

# Hermeticism and the Transformation of Consciousness

Posted on [September 1, 2020](#)

In Hermetic tradition, the Egyptian God Thoth, the Ibis-headed god with a writing implement in his hand, was considered the font of all wisdom; a man-god revealing to the Egyptians their knowledge of astronomy, architecture, geometry, medicine and religion. From this advanced knowledge, wonders emerged, such as the Great Pyramid of Giza. The Greek name for Thoth is Hermes, otherwise known as Hermes Trismegistus, the “Thrice Great Hermes”, the greatest of all priests, the greatest of all philosophers and the greatest of all kings.

The Egyptians were not materialists, so spiritual understandings and principles were not excluded from their science. Therefore, chemistry blended into alchemy, the notion that anything could be transformed, including consciousness.

The Principle of Mentalism, central to Hermeticism, embodies the idea that “All is Mind.” Everything that happens arises from a preceding mental state. For anything to exist, thoughts had to form first, which then

manifest as physical reality. This ancient concept is confirmed by some of the most famous modern physicists.

Physicist Max Planck said, “All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force — . We must assume behind this force the existence of a **conscious and intelligent mind**. This **mind** is the matrix of all matter.”

Planck, the originator of quantum theory, received the Nobel Prize for physics in 1918.

Cambridge physicist, Sir Arthur Eddington, wrote, “The **universe** is of the nature of a thought or sensation in a universal **Mind** ... To put the conclusion crudely — **the stuff** of the world is **mind–stuff**.”

During WW1 Sir Arthur collaborated with Albert Einstein to prove Einstein’s new theory on gravity. This was made into an excellent film, *Einstein and Eddington*. (I have posted a link in the **Recommended** section.) Eddington was renowned for his ability to explain relativity in understandable terms, and his lectures on this topic were compiled in a book, *The Mathematical Theory of Relativity*, which Albert Einstein suggested was “the finest presentation of the subject in any language.”

Albert Einstein himself, as well as Stephen Hawking, have described science as an attempt to understand the mind of God.

Copernicus made his momentous claim that the sun, not the earth, was the centre of our solar system, after studying hermeticism.

The Principle of Mentalism is the first of seven Hermetic principles. “The All is Mind; the Universe is Mental”, *The Kybalion* (a hermetic manuscript). Implicit in this view is the notion that the material world, including our compulsions, addictions, moods and attitudes, is plastic to our thought. Human beings, viewed as individual holographic expressions of an all-encompassing Mind, may have more influence over ourselves and over the world than we can possibly imagine.

This brings us to the Sixth Hermetic Principle, the Principle of Cause and Effect. The world, and our reaction to it, are the effects of thinking. Can we move mountains with our thinking?

In *The Matrix*, Neo asks Morpheus, “What are you trying to tell me? That I can dodge bullets?” Morpheus replies, “No Neo, I’m trying to tell you that when you’re ready, you won’t have to.” Perhaps we are ready once we realize who we truly are — an aspect or fragment of the Divine.

But the prevailing philosophy of determinism says that we have no choice, that we are victims of circumstances, mere pawns in the game of life, that our choice is an illusion; but the Hermeticists, rising to the plane above, learned to master their moods, compulsions, obsessions as well as the world around them by operating from a higher plane of existence, rising above what appears to be a deterministic prison. They became players, rather than being played by their internalized demiurge or tossed to and fro by the will and intentions of others.

Change your thinking and change your world. Sounds easy but we all know it is not. The transmutation of base metal into gold, an allegory for mental mastery, is not easy but still possible.

Psychiatrist Victor Frankl, author of *Man's Search For Meaning*, was a holocaust survivor. His story tells us we might not always dodge the bullet, but we can still retain mental mastery. He did not dodge the bullet when he lost everything in the camp. In the camp everything was taken away, except one thing, the power to choose one's mental state. He chose to find meaning in the completion of an academic paper and this act of will saved his life. He did not dodge the bullet but, in the end, he did not have to. He survived to find out "that which does not kill us makes us stronger" (Nietzsche); yet he has the humility to admit, "the best of us did not survive".

On one occasion when I was discouraged about something, I picked up a book to see if I could find some words to make me feel better (a very crude form of divination). My eyes immediately fell upon a verse from Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

If Victor Frankl could find meaning in Auschwitz, why then is there misery in mansions? The answer lies in the power of the mind to create within itself a heaven or a hell and to do so regardless of external circumstances.

The passage had quite an impact. After a while I put the book down and turned on the television. At that precise moment, someone was reading that very passage. Another of those astonishing synchronicities Jung wrote about, meaningful co-incidences in a meaningless world. In a meaningless world, we cancel the deficit of meaning by rising to the higher planes (pleroma) of our transcendent mental capabilities.

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