed from redness, by thy study. Behold, I have circumscribed nothing; if thou hast understanding, there be but few things unopened. Ye Sons of Wisdom ! turn then the Breyms Body with an exceeding great fire; and it will yield gratefully what you desire. And see that you make that which is volatile, so that it cannot fly, and by means of that which flies not. And that which yet rests upon the fire, as it were itself a fiery flame, and that which in the heat of a boiling fire is corrupted, is cambar.

And know ye that the Art of this permanent water is our brass, and the colourings of its tincture and blackness is then changed into the true red.

I declare that, by the help of God I have spoken nothing but the truth. That which is destroyed is renovated, and hence the corruption is made manifest in the matter to be renewed, and hence the melioration will appear, and on either side it is a signal of Art.

SECTION V.

MY SON, that which is born of the crow is the beginning of Art. Behold, how I have obscured matter treated of, by circumlocution, depriving thee of the light. Yet this dissolved, this joined, this nearest and furthest off I have named to thee. Roast those things, therefore, and boil them in that which comes from the horse's belly for seven, fourteen, or twenty-one days. Then will the Dragon eat his own wings and destroy himself; this being done, let it be put into a fiery furnace, which lute diligently, and observe that none of the spirit may escape.

And know that the periods of the earth are in the water, which let it be as long as until thou putteth the same upon it. The matter being thus melted and burned take the brain thereof and triturate it in most sharp vinegar, till it becomes obscured. This done, it lives in the putrefaction, let the dark clouds which were in it before it was killed be converted into its own body. Let this process be repeated, as I have described, let it again die, as I before said, and then it lives.

In the life and death thereof we work with the spirits, for as it dies by the taking away of the spirit, so it lives in the return and is revived and rejoices therein. Being arrived then at this knowledge, that which thou hast been searching for is made in the Affirmation, I have even related to thee the joyful signs, even that which doth fix the body. But these things, and how they attained to the knowledge of this secret, are given by our ancestors in figures and types; behold, they are dead; I have opened the riddle, and the book of knowledge is revealed, the hidden things I have uncovered, and have brought together the scattered truths within their boundary, and have conjoined many various forms -even I have associated the spirit. Take it as the gift of God.

SECTION VI.

It behoves thee to give thanks to God who has bestowed liberally of his bounty to the wise, who delivers us from misery and poverty. I am tempted and proven with the fullness of his substance and his probable wonders, and humbly pray God that whilst we live we may come to him. Remove thence, O Sons of Science, the unguents which we extract from fats, hair, verdigrease, tragacanth, and bones, which are written in the books of our fathers. But concerning the ointments which contain the tincture coagulate the fugitive, and adorn the sulphurs it behooves us to explain their disposition more at large ! and to unveil the Form, which is buried and hidden from other unguents; which is seen in disposition, but dwells in his own body, as fire in trees and stones, which by the most subtle art and ingenuity it behoves to extract without burning. And know that the Heaven is to be joined mediately with the Earth - but the Form is in a middle nature between tie heaven and earth, which is our water. But the water holds of all the first place which goes forth from this stone; but the second is gold; and the third is gold, only in a mean which is more noble than the water and the faeces. But in these are the smoke, the blackness and the

death. It behoves us, therefore, to dry away the vapour from the water, to expel the blackness from the unguent, and death from the feces, and this by dissolution. By Which means we attain to the highest philosophy and secret of all hidden things.

SECTION VII.

Know ye then, O Sons of Science, there are seven bodies, of which gold is the first, the most perfect, the king of them, and their head, which neither the earth can corrupt nor fire devastate, nor the water change, for its complexion is equalised, and its nature regulated with respect to heat, cold, and moisture; nor is there anything in it which is superfluous, therefore the philosophers do buoy up and magnify themselves init saying that this gold, in relation of other bodies. is, as the sun amongst the stars, more splendid in Light; and as, by the power of God, every vegetable and all the fruits of the earth are perfected, so gold by the same power sustaineth all.

For as dough without a ferment cannot be fermented so when thou sublimest the body and purifiest it, separating the uncleanness from it, thou wilt then conjoin and mix them together, and put in the ferment confecting the earth and water. Then will the Ixir ferment even as dough doth ferment. Think of this, and see how the ferment in this case doth change the former natures to another thing. Observe, also, that there is no ferment otherwise than from the dough itself.

Observe, moreover, that the ferment whitens the confection and hinders it from turning, and holds the tincture lest it should fly, and rejoice the bodies, and makes them intimately to join and to enter one into another, and this is the key of the philosophers and the end of their work: and by this science, bodies are meliorated, and the operation of them, God assisting, is consummate.

But, through negligence and a false opinion of the matter, the operation may be perverted, as a mass of leaven growing corrupt, or milk turned with rennet for cheese, and musk among aromatics.

The sure colour of the golden matter for the red, and the nature thereof, is not sweetness; therefore we make of them sericum - ie Ixir; and of them we make the enamel of which we have already without and with the king's seal we have tinged the clay, and in that have set the colour of heaven, which augments the sight of them that see.

The Stone, therefore is the most precious gold without spots, evenly tempered, which neither fire nor air, nor water, nor earth is able to corrupt for it is the Universal Ferment rectifying all things in a medium composition, whose complexion is yellow and a true citrine colour.

The gold of the wise, boiled and well digested with a fiery water, makes Ixir; for the gold of the wise is more heavy than lead, which in a temperate composition is a ferment Ixir, and contrariwise, in our intemperate composition, is the confusion of the whole. For the work begins from the vegetable, next from the animal, as in a hen's egg, in which is the greatest help, and our earth is gold, of all which we make sericum, which is the ferment Ixir.

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THE ESSENTIAL KYBALION

Excerpts from THE KYBALLION - by The Three Initiates

"The lips of wisdom are closed, except to the ears of Understanding"

"Where fall the footsteps of the Master, the ears of those ready for his Teaching
open wide."

"When the ears of the student are ready to hear, then cometh the lips to fill them
with Wisdom."

"The Principles of Truth are Seven; he who knows these, understandingly,
possesses the Magic Key before whose touch all the Doors of the Temple fly
open".

"THE ALL IS MIND; The Universe is Mental."

"As above, so below; as below, so above."

"Nothing rests; everything moves; everything vibrates."

"Everything is Dual; everything has poles; everything has its pair of opposites;
like and unlike are the same; opposites are identical in nature, but different in
degree; extremes meet; all truths are but half-truths; all paradoxes may be
reconciled."

"Everything flows, out and in; everything has its tides; all things rise and fall; the
pendulum-swing manifests in everything; the measure of the swing to the right is
the measure of the swing to the left; rhythm compensates."

"Every Cause has its Effect; every Effect has its Cause; everything happens according to Law; Chance is but a name for Law not recognized; there are many planes of causation, but nothing escapes the Law."

"Gender is in everything; everything has its Masculine and Feminine Principles; Gender manifests on all planes."

"Mind (as well as metals and elements) may be transmuted, from state to state; degree to degree; condition to condition; pole to pole; vibration to vibration. True Hermetic Transmutation is a Mental Art."

"Under, and back of, the Universe of Time, Space and Change, is ever to be found The Substantial Reality - the Fundamental Truth."

"THAT which is the Fundamental Truth-the Substantial Reality--is beyond true naming, but the Wise Men call it THE ALL."

"In its Essence, THE ALL is UNKNOWABLE."

"But, the report of Reason must be hospitably received, and treated with respect."

"The Universe is Mental--held in the Mind of THE ALL."

"THE ALL creates in its Infinite Mind countless Universes, which exist for aeons of Time--and yet, to THE ALL, the creation, development, decline and death of a million Universes is as the time of the twinkling of an eye."

"The Infinite Mind of THE ALL is the womb of Universes."

"Within the Father-Mother Mind, mortal children are at home."

"There is not one who is Fatherless, nor Motherless in the Universe."

"The half-wise, recognizing the comparative unreality of the Universe, imagine that they may defy its Laws--such are vain and presumptuous fools, and they are broken against the rocks and torn asunder by the elements by reason of their folly.

The truly wise, knowing the nature of the Universe, use Law against laws; the higher against the lower; and by the Art of Alchemy transmute that which is undesirable into that which is worthy, and thus triumph. Mastery consists not in abnormal dreams, visions and fantastic imaginings or living, but in using the higher forces against the lower--escaping the pains of the lower planes by vibrating on the higher. Transmutation, not presumptuous denial, is the weapon of the Master."

"While All is in THE ALL, it is equally true that THE ALL is in ALL. To him who truly understands this truth hath come great knowledge.

"The possession of Knowledge, unless accompanied by a manifestation and expression in Action, is like the hoarding of precious metals-a vain and foolish

thing. Knowledge, like wealth, is intended for Use. The Law of Use is Universal, and he who violates it suffers by reason of his conflict with natural forces."

"To change your mood or mental state-change your vibration."

"To destroy an undesirable rate of mental vibration, put into operation the principle of Polarity and concentrate upon the opposite pole to that which you desire to suppress. Kill out the undesirable by changing its polarity."

"Mind (as well as metals and elements) may be transmuted from state to state degree to degree. condition to condition pole to pole; vibration to vibration."

"Rhythm may be neutralized by an application of the Art of Polarization."

"Nothing escapes the Principle of Cause and Effect, but there are many Planes of Causation, and one may use the laws of the higher to overcome the laws of the lower."

"The wise ones serve on the higher, but rule on the lower. They obey the laws coming from above them, But on their own plane, and those below them they rule and give orders. And, yet, in so doing, they form a part of the Principle, instead of opposing it. The wise man falls in with the Law, and by understanding its movements he operates it instead of being its blind slave. Just as does the skilled swimmer turn this way and that way, going and coming as he will, instead of being as the log which is carried here and there-so is the wise man as compared to the ordinary man-and yet both swimmer and log; wise man and fool, are subject to Law. He who understands this is well on the road to Mastery"

"True Hermetic Transmutation is a Mental Art."