

The Vision of Hermes

Transcribed Manly P. Hall lecture

The Greatest of the books of Hermes is that which is called in the day the Divine Pymander. It consists of 17 fragments; these fragments together cannot be said to form the Corpus Hermeticum, but they certainly constitute the greatest core of temporal authority in the Hermetic system. Of these works, the Poimandres or The Vision is by far the most important. It's usually placed second in the collection. The analysis of this work must begin with some effort to determine its place in the literary religious structure of our world knowledge. Actually by structure, the vision is a sacred book. It contains within itself nearly all of the traditional elements of a divine revelation. We have no real right to say that it is a plagiarisation from other systems, although as in the case of almost all sacred books it shows some indebtedness to earlier or contemporary thought. This must also be said of the bible, or of the teachings of Buddha, or of the writings of Confucius. Thus we may say that the vision not only gives us a firm insight into the Hermetic theory, but also explains clearly why this gradually came to be of unusual interest to chemists and how it made possible perhaps, the rise of symbolic alchemy. We know immediately when we approach the book that we are in the presence of something resembling an apocalypse. There is a reminiscent likeness of the vision of Ezekiel, or to other ancient literary and religious fragments. On the other hand there is also a strange note of uniqueness running through the book. This uniqueness is not in the words, nor necessarily in the word pictures that are produced, it is in the arrangement of other available elements that these

elements existed prior to the production of the hermetic writings we cannot doubt. Therefore it is in the sequence in which they are placed, it is the order and descent of ideas which bring with them a certain newness. As though we have taken old and familiar pigments and paints, used a traditional canvas and well understood brushes and pallet yet painted a picture that was new, a picture that combined much of the wisdom of the past and provided a kind of key to open doctrines which had already attracted and held public attention. Thus we may say that the vision represents a kind of key through the great theological mysteries of antiquity, it reduces them to a reasonable and recognisable order, it is a powerful defence of comparative religion. Like the apocalypse of John shows that the author or authors had a wide acquaintance with religions apart from the area in which this work is believed to have been produced. In broad structure therefore we have this work that has come down to us as the divine vision of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus who is described as a priest of the mysteries of Egypt, and whose writings according to his own content, they are not the stamp of a man but the stamp of heaven. In this work Hermes is advanced as a prophet, as a minister and missionary of God. As one particularly and divinely tailored to reveal the essential doctrine to mankind. The work is brief, comparatively. We can sometimes wonder why it did not gain a greater sphere of influence. In many respects it has a grammar missing in other sacred books. It certainly has a wonderful symbolism, which could inspire the minds of many persons of a contemplation of mysteries.

Yet through it all there runs a thread of intellectualism so broad in its scope, so deep in its implication that in all probabilities it decreed or destined that the work should

have a minority audience, that it could only be understandable by certain types of persons. While it was a wonderful picture story, it was only for certain kinds of minds, these minds were not sufficient in number to integrate around this work the kind of religion or the kind of a common descent of beliefs that we find with simpler more obvious revelations. The work also brings into focus a number of contexts with which we are becoming increasingly familiar today, one of these is an extension, an application of the Platonic concept of archetypes. The term archetype actually occurs in the vision, therefore there is a link between it and the psychological concept of archetypes which we have today. Also like Buddhism and Taoism, the vision strongly emphasises the psychological quality in human nature. It deals with mind, it deals with reason, and it deals with the pitfalls into which the mind may lead. And the method of rescuing the individual from the disturbing influences of his own thoughts. Thus the work may be regarded in the modern term as psychological, and it represents religion as a psychological mystery. It presents theology, not in its traditional or conventional form, but more as a philosophy. And we must assume from the collected product of an Hermetic group that the work was that of a philosophic religious body, in which perhaps philosophy took predominance, but in turn became the instrument for the clarification of spiritual principles. There is much subtle wording in the vision also. Wording which has to be rather carefully examined.

It is quite probable that for 15 or 18 hundred years the decline of Greco-Egyptian culture to the rise of modern humanism that these subtle inferences would have a slight impact on the public mind. There was a veritability to

equate them, to find in them familiar responses to the long dark ages which we call the mediaeval world. Now however we have restored much of the learning which would enable us to give us this great dialogue—which it essentially is—its place in our modern world of thought. We come across two or three important points which call for a certain divergence from our principled beam or stream, so we will have to be prepared to reach out into comparative religion just a little in order to clarify the issue. The story takes as in the vision of Ezekiel or in the apocalypse of John a general pattern of the recounting of a mystical experience which occurred to the principal person, in this case Hermes. There is nothing whatsoever within the visions—as it is called—which will give us any clue to the historical orientation of Hermes, or his character and personality. There is no description of him. He simply appears as a person passing through an extraordinary internal revelation. And having received the instruction achieving to a dedication by means of which he meant for to share it with all who would listen.

Thus the Hermes of the vision is a person without crystallised personality, he is an archetypal kind of person, perhaps he represents all truth seekers, or the truth seeker. Certainly he experiences that which all truth seekers hope to experience, a kind of a reward by which they come in the end to the substance of their soul's desire. So we find according to the vision itself, this man wandering forth alone into the wilderness. He comes to a distant place, a place apparently barren and forlorn. But one apart from the ordinary habitations of men. Here he sits himself, and begins the quiet internal meditation from the mystery of truth. Now in this meditation we are told in the vision for

example that Hermes divides himself, or separates himself from his body and his senses. This almost immediately gives us a certain hint of yoga of Vedanta. The presence of a discipline by means of which the conscious energies are directed away from objective things is clearly indicated. Hermes was following a formula or a pattern, he was performing a certain kind of devotion, and the implication further is that this devotion is that which was taught in the mysteries or in the secret schools of initiation. In any event he retired into the inner parts of himself, he relaxed his objective senses, he depended not upon them, but upon the extension of an intuitive nature within him. And as he internalised, separating himself totally from all the concerns of this world, departing, not only into the wilderness of a desert place, but into the inner wilderness of his own life, apart from all things. He suddenly beheld the universe open around him, it seemed to break, burst, unfold with incredible rapidity and he beheld filling the universe, filling space, a strange monster.

This monster was a great winged dragon which writhed and turned and twisted in the air. And when we come to this, we come to our first exploration of comparative religion, for the description of this dragon is almost identical with the description given by Confucius of the mind of Lao Tzu. It was this strange incredible power monster. Something like the Chinese dragon, particularly the imperial five clawed symbol of heaven. To the Chinese the dragon was the symbol of universal energy, it was the symbol of light per se, it was the symbol of all power and of god as power. In the vision this dragon becomes the personification of universal mind, the intellect of the world. It is a creature of vast strength and mysterious appearance,

both inviting and menacing—and as the vision tells us—utterly unfamiliar to the normal senses or to the expectancy of man's outward perceptions. Hermes beholding the dragon is terrified, but there is nothing whatever in the vision to indicate that this dragon was a monster of evil it was not, it was the dragon of the mysteries, it was the winged serpent of the ancient Egyptian high animals, it was the combined symbol of light, light consciousness motion and mind. It was all these qualities and powers as one internal rising thing. In the Chinese philosophy the dragon is a most sacred and important symbol in as much as it represents an animal that feeds from the sky. It derives no nutrition from the earth, it does not place its feet upon the earth, its abode is space, it sleeps upon clouds, it never approaches man and those who discover it must journey to the most difficult and inaccessible areas. Yet this dragon in China is also the guardian of the pearl of great price, it is the guardian of the mysterious golden ball of light. It is even to some degree the devourer of the sun and among the Chinese of course it was also the particular emblem of absolute sovereignty and royalty. Hermes beholding this dragon gives us symbolically—almost in the form of pictures—a story which we must also give some consideration to. It tells us that the nature of true mind is unknown to man. That what we call the mind is not the mind.

That this thing that is real the mind is as incredible as the dragon, that it is utterly beyond our experience, and he tells us in one of the fragments that the mind that we know is not the mind. That what we call the source of thought is simply an aggregate of physical faculties and powers within us. That what we call the thinker is not the thinker, what we

call reason is not the reason with a capital R. What we call the God concept is not the true God concept, that what we are trying to define and defile in the very process is utterly beyond us, an incredible thing that in its first impact terrifies and brings us to our knees beseeching it to conceal something of its radiance from us because it is beyond our knowledge and beyond our power to endure. Thus we have in the vision the immediate clarification of this thing which Hermes is later to refer to as reason. But this is not the reason of the book man, this is not the reason of scholarship, this is not the reason which arises only from the experience and contemplation of worldly things, this is not worldly wisdom, this is not the wisdom that is derived from the research that we know. This is the wisdom that lives and forever exists free in space, a reason that never feeds upon earthly things but has a life in itself, a reason that is wisdom with wings, an immortal creature, a creature forever in motion, forever frightening or fearful in its aspects, but at the same time this fearfulness of appearance only, for this reason destroys nothing, attacks nothing, injures nothing. The only way in which it hurts man is because it frightens him, it does nothing actually to injure him. Hermes however fearful of the tremendous impact of this mind in the form of the great dragon beseeches reason to present itself to him in some more familiar or more simple form. And the heavenly thing sort of falls back into itself again and in the place of it is a great area of radiance, there is only light, and this light is therefore the appearance of reason, this light is a radiance abiding in space, this light carries within itself the power of the dragon, yet it is not of the same terrible and menacing appearance. This radiance then to Hermes obviously permeates all space, and reason takes upon itself the power of enlightenment. It is revealed as the

enlightener or the bringer of the light of the mind and Hermes feels himself lifted up and he is placed in the midst of this radiance and he stands there supported only by space and the light, having his foundation in everlastingness because he is in the substance of light itself. From within this substance there can be no falling and there can be no injury and there can be no lack of anything. Yet because Hermes has asked for wisdom and asked to know the mystery of the great reason, which is the master of the great mystery of the world, he beholds something else, remain possible to him out of the power of the divine mind, and this thing that happens to him is that gradually he perceives something he does not know what it is exactly, it seems like dark curtains or mysterious streamers of mist, or a strange obscuration that flows down from above as though it were a water putting out fire and this strange mist like darkness descending in every direction slowly causes the radiance to fade out.

The radiance is dissolved into this mist, and the mist becomes more and more dense and impenetrable until at last Hermes finds himself standing only in the mist. Yet where he stands has been the radiance but a water has put out the fire of light, yet it was not earthly water, it is not anything that we know, it was a kind of conditioned darkness, not simple darkness but a darkness that poured like water or moved like some strange mysterious fluid and as this darkness finally caused the radiance to vanish into itself so that it was no longer apparent or visible Hermes became aware of sighing and the moaning and of strange sounds coming out of the mist. In the midst of all of this strange moaning and sound he became aware that another transformation was taking place. He knew inwardly that

what had happened was, that matter, a mysterious tangible substance had gradually fallen from the sky and had devoured the radiance and that this radiance was now locked in this strange fluidic mist and that this mist was what some of our mystics of the early twentieth century referred to as the mist of matter, it was this material something that had swallowed up the light and because of this there was a strange moaning and crying and sighing. As this condition continued for a time another strange and wonderful thing happened, there rolled out of this mist and this darkness now ascending from below a great column a pillar, and this pillar became a great radiant thing standing in the way of the mist and Hermes heard the voice of reason, the great invisible dragon that was no longer to be seen. And the invisible dragon declared that this mysterious thing that had risen out of the darkness was the word of the mind, the power, that this mysterious mind word power represented a kind of instrument that was brought forth and created out of mind itself, out of being, out of reason. That was to stand until everlastingness as the symbol like the column of Enoch, of the enduring fact, it was the pillar perhaps set up in Egypt referred to in the Old Testament, anyway it was the steadfastness of the law, standing forever like a rock, like a great column, a great lighthouse or tower forever standing in the darkness.

Now this thing that stood in the darkness was a symbol also, but it was a symbol that in the Hermetic mystery and particularly with the later Hermetists takes on a great many attributes. This tower takes on some of the qualities of the mysterious rainbow of Noah, because this tower is the tower of the covenant, while this tower stands there also stands the power, which stood, stands and shall stand. This column

represents the presence of reality in the midst of all things. In fact, the great mind instructs Hermes that this tower is the certainty in the midst of the darkness. It is the ever present and indestructible monument, the lighthouse. The testimony until the ages, and perhaps Hermes is not so far from the fact—and he tells indirectly—that to him this tower means law, this tower is the law, and this law is what stands in the darkness. That remains whether man knows it or not, sees it or not, understands it or not, and modern science looking out into the universe beholds a tower of law which it cannot break and that which in its own nature is forever invisible, reveals itself by the immutability of the seasons, by the motions of planets, by the great courses of cosmic systems. by the principles of growth in all things, by the harmonies of elements, by the structure of cells, and by the mysterious formulas which by their reversal can even split the atom.

Every one of these things stands as a strange lighthouse in the darkness bearing witness to the fact that this world in which we live is forever supported and sustained by the single column of the divine will, that this will is the proof that God cannot, has not and never will depart from his world, that this principle stands forever. So in the midst of all uncertainty man searching for truth may detect the presence of these eternal landmarks. These principles and invariable patterns, which impel Lord Bacon to say on one occasion, that it is not necessary for God to prove himself by miracles, for his commonest works are in themselves miraculous. This thought perhaps is the principle behind this concept. Certainly it is the column standing as the inevitable, visible, knowable, tangible proof to the eternal power that never ceases, never changes, and can never be

destroyed. From this tower then also comes other thinking, other value, for this tower more or less bears witness to the power of deity, the strange intangible dragon which is in a sense reason as universal will, gave place to radiance, which is reason as universal love.

This in turn, destroyed by matter this strange veil of the senses which descends over man's spiritual emotion, gradually dimming these emotions and perverting them. This in turn gives witness to the final manifestation of the invisible through the immutable structure of a universe upon eternal foundations rising as a column out of the darkness. Now the great reason in the power of things then further explains that Hermes has beheld the descent of the eternal into the darkness of illusion. That the darkness in the midst of which rises the column is in truth the darkness of the mortal mind which stands in the presence of the column but does not see it. Does not know it, does not know how to comprehend it or to realise it, for it is only given to those whom God shall love, that they shall look out into chaos and see not chaos but the rising of the great column of law. The others are not given to see these things. The reason also explains how all this mystery came about. It explains for example that the divine mind within itself conjured up archetypes, these archetypes are its own thoughts. The divine power of mind reason, reflecting upon his own nature cause to arise within itself thought forms. These thought forms being what the modern psychologist might call the wishful thinking of the infinite. The infinite possessing within itself absolute potential and with also the power of absolute transformation of potential into potency. The universal mind began to devise out of itself the devisement of itself. It began to project its own eternal

reason into the product of reason, fashioning out of itself many patterns as though upon a potter's wheel, and each of these patterns was a magnificently potent blossom of thought, each of these patterns was a tremendous dynamic symmetry of divine idea. The eternal mind, having daydreamed these beautiful things within itself, having in it meditation, realised that of which it was capable. And having in itself the infinite good which it could not but wish to express through the perpetual visualisation of good things. It is said in the vision that the reason fell in love with its own thought and because it formed a partnership with its own thought it descended out of its own nature and became one with its thought and this descent or this departure from its own centre into the centre of its own production was the first motion and from this came the supreme illusion which is existence as we know it.

Thus Hermes goes on to say that illusion always arises from reason falling in love with its own thoughts. The delusion from man is the dedication of the energy of his mind to the service to the productions of that same mind. Therefore if a man shall have a fear and shall create a thought in which this thought is objectified as a pattern, as impulse, as a design causing negative attitudes to arise within him then his reason becomes identical with his own thought, he falls in love with his own idea or archetype, unites with it and begins to serve this idea rather than the truth. Wherever this occurs native habits set in and man loses his own centre becoming the servant of thought and forgets that every thought is a production of himself. Therefore the service of his thought is merely the service of a lesser part of his own nature. Forgetting this he dedicates his life to the fulfilment of his own thoughts and in so doing wonders

further and further into space like Dionysus following the magic mirror held by the titans. And when he has been lured away from the great throne of heaven the titans set upon Dionysus the reasoner and destroy him. And then they eat of his flesh they in turn are destroyed by the thunderbolts of Zeus and from the ashes of the titans—containing the blood of Dionysis—was fashioned the bodies of mortal man. This is your Greek men and carries the same essential point. In the beginning, reason is lured into space by its own archetypal thoughts, thus establishing the pattern which maintains upon all the levels of life and every man is lured toward chaos by his own thoughts, which he becomes enamoured of, thinking them greater than thoughts of any other man, and most of all regarding them as greater than the thoughts of heaven. In so doing he sets up darkness, he sets up illusion, he sets up a mysterious falseness by which his entire future is strangely possessed and obsessed.

The next point in the vision deals with another very interesting and curious thing. Having fashioned out of its own nature this mysterious symbol of the word mind the great power takes the word and uses it as a kind of hammer so that like the mysterious hammer of the Nordic deity Thor or Tor this hammer is used to beat out space, to carve or cut great holes in space. And we are again reminded of the Chinese because P'an-ku (盘古), the symbol of the divine mind personified is given a hammer and a chisel and is given the power to carve out holes in space and these holes become suns and planets and worlds. Here's an interesting point that Hermes makes, namely that these are not bodies in space but holes in space and that what we call the solidness of a physical thing is actually a solid within a

density and the density is the true solid. Therefore matter is not a solid in space but a deprivation or hole and density—which is space itself, life itself, the divine mind itself—finds its own productions as small areas of negation within its own nature rather than forms or structures more positive than itself. The word or the mind moving upon the great deep, upon this strange mist of matter causes something that Hermes in the vision describes as striving, therefore here we have an alchemical principle of motion releasing fire. We have motion as friction and out of the motion of the will in the form of the hammer or in the form of the active agent we find there emerging out of space the seven children of friction called by Hermes as the suns of striving.

These are the seven deities or the seven planetary gods and together these gods constitute what Hermes calls the second mind. Therefore there is the first mind or the reason which is the dragon and there is the second mind which is composed of the seven governors or the seven cosmocratores (Rulers of the World). The adjective forces of creation. These seven governors form the demiurgus or the second type of deity, the secondary God. To such orders of deity would belong Zeus in the Greek order or Jupiter in the Latin. These deities are the objectifications, the coming forth out of the darkness of cause into the great world of effects, universal reason of first mind. Therefore operates through the second mind which is the orderly sequence of created bodies and worlds. And these seven governors have their power from the great reason which is the dragon, but they disseminate this power from themselves into the world calling forth out of the darkness the shadowy substance of creation. These are indeed the spirits that move upon the

face of the waters. These are the Elohim of Genesis. These are the Amunian (Amun, Egyptian creation god) artificers of Egypt. These are the sacred vowels from who's combinations are formed the names of gods. These seven then become the carriers of the word, they are the disseminators, they are the diffusers and the distributors and they sit upon their ancient thrones or drive their chariots around the golden altar of the sun. We have therefore now the concept of the emergence of a universe of a solar-system or of a power. Now in the midst of these procedures Hermes beholds something still further. He beholds rising out of the deepness, darkness of things anthropos—the divine man. Anthropos seems to stand in the midst of all things, he appears to stand as an isolated and lonely creation as Goethe says twixt heaven and earth dominion wielding. This is the mysterious, primordial, archetypal universal man. This is the total man, this mysterious great man of the Zohar who stands with his head in the heavens, one foot upon the earth and the other upon the oceans. This is the great macrocosmic man and this man in the Hermetic doctrine is the one and only begotten son of the father. And this is the man that stands forth as anthropos.

The man which is the son of the mind. The son of reason in whose nature have been gathered all of the celestial elements, for this man is the final and most perfect of the archetypal projections of the mind of the creator. This man therefore is that being made and fashioned in the image of reason of God. We said that efforts have been made to parallel this man with the Christ of Christianity—as the only begotten—and also strangely as the celestial Adam. This power which is also found in the writings of Böhme (Jakob

Böhme, German philosopher) and is symbolised by an upright light letter A, even as the relaxed Adam is represented by a black letter A. This celestial man however, is not truly a Christian figure, this does not mean that it is opposed to Christianity, but it cannot be said that this archetypal man of Hermes is simply patterned upon the Christ concept. Nor could it be safely said that the Christ concept could have been patterned upon this, it stands apart, for this man fashioned by the father is truly the redeemer of the world, he's truly the preacher that was made to be proprietor of all things. It was this creature that was given the right to be a citizen in space, to wander from star to star, to gather experience in the great meadows of the constellations. This great man, this mysterious shadowy archetype was a perfect magnificent heroic creature. Almost in itself a god, but a product of a God, and into this archetype all of the essentials and essences of the divine nature were united, so truly it was the noblest work of the creator, and was really a kind of projection of himself. There may be a parallel to this in the idea of Osiris being reborn in his own son Horus. For it was through this great man or universal being which it had fashioned that reason came into its perfect rulership over matter because this archetypal being was virtuous, gracious, full of light and wisdom, defective in nothing, deficient in nothing because within him were all the potentials and powers of the eternal reason. Thus in a way eternal reason is consummated in the concept of archetypal human reason. Not the reason of a schooled man but the reason of the internal intuitive being, for this being was not embodied it was simply a great design, a great living archetype. Into this archetype however, the creator placed not only the tremendous potential of its own being, but it placed therein also the

peculiar habit of itself—namely the habit of daydreaming. This creature like its father could project thoughts from its own mind. It likewise could conjure up ideas, fall in love with them—become possessed by them and wander away from its own strange ethereal space foundations. And there is a wonderful word picture of this universal man, this anthropos, standing upon the rings of the seven governors or the masters of the planets and gazing downward into the mystery of the unknown. Hermes tells us then also a very interesting fact that I believe has become a point in Jungian psychology, namely that in the presence of the unknown man is always in the position of being liable to a fall. The human being cannot apparently in his own personal psychology survive a kind of mystery, which if ever grasps him or envelops him leads him into the strangest and most distant departures from reason and common sense. And in the vision, this anthropos, this divine man standing with the governors of all things looks down into the abyss. Looks down in the strange whirling shadows somewhere in the midst of which there is a broad desolate plain like area: matter. Matter which has swallowed up the radiance of the dragon. Matter—all of the atoms of which—are seminal with God, filled with the seed of God, filled with the power to bring forth dragons of themselves, filled with light, this light being more or less than the thought of reason, the eternal thought of the eternal thinker. And then Pymander shows a certain indebtedness to Greek mythology, for this anthropos, this heavenly man, gazing down into the abyss, gazes as though into the depths of a still pool, or upon the surface of a burnished mirror. And looking down into the abyss he is like Narcissus in the Greek legend, he sees looking back up at him a strange shadowy likeness of himself. This is the projection of his own thought in the

daydream of creation, it is his first sensing of the power which he possesses within himself to create by reason. The reason generates—gives birth to things—but it is not merely for the constant remembering and handling of dead facts that reason is a living thing, a god, and that that which possesses it can be so light and this anthropos looking down becomes enamoured of its own mysterious reflection and descends or hurls itself from the ring of the governors down into the darkness of the underworld. It goes not because of sin, it goes rather because of fascination, it goes because within the nature of mind is the eternal enquiry that the thinker cannot exist without his thought, that reason cannot escape the instinctive desire to reason, that the noun is forever giving birth to itself in the form of the verb. Therefore the thinker without a labour is inconceivable.

An existence which does not seek to solve the mystery of itself is inconceivable. And an existence that is not fascinated by the projected shadows of its own creation is also inconceivable. So we find this universal man moving downward precipitously but voluntarily and as it moves downward there is a reaction from below, a mysterious veiled being like Hera the great earth mother of the Nordic rights. A mysterious mother, mother principle rises up out of the darkness of the below and envelops the anthropos with robes of mist and of darkness. Envelops it with strange protective garments and in these garments it falls into darkness and into sleep and suddenly it is born again and its birth is in the birth of body and this thing that fell from the rings of stars is reborn as the weeping infant coming into this world. Now Hermes is not really telling us the story of human birth, primarily that is not his motive. Remember

our anthropos or a man is a kind of mind, the great mother, the enveloping mother is form or body which to protect this mind in the darkness of the abyss wraps it in a kind of swaddling garment which is also not different from a grave cloth, and thus protecting it. Protecting the power of the mind by encasing it in a form it then leads it downwards into the world of form and we find then archetypal man. Passing from the state of a spiritual existence to the state of a material existence and symbolically man the thinker is born into this world. Man not as a person but as an instrument of reason, man is a projection of the father, man really is the wish fulfilment of the eternal, man as reason exploring the darkness of the field of its own thought. So what has actually happened now is that the dragon, having projected the archetype of creation, creates an instrument by means of which it can move into its own archetype, this instrument is archetypal man. The symbol of Manus, the mind thinker.

Taking upon itself the likeness of its own mind, it moves into its thought, falls with it into nature or into matter and comes forth as embodied reason. This embodied reason is a strange thing for it has a tremendous invisible and a comparative limited visibility. This creature wrapped in claws and robes is almost incapable of motion, it has lost all memory as in the famous gnostic hymn of the robe of glory, it has lost all memory of its own origin, it has however come into existence with a spark and this spark is the seed of reason. It is this seed of reason without which no thing can be created and which is intrinsic in every atom, every electron, every indivisible ultimate minute particle of energy or substance. Every one of these contains the seminal reason of the infinite, contains the seed of eternal truth. This

mind then coming forth and becoming the archetypal material man becomes the parallel of the Adam Kadmon of the Kabbalists, for this is the Adam made of the red earth, this is the Adam who's nature is outwardly earthy, but who's inward parts still belong in and to heaven. This man or this eternal power, this wonderful anthropos has stood upon the rings of the seven governors and descending into the darkness of material obscuration has brought not only with it the power of the divine reason but also brings with it the powers of the seven governors. These seven governors being the active agencies by means of which reason is served, by which reason projects its purposes and by which reason is gradually brought into orientation in the material universe. Thus we find in the Pymander or the great vision that Hermes describes a multiplication of this primordial man, having become absorbed into the mystery of material diffusion this man becomes 7 men, multiplying itself according to the mysterious powers of the guardians or the governors of the world. Therefore the archetypal man now embodied but although embodied not obvious to us for we see no giant standing with its head in the sky. This becomes a totality which is broken up within itself to produce the seven men. It's pretty obvious that Hermes is now telling us the story of the archetypal man by which we shall say humanity, the totality, humanity as one. Later by the action of the differentiation of the seven governors, we find the one man as humanity, a reversal of position, so out of the one man come the seven endogenous male female beings, and these in the Hermetic tradition represent the seven races. They are the seven differentiations by means of which humanity can be variously distinguished into levels, and each of the races therefore is an embodiment of the power of one of the seven guardians sitting upon the circle of the

stars. And the infinite progression of things and these generations are reflected as the gradual individualisation of the power of reason. Each of these seeds develops within its own nature its own individuality, for the symbol of the anthropos or the universal man is the symbol of individuality rising in the universality of divine reason. So out of all this comes the mortal mind, mortal reason, the human thought, the human projection of its own thought purpose, and the result of all of this combines to produce individuality and the final statement of individuality, I, I or selfness, and this I is a pillar set up in the soul of man, just exactly like the great column that is set up in space. This pillar of selfhood or selfness becomes man's great centre of assurance. It becomes the mysterious axis tree upon which turns the entire wheel of his existence, and it is this same wheel—which as Buddha taught—he clings to so desperately in the cycle of trans-migratory existence. There is an I, a column set up in the soul, which to each individual becomes the peculiar symbol of his godhood, but this symbol of his godhood is a strange and illusionary thing and in the pursuit of it man passes into a constant recedure of separation, segregation, division, further division, until finally out of the one comes the circumference of ultimate diversity. While the eyes shine like little stars, matter becomes an incredible area of selfnesses and these form a new kind of matter—which is interesting and curious in itself—for just as the earth is made up of an infinite number of small material particles, so what we call culture, civilization, the vast area of human projects is composed of a kind of substance made up of an infinite number of selfnesses grouped together to form structures. These structures we may call economic, political, religious, artistic, they become schools and sects and creeds, they become

doctrines and arts and sciences forming like bodies composed of infinite units, compounds each one of which must ultimately be dissolved. Thus all mental and emotional forms, cultural forms and concepts are temporary kinds of bodies composed of the voluntary cooperation of selves or selfhoods which stay as long as they can stay, or endure as long as they can endure and then depart. So we have another interesting level namely that self, iota, the ego is the column set up in the midst of our own natures by which we seem to see or feel the presence of a tremendous and enduring power, but this power is purely symbolical.

Hermes then beseeches the great mind, reason which is the eternal dragon to reveal to him something more. He has now learned of how leviathan—this dragon—gathering unto itself a third of the stars of the heavens carried them forth into the abyss. We have again a biblical parallel. According to Hermes comes the greater mystery of it all. How men, how this infinite number of separate Inesses shall finally be reconciled, how from the base metals and substances of nature the infinite mind shall be rescued and restored and revived. Reason explains to Hermes that all these forms and bodies set up in nature are merely the instruments of its own purpose and its purpose is the complete and full discovery of its own unity. Man in order to experience that which is good must have certain need, must have desire, and be capable of the archetypal thought of good, it must have the ultimate archetype of unity in order to experience its own eternal unity, that which is undivided knows not its own unity unless it passes through the experience of a parent diversity and discovers itself. Thus reason through this vast pageantry and circuit of things is forever

concerned with its ultimate goal, self discovery. That from the exploration of the not-self it shall be restored to the equilibrium of the self knowing. And the great mind or reason tells Hermes that the course of this is a vast cycle of which the death of man is a miniature representation or replica. The reason says to Hermes that man is separate from truth because of the various deflections which affect its mind, which affect its attitudes and particularly divided from others of its own kind.

The formula for regeneration as set forth in the vision is almost completely Buddhistic but it is not certain that it was brought from India although it is possible that it could have been, because the doctrine of Buddhism had been established in Asia for 450 years before the probable date of the compilation of the Pymander. In any event this pattern—perhaps supported by the Babylonian account of the adventure of Ishtar at the seven gates—certainly gives us a clue to what we want. The soul passing out of the body at death, therefore precedes toward the goal of liberation. What is death to the body is achieved by a certain disenchantment of the mind, thus as the body must die to release its occupant so illusion must die in order that the truth content in reason may rise victorious over error. Here again a strong psychological position, and in this sense death thus becomes disenchantment. The reason escaping from the wiles of the senses and from the pressures of material situation. We have something a little reminiscent also of the Percival legend and the young prince in his experiences in the enchanted garden of Klingsor the black magician. This disenchantment—like in the story of Mohammed's night journey to heaven—consists of the reason ascending through the seven orbits of the planets,

ascending through the seven gates of the governors of the world and voluntarily returning to each of the governors the conditioning qualities which that governor has bestowed. Otherwise man fell by taking on attributes and qualities he rises by renouncing them.

We have a little bit of astrology coming into this pattern, which is perfectly consistent with the times for in those days astrology was as sound a science as physics is today, people regarded it with just as much appreciation and keenness of affection. The disembodied being, the disenchanted one was wakened from the sleep of material life and has passed out of this world of matter into the Cerberial world of the divine machinery moves first upward through the gate of the moon and there as Hermes says it relinquishes the power to increase and decrease. In other words it ends the moods or renounces its strange allegiances by which man has become servant of the moon, servant of change, servant of vacillation, servant of mood, servant of generation, servant of all these things which in their inconstancy hold up the mirror of illusion in which the being sees the distorted reflection of itself. To all the strange illusions of night and darkness, the waxing and waning, from the strange laws governing the 28 cycle of the moon, from all the strange world of phenomena—which is associated by the ancients with the lunar orb—and constitute together the lunacy of all time. These are rejected, cast off, returned again to their custodian where they shall be held to be used by others who need them, but now the soul is returning to its homeland. Having relieved itself from all of these mysterious bonds and bondages the soul then ascends to the gate of Mercury and here it returns to the guardian or the worker of the gate those things that

belong to the world of Mercury. Hermes says that these include all manner of deceit, all manner of false thinking all schemes, all plots and strategies, all brilliant intellections which have no substance in themselves, false knowledge, false learning, sophistication, that by which brilliance is mistaken for truth and the light of sophistry is substituted for the light of reason. These things must return again, and man to pass through the gate and ascend must pay the fee of the gatekeeper and at each gate the gatekeeper demands its allotment from the nature of man, so that at each gate man loses something of his mortal or corporeal nature. He ascends to the third gate, and here he must restore to Venus those things which are the peculiar province of this goddess. Most of that which he must restore is vanity, vanity must cease, he must never again be moved by appearances and the outward semblances of things, he must not chase the will-o-the-wisp of gratification or of idle fortune, nor must he in any way be deceived by the seemingness of anything. He must penetrate appearances, seeking for that beauty which is in the soul of things, and not indoctrinated only by those symmetries and graces of form which he has mistaken for the presence of reality. Having paid the keeper of this gate he goes on and approaches the gate of the sun. Here to this guardian, to this one of the seven governors he must restore its substance which is ambition.

Here he must return to the gatekeeper all of those things which bear upon greatness, all desires to excel others, all comparative search for self aggrandisement, to escape from the illusion of high office, or the delusion of humility and humble station. To escape also from the temptation of possession and the great temptation of all, to use what we

have to the detriment and destruction of those who have less. This must be left with the keeper of the gate of the sun, and then the soul proceeds onwards to the gate of Mars. Here the gatekeeper also demands his fee, and to him must be returned all contention, all discord, all hate, all war likeness either of the mind or of the body. Here likewise there must be an arbitration of every conflict which can possibly affect adversely the spiritual destiny of the soul. To Mars therefore must be given back temper, anger even righteous indignation has no place, all things but gentleness must be renounced. And then to the gate of Jupiter the soul ascends and here it must perhaps sacrifice more than in any other place given our way of thinking today for here we must sacrifice judgement of others. Here we must sacrifice the type of thinking which many people regard as philosophical, we must give up the mental solution to the mystery of life, here we must end forever the discussions, discourses, debates of the learned. Here we must also seek to escape from theoretical knowledge, from the common mistake that if we name a thing we know it. Here we must reform the whole concept of our higher learning making it identical with the quest for reality—rather than the accumulation of a wealth of ideas which may seem to be a marvellous fortune but really are only a burden to the spirit.

Having passed through this gate the soul comes finally to the gate of Saturn. Here it must give up those things which are its most basic ideas. Its belief in life and death, its belief in happiness and sorrow, its belief that this world bears anywhere within the substance of itself any injustice. Also we must give up all compromise about the laws of nature and the laws of God. Here we must give up all evasions, we

must give up everything which seems to point to the permanence of our illusionary state. So that indeed from the gravity of this planet we have gained a gravity which holds us down and we must return it so that we are once more free of motion. That we move with the moment that we master the mystery of time, that we overcome forever past, present and future in ourselves, becoming now not only bodiless but trainless, dwelling in space, and having so done according to the old beliefs we are returned again to the infinite from the strange whirring rings of Saturn of the soul which has ascended above the 7 governors then it turns into what Hermes calls the blessed state of the eight sphere.

This eight sphere which in the old astronomical system corresponded with the imperium or the abode of the angels or the abode of blessed spirits, was also the sphere of the fixed stars, here the reason having liberated itself now from all worldliness passes into the contemplation of the divine universe. Not again necessarily coming face to face with the great dragon but beholding directly the works of reason, beholding as Hermes did in his vision the unfolding of the resplendent world of absolute law, beholding truly the angels and the stars, even the wide eyed cherubim. Beholding a magnificent garden in space, a garden filled with the flowers of truth. Here the being comes into the certainty of the divine good, lives in the world directly the fashioning of God and beholds inwardly the faces and substances of the divine powers. Thus having ascended through the mystery of the ladder, or of the seven conditions, the being no longer conditioned moves again into the archetypal state of pure reason.

This to a certain degree corresponds also with the ladder of illumination described by Plotinus the neo-Platonist, for it represents undoubtedly the progressive refinement of man's consciousness and his motion from opinion to sense, from sense to knowledge, from knowledge to wisdom, from wisdom to understanding, from understanding to intuition, from intuition to illumination and from illumination to God. It is an ascending order. This constitutes on unquestionably the presence in the Hermetic doctrine of a distinct discipline perhaps corresponding somewhat to the chakra system of yoga Vedanta and again in the vision of the apocalypse of John these levels and layers through which the soul ascends are of course the seven churches which are in Asia. The victory over the 7 governors corresponds to the opening of the 7 seals. These analogies and parallels bring us again finally to the contemplation of released or illumined reason. Reason which by virtue of itself now reasons about the one subject, that is deity. Not deity theologically, but deity as totality, deity as the end of all learning, the summit of all sciences, the source and perfection of all arts. We no longer think of reason either as philosophical or as theological, it is now simply the total knowing of the total thing to be known. Hermes having received this part of the revelation brings to us another interesting situation for us to consider. He asks the great mind, the great reason, the dragon something about the nature of the expectancies and hopes of mankind about all this. He knows and perhaps has already been told because the original sequence of the verses or sections of the vision is not really known. He anticipates at least that he is about to approach the ministry of service, that he is to bring the message of the great dragon, that he is to become the instrument for reason, that truly it is not himself but the

divine reason in him which is to speak. And he asks naturally to whom shall the reason speak and who shall understand the reason? How shall this strange ministry be promoted? The dragon answers him very definitely, but of course as always in these cases a dogmatic way which is not clearly practical at least not in its first presentation. First of all the reason assures Hermes that the secret of the final liberation of all things is that the same reason which in its substance overshadows and permeates is also the same reason which in its fragments—divided and embodied—must accept the doctrine. Thus reason speaks only to itself. It speaks from the total appearance of itself to the diversified appearance of itself. And because every germ of life contains the seed of reason this seed can be restored, it can be released, it can ultimately be raised from the darkness of its ignorance to an abiding in eternal life. However this reason—in the case of mankind—is deeply buried and hidden within the structure of mortality, it is obscured, punished, almost destroyed by the senses. It has slight if any opportunity in the confusion in our outward living to achieve its proper and purposeful end. Therefore the divine reason tells Hermes very simply that the course of procedure—much as in the biblical parable—is that Hermes shall go forth and sow the seeds of reason, that he shall bring the message and the message will fall upon fertile ground and upon sterile ground and there shall be some that will immediately accept, there are others who will ultimately accept, there are many who will not accept, or time, or time and a half times. That there will be those whose understanding will in various degrees of intensity rise from darkness of their sleep and search for this reason which is the true substance of themselves. There are others again who will believe it but will not see it. There are some

who will say this is true but this is not for me. There are others who will say sometime, when things are different I will search, but now I cannot. There are others who still will say I would like to search but my worldliness is stronger than my faith therefore I will cling to what I know and sometime perhaps I should know more. All kinds of humanity. There are some who shall blaspheme the reason, shall deny that it exists and say that man comes out of the earth and will return to it and that is all.

These shall be considered as abiding in a strange thrice dark darkness, for they are not only without the light, but they are without the vision of the need of the dark and they are without the possibility of the hope of the light. These different beings will variously react and some may turn upon Hermes and injure him, some will ridicule him, some may attempt to destroy him, others will pass him by and ignore him and a few will listen, more will argue, and some in turn will attempt to convert him to their ways. In all cases it is his duty to preserve always the vision and the reason, to serve it in any way that he can, and if it shall happen that a man shall not come to not know the reason of the world because the voice of Hermes has not reached him or the voice of other prophets sent by God have not come to him or men have so diluted the words of the prophets that they can no longer guide their lives by the ancient ways, these men are not lost, they are not destroyed, nor is there for them any great and eternal evil. They shall simply at death go to sleep and they shall sleep and they shall move in their sleep through the gates and the keepers of the gates, and in their sleeping they shall pay no fee and there shall return nothing to the keeper of the gates. They shall return again into the great eighth sphere but they shall sleep and they

shall sleep through the mystery of this and in their sleeping they shall fold into the sphere of the stars and in the sphere of the stars there's a river,—flowing forever—called by us the river of stars. The milky way, and the milky way is the nurse of little souls and it nourishes them out of the milk of life, and when the souls reach this they shall enter upon the stream as little ships upon a river, they shall float and float and float. They shall float back again down into the world and be born again. They shall float back into the dream and into the illusion into which they have never awakened, and they shall rest for a little time among the stars that they shall be born again in this world, and they shall keep on this cycle until they awaken, for they cannot be released until consciously and voluntarily they return to the seven guardians the fees of the payment of the seven spheres. This Hermes is told by the eternal reason, is not because God loves or hates, because God punishes or rewards, for there is nothing that God could hate but himself, nothing that he could reward but himself, there is nothing that he can say well done to except the doing of himself.

There is no way in which a part of himself can be lost to himself, for he is all and he is forever. Therefore this great cycle goes on not by fear, not by hate, not by punishment nor by reward, but because it is under the mysterious axis which is called the spindle of necessity upon which all things turn. And these are the robes and the ways of the machineries by means of which the divine power fulfils its own work. They are the functions of its body, just as circulation and assimilation and excretion are functions of the mortal body of man. Because the rotations and revolutions of the bloods and fluids of the body maintain the body so the mutations and revolutions of beings

maintain the vast circulation of that infinite one, who alone is the essential substance of things. Thus this great procedure is punctured, it is the proper and inevitable way in which growth protects its own mystery and by means of which all archetype is fulfilled, and in the fulfilment of archetype there is the end of both the dream and the dreamer. The dreamer awakens, the dream vanishes and reality fully aware of itself abides continuously in the state of conscious reasoning, the eternal state of all knowing, but liberated from the great illusion which is self-knowing. This concept gives certain comfort to Hermes who then declares himself as willing to accept it. He also declares that it has come upon his consciousness that he knows that the sleeping of the body is the waking of the soul and that the waking of the body is of the sleeping of the soul. That man has two ways of life, two kinds of life, a life in which the senses are awake and the soul sleeps and a life in which the soul is awake and the senses sleep. That he has now joined himself consciously to the wakefulness of his soul and that by this waking he does not destroy the senses nor does he turn upon them as upon some evil thing, nor does he hate them, he simply returns them to the substances of space where they belong. He returns them to the great keepers who are the guardians of these things and precedes on his own victorious journey back to his own native land. He has completed his odyssey. He has fulfilled the terrible journey which began at the siege of Troy and ends when he reaches the land of his birth.

Hermes then conceiving these things meditates upon them and he tries to give us a certain further insight as to the meaning of religion and of the place of reason in all things. The word reason is hard, it is a word that we have to use

perhaps some of the things we have said have indicated its extra-intellectual dimension. Certainly Hermes did not mean rationality as we use it, he did not mean the reasoning power as we have it, he meant rather, the self knowing consciousness of deity which achieves a kind of existence by liberating itself from the self knowing of all parts of itself. While the parts remain self knowing the total is not, when the total becomes self knowing the parts are not. It is a formula, and it is a formula that is to be found in many ancient works, but perhaps nowhere evolved and developed with as much dramatic insight as in the Hermetic legend or fable. Also Hermes accepts this reason as a kind of complete and total insight without condition. In other words reason implies complete freedom from the pressure of sensory perception, it implies complete liberation from any false pressure of thought or emotion. Reason is the pure power of rational cognition, it is that which inevitably turns upon fact and moves into identity with truth. Reason is therefore a kind of undisturbed ability to approach the thing in its substance and is utterly impossible so long as pressures of any kind, mental, emotional or physical colour or influence cognition. Thus we have in the concept of this pure reason almost a Buddhistic idea, the sense of Nirvana as we find it, the Samadi of the saint in Eastern mysticism. This condition of the total experience of reality without the recognition of self existence. The drifting of the personality to sleep, in which in this moment when the personality ceases the universality takes over, rushes in upon man perhaps even with the terrible aspect of the great dragon, sometimes also in the subtle radiance with which that dragon later enveloped its power so that it was easier cognisable by Hermes. But in this pure reason he has pure knowing, the knowing of

causes, the knowing of things not by their names but by their substances and natures. Pure reason is therefore the utter cognition of total existence, total life, total energy, total God. And this cognition by its very nature—as Hermes himself realises—moves the individual gradually from his own existence to something else. Hermes fully realised that this ultimate state of reason could not belong to man. This perfection of cognition, this total apperception and apprehension of all things was no longer a human faculty. There could be all knowing power, there could be only one reason behind all things reasonable. Therefore man himself could not ever become totally perfect in this rational faculty. The only answer was that as man ascends and leaves his humanity behind he leaves also behind the mysterious image of the redeeming man, the anthropos, for the anthropos represents man's awareness of his nearest proximity to reason or reality. Thus the anthropos represents the extreme of conscious learning, conscious wisdom, conscious understanding. It is the highest state in which a being can contemplate its own source. Therefore it stands upon the circle of the words. It stands as the only begotten it is selfhood, the only born of the selfless. Man therefore can attain perhaps to an heroic state, for the hero of the Greek is the anthropos of Hermes.

Man can reach a condition where perhaps all knowledge shall be granted onto him, for everything knowable he shall know, for everything learnable he shall learn and everything capable of being understood he will understand, but when he attains that he stands on the borders of space. He stands gazing out upon the final expanse of actual participation, identification, by means of which all things observed and contemplated have their intervals removed. This man

cannot achieve by his own reason so Hermes following the Eastern mystics, Buddha and the others, realised that at the last step human reason simply ceases and something else goes on, and this thing that goes on is that which grew up through human reason, which became—so to say—the tutoring power for as man brings forth his children and raises them to their maturity man likewise within himself brings forth his reason, educates it, directs it, disciplines it and brings it to its maturity, but when his child is mature that child no longer belongs to him but has a life of itself in time and eternity. He has been only the custodian, the guardian of something he could never own. This is Hermes' concept of reason, namely that this reason which man disciplines, tutors and uses for so many diverse purposes was never his own and can never be his own. By means of the cultivation of it he gains certain joys, certain experiences, certain opportunities, but as he shares the companionship of his children in their growing years only to have them leave him when they reach their own majority. So reason having attained its majority leaves man and goes back to God. It carries with it that part of man which is by a strange spiritual hereditary associated with reason. It more or less carries back the only thing that is left of man by that time and that is his own reason. But his own reason leaving the world behind leaves its own selfhood behind and becomes again universal reason. So as Hermes is told by the great mind or the great dragon, the only reason a man can be saved is because the divine reason is in him, that it cannot be taken from him, he may conceal it, and if he shall rise against this reason with all of the skill and bitterness of his own disolutionments, if he shall become like a fallen angel, a rebel in space so that he raises his hand against heaven to destroy it though he deny heaven, he deny God,

he deny reason, tho he lock himself for a thousand lives in the small circle of his own contempt he can do nothing. This reason can not die, he must ultimately join all that has gone before and walked the path that all others have followed, for this reason will never die, will never rest, will never surrender itself. It will survive all antagonism and all resistance and will ultimately proceed to its own source drawn by the power of itself which is greater than the power of the whole world put together.

Therefore nothing can ultimately fail, but things can be unreasonably and unnecessarily delayed. What is the objection to delay if men want it? The universal reason says the objection to the delay is man's objection to the consequence of delay. The individual in his own objecting becomes miserable. The individual burdened with the results of illusion in his own character comes under pain, suffering, misery and loss as in the philosophy of the Buddha: man passes under the keeping of suffering he must pass through all causations and consequences due to his own ineptitudes. Therefore the way of reason is the way of peace, it is the way of release from obstacle, it is the natural and proper way that a man should go, it is perfectly proper that a parent shall raise the child, it is perfectly proper that it should guard it and educate it and bring it through many dangerous perils perhaps and sit by the side of sickness in the night, nursing and praying that the child's life should be spared. It is also proper that the parent should enjoy the life of the child and shall look forward to the fullness of that life for the child. But when the child grows up which is like human reason reaching its majority the parent, the old body, the personality with its senses and its limitations and restrictions shall be so selfish as not to

release the child that the parent shall try to dominate the child, shall hold its life beyond the proper time, shall make this child a servant of its own happiness instead of freeing the child to live the life which was its proper purpose. If therefore having brought the child to majority the parent continues to press its own will upon the child then this child's life is damaged, then there are sorrows for both child and parent, and perhaps the child will rebel or perhaps the parent will have a broken heart because it has not received the sympathy and understanding which it feels it deserves for having so faithfully reared that child. This is the problem of reason and the mind. But man's mind reaches a point of skill where by it is capable of sustaining itself and having its own life. It is then the proper purpose that this mind reason should be allowed to grow. Man should not bind it to merely the satisfaction of his senses, he should not overshadow it like the ambitious parent.

Man should not take the life of this free reason and bind it merely to selfish personal gain, nor should make this reason the servant only of its senses, of its passions, of its hates, and its fears. In so doing it oppresses the child which it brought up, it refuses to free the reasoning part to fly upward to the sky and to the light according to its natural destiny. Thus man can delay the return of the seed of reason to its eternal ground but he cannot prevent it for in time this struggle this conflict will exhaust the selfishness of man. He cannot go on forever he cannot be hurt forever. At last raising his eyes asking the heavens for pity he must come face to face with the column of law that rises in the sky and he must realise that against the eternal will he has struggled in vain and that his waves breaking against reality are themselves broken but reality stands unmoved. Thus in the return to

reason Hermes points out that eternal reason speaking through him Hermes gave its message to his disciples who are also reason, that one speaking to another is one speaking to the same. That everywhere the message goes forth and it shall come as a ray of light to the sleeping seeds of itself that they should burst forth out of the earth and those who are ready shall follow and those who are not ready will not follow. This following is of no importance nor does it have any meaning, because all these things are in the common reason which is the infinite good. No man should be surprised by the conduct of another because reason embraces all conduct and understands it and knows why it is as it is. So those who accept the teachings of the shepherd are not different from those who reject but those who have accepted have shortened the sorrow of their own journey and have found their way back. And so Hermes having seen the nature of his ministry, that his ministry is merely to pass along that road to teach and to go his way realising always that it is the eternal reason that moves within him and that if he is quiet and at peace this reason will leave and it will make those who know him receive his words and it will be acceptable to those who are ready and for the others there must be the silence and the return to the stars. And having more or less put this whole pattern in order in his own consciousness Hermes then raises his voice to him, this eternal reason, and his words of praise are the words of the priest for in this reason he is paying tribute to God who of all creatures alone is completely reasonable. He is thinking of God now not as an ancient power standing with thunderbolts or upon a gilded throne on some Olympian island. God is a kind of wonderful common sense. A common sense common to all things but uncommon to the human experience. This commonness of God, this God

that is everywhere and in everything here is not a remote tyrannical deity but just that voice which is raised in council, the elder speaking to the child, the child looking wide eyed both to the elder and to the world—seeking light. Wherever the child's eyes shall go, whether it knows it or not it beholds the reason of the world. It beholds all things in reasonableness and must learn sometime to apply this lesson to its own nature beholding order in the world. The child must grow to know order in itself. Beholding everything lawful the child must act in all things lawful and by so doing, it worships—for worship is nothing more or less than the living of the common sense of God in nature. This simple procedure of departing from the complexity of mortal mind into the simple and inevitable motions of the divine mind. At the end of his wonderful discourse Hermes raises his heart and his mind to the great dragon that is writhing in space and he says to that dragon—eternal reason—the creature which tho has fashioned in thy wisdom awaits the works that tho attends to. There's nothing of self only that the eternal reason moving in all things shall perfect its perfect works and that the wise man is not the master of the world but the handmaiden and servant of that reason which alone knows the good and can alone lead man to goodness to union with itself, in the perfect state of timeless ageless good. Thus the reason is all these things which we have variously named but most of all it is the total reasonableness of existence bearing witness to the great reasoner, to the great power that does all things in a reasonable way and that in this reasonable way all hope, all faith, all love, all friendship have their perfect works. For these things are the most reasonable of all.

Poemandres, The Shepherd Of Men

1. It chanced once on a time my mind was meditating on the things that are, my thought was raised to a great height, the senses of my body being held back - just as men who are weighed down with sleep after a fill of food, or from fatigue of body.

My thought a Being more than vast, in size beyond all bounds, called out my name and saith: What wouldst thou hear and see, and what hast thou in mind to learn and know?

2. And I do say: Who art thou?

He saith: I am Man-Shepherd (Poemandres), Mind of all-masterhood; I know what thou desirest and I'm with thee everywhere.

3. [And] I reply: I long to learn the things that are, and comprehend their nature, and know God. This is, I said, what I desire to hear.

He answered back to me: Hold in thy mind all thou wouldst know, and I will teach thee.

4. E'en with these words His aspect changed, and straightway, in the twinkling of an eye, all things were opened to me, and I see a Vision limitless, all things turned into Light - sweet, joyous [Light]. And I became transported as I gazed.

But in a little while Darkness came settling down on part [of it], awesome and gloomy, coiling in sinuous folds, so that methought it like unto a snake.

And then the Darkness changed into some sort of a Moist Nature, tossed about beyond all power of words, belching out smoke as from a fire, and groaning forth a wailing sound that beggars all description.

[And] after that an outcry inarticulate came forth from it, as though it were a Voice of Fire.

5. [Thereon] out of the Light [...] a Holy Word (Logos) descended on that Nature. And upwards to the height from the Moist Nature leaped forth pure Fire; light was it, swift and active too.

The Air, too, being light, followed after the Fire; from out of the Earth-and-Water rising up to Fire so that it seemed to hang therefrom.

But Earth-and-Water stayed so mingled with each other, that Earth from Water no one could discern. Yet were they moved to hear by reason of the Spirit-Word (Logos) pervading them.

6. Then saith to me Man-Shepherd: Didst understand this Vision what it means?

Nay; that shall I know, said I.

That Light, He said, am I, thy God, Mind, prior to Moist Nature which appeared from Darkness; the Light-Word (Logos) [that appeared] from Mind is Son of God.

What then? - say I.

Know that what sees in thee and hears is the Lord's Word (Logos); but Mind is Father-God. Not separate are they the one from other; just in their union [rather] is it Life consists.

Thanks be to Thee, I said.

So, understand the Light [He answered], and make friends with it.

7. And speaking thus He gazed for long into my eyes, so that I trembled at the look of him.

But when He raised His head, I see in Mind the Light, [but] now in Powers no man could number, and Cosmos grown beyond all bounds, and that the Fire was compassed round about by a most mighty Power, and [now] subdued had come unto a stand.

And when I saw these things I understood by reason of Man-Shepherd's Word (Logos).

8. But as I was in great astonishment, He saith to me again: Thou didst behold in Mind the Archetypal Form whose being is before beginning without end. Thus spake to me Man-Shepherd.

And I say: Whence then have Nature's elements their being?

To this He answer gives: From Will of God. [Nature] received the Word (Logos), and gazing upon the Cosmos Beautiful did copy it, making herself into a cosmos, by means of her own elements and by the births of souls.

9. And God-the-Mind, being male and female both, as Light and Life subsisting, brought forth another Mind to give things form, who, God as he was of Fire and Spirit, formed

Seven Rulers who enclose the cosmos that the sense perceives. Men call their ruling Fate.

10. Straightway from out the downward elements God's Reason (Logos) leaped up to Nature's pure formation, and was at-oned with the Formative Mind; for it was co-essential with it. And Nature's downward elements were thus left reason-less, so as to be pure matter.

11. Then the Formative Mind ([at-oned] with Reason), he who surrounds the spheres and spins them with his whorl, set turning his formations, and let them turn from a beginning boundless unto an endless end. For that the circulation of these [spheres] begins where it doth end, as Mind doth will.

And from the downward elements Nature brought forth lives reason-less; for He did not extend the Reason (Logos) [to them]. The Air brought forth things winged; the Water things that swim, and Earth-and-Water one from another parted, as Mind willed. And from her bosom Earth produced what lives she had, four-footed things and reptiles, beasts wild and tame.

12. But All-Father Mind, being Life and Light, did bring forth Man co-equal to Himself, with whom He fell in love, as being His own child; for he was beautiful beyond compare, the Image of his Sire. In very truth, God fell in love with his own Form; and on him did bestow all of His own formations.

13. And when he gazed upon what the Enformer had created in the Father, [Man] too wished to enform; and [so] assent was given him by the Father.

Changing his state to the formative sphere, in that he was to have his whole authority, he gazed upon his Brother's

creatures. They fell in love with him, and gave him each a share of his own ordering.

And after that he had well learned their essence and had become a sharer in their nature, he had a mind to break right through the Boundary of their spheres, and to subdue the might of that which pressed upon the Fire.

14. So he who hath the whole authority o'er [all] the mortals in the cosmos and o'er its lives irrational, bent his face downwards through the Harmony, breaking right through its strength, and showed to downward Nature God's fair form.

And when she saw that Form of beauty which can never satiate, and him who [now] possessed within himself each single energy of [all seven] Rulers as well as God's own Form, she smiled with love; for 'twas as though she'd seen the image of Man's fairest form upon her Water, his shadow on her Earth.

He in turn beholding the form like to himself, existing in her, in her Water, loved it and willed to live in it; and with the will came act, and [so] he vivified the form devoid of reason.

And Nature took the object of her love and wound herself completely around him, and they were intermingled, for they were lovers.

15. And this is why beyond all creatures on the earth man is twofold; mortal because of body, but because of the essential man immortal.

Though deathless and possessed of sway o'er all, yet doth he suffer as a mortal doth, subject to Fate.

Thus though above the Harmony, within the Harmony he hath become a slave. Though male-female, as from a Father male-female, and though he's sleepless from a sleepless [Sire], yet is he overcome [by sleep].

16. Thereon [I say: Teach on], O Mind of me, for I myself as well am amorous of the Word (Logos).

The Shepherd said: This is the mystery kept hid until this day.

Nature embraced by Man brought forth a wonder, oh so wonderful. For as he had the nature of the Concord of the Seven, who, as I said to thee, [were made] of Fire and Spirit - Nature delayed not, but immediately brought forth seven "men", in correspondence with the natures of the Seven, male-female and moving in the air.

Thereon [I said]: O Shepherd, ..., for now I'm filled with great desire and long to hear; do not run off.

The Shepherd said: Keep silence, for not as yet have I unrolled for thee the first discourse (logoi).

Lo! I am still, I said.

17. In such wise than, as I have said, the generation of these seven came to pass. Earth was as woman, her Water filled with longing; ripeness she took from Fire, spirit from Aether. Nature thus brought forth frames to suit the form of Man.

And Man from Light and Life changed into soul and mind - from Life to soul, from Light to mind.

And thus continued all the sense-world's parts until the period of their end and new beginnings.

18. Now listen to the rest of the discourse (Logos) which thou dost long to hear.

The period being ended, the bond that bound them all was loosened by God's Will. For all the animals being male-female, at the same time with Man were loosed apart; some became partly male, some in like fashion [partly] female. And straightway God spake by His Holy Word (Logos):

"Increase ye in increasing, and multiply in multitude, ye creatures and creations all; and man that hath Mind in him, let him learn to know that he himself is deathless, and that the cause of death is love, though Love is all."

19. When He said this, His Forethought did by means of Fate and Harmony effect their couplings and their generations founded. And so all things were multiplied according to their kind.

And he who thus hath learned to know himself, hath reached that Good which doth transcend abundance; but he who through a love that leads astray, expends his love upon his body - he stays in Darkness wandering, and suffering through his senses things of Death.

20. What is the so great fault, said I, the ignorant commit, that they should be deprived of deathlessness?

Thou seem'st, He said, O thou, not to have given heed to what thou heardest. Did I not bid thee think?

Yea do I think, and I remember, and therefore give Thee thanks.

If thou didst think [thereon], [said He], tell me: Why do they merit death who are in Death?

It is because the gloomy Darkness is the root and base of the material frame; from it came the Moist Nature; from this the body in the sense-world was composed; and from this [body] Death doth the Water drain.

21. Right was thy thought, O thou! But how doth “he who knows himself, go unto Him”, as God’s Word (Logos) hath declared?

And I reply: the Father of the universals doth consist of Light and Life, from Him Man was born.

Thou sayest well, [thus] speaking. Light and Life is Father-God, and from Him Man was born.

If then thou learnest that thou art thyself of Life and Light, and that thou [happen’st] to be out of them, thou shalt return again to Life. Thus did Man-Shepherd speak.

But tell me further, Mind of me, I cried, how shall I come to Life again...for God doth say: “The man who hath Mind in him, let him learn to know that he himself [is deathless].”

22. Have not all men then Mind?

Thou sayest well, O thou, thus speaking. I, Mind, myself am present with holy men and good, the pure and merciful, men who live piously.

[To such] my presence doth become an aid, and straightway they gain gnosis of all things, and win the Father’s love by their pure lives, and give Him thanks, invoking on Him blessings, and chanting hymns, intent on Him with ardent love.

And here they give up the body unto its proper death, they turn them with disgust from its sensations, from knowledge of what things they operate. Nay, it is I, the Mind, that will not let the operations which befall the body, work to their [natural] end. For being door-keeper I'll close up [all] the entrances, and cut the mental actions off which base and evil energies induce.

23. But to the Mind-less ones, the wicked and depraved, the envious and covetous, and those who mured do and love impiety, I am far off, yielding my place to the Avenging Daimon, who sharpening the fire, tormenteth him and addeth fire to fire upon him, and rusheth upon him through his senses, thus rendering him readier for transgressions of the law, so that he meets with greater torment; nor doth he ever cease to have desire for appetites inordinate, insatiately striving in the dark.

24. Well hast thou taught me all, as I desired, O Mind. And now, pray, tell me further of the nature of the Way Above as now it is [for me].

To this Man-Shepherd said: When the material body is to be dissolved, first thou surrenderest the body by itself unto the work of change, and thus the form thou hadst doth vanish, and thou surrenderest thy way of life, void of its energy, unto the Daimon. The body's senses next pass back into their sources, becoming separate, and resurrect as energies; and passion and desire withdraw unto that nature which is void of reason.

25. And thus it is that man doth speed his way thereafter upwards through the Harmony.

To the first zone he gives the Energy of Growth and Waning; unto the second [zone], Device of Evils [now] de-energized; unto the third, the Guile of the Desires de-energized; unto the fourth, his Domineering Arrogance, [also] de-energized; unto the fifth, unholy Daring and the Rashness of Audacity, de-energized; unto the sixth, Striving for Wealth by evil means, deprived of its aggrandizement; and to the seventh zone, Ensnaring Falsehood, de-energized.

26. And then, with all the energisings of the harmony stript from him, clothed in his proper Power, he cometh to that Nature which belongs unto the Eighth, and there with those-that-are hymneth the Father.

They who are there welcome his coming there with joy; and he, made like to them that sojourn there, doth further hear the Powers who are above the Nature that belongs unto the Eighth, singing their songs of praise to God in language of their own.

And then they, in a band, go to the Father home; of their own selves they make surrender of themselves to Powers, and [thus] becoming Powers they are in God. This the good end for those who have gained Gnosis - to be made one with God.

Why shouldst thou then delay? Must it not be, since thou hast all received, that thou shouldst to the worthy point the way, in order that through thee the race of mortal kind may by [thy] God be saved?

27. This when He'd said, Man-Shepherd mingled with the Powers.

But I, with thanks and blessings unto the Father of the universal [Powers], was freed, full of the power he had poured into me, and full of what He'd taught me of the nature of the All and of the loftiest Vision.

And I began to preach unto men the Beauty of Devotion and of Gnosis:

O ye people, earth-born folk, ye who have given yourselves to drunkenness and sleep and ignorance of God, be sober now, cease from your surfeit, cease to be glamourous by irrational sleep!

28. And when they heard, they came with one accord. Whereon I say:

Ye earth-born folk, why have ye given yourselves up to Death, while yet ye have the power of sharing Deathlessness? Repent, O ye, who walk with Error arm in arm and make of Ignorance the sharer of your board; get ye out from the light of Darkness, and take your part in Deathlessness, forsake Destruction!

29. And some of them with jests upon their lips departed [from me], abandoning themselves unto the Way of Death; others entreated to be taught, casting themselves before my feet.

But I made them arise, and I became a leader of the Race towards home, teaching the words (logoi), how and in what way they shall be saved. I sowed in them the words (logoi) of wisdom; of Deathless Water were they given to drink.

And when even was come and all sun's beams began to set, I bade them all give thanks to God. And when they had

brought to an end the giving of their thanks, each man returned to his own resting place.

30. But I recorded in my heart Man-Shepherd's benefaction, and with my every hope fulfilled more than rejoiced. For body's sleep became the soul's awakening, and closing of the eyes - true vision, pregnant with Good my silence, and the utterance of my word (logos) begetting of good things.

All this befell me from my Mind, that is Man-Shepherd, Word (Logos) of all masterhood, by whom being God-inspired I came unto the Plain of Truth. Wherefore with all my soul and strength thanksgiving give I unto Father-God.

31. Holy art Thou, O God, the universals' Father.

Holy art Thou, O God, whose Will perfects itself by means of its own Powers.

Holy art Thou, O God, who willeth to be known and art known by Thine own.

Holy art Thou, who didst by Word (Logos) make to consist the things that are.

Holy art Thou, of whom All-nature hath been made an image.

Holy art Thou, whose Form Nature hath never made.

Holy art Thou, more powerful than all power.

Holy art Thou, transcending all pre-eminence.

Holy Thou art, Thou better than all praise.

Accept my reason's offerings pure, from soul and heart for
aye stretched up to Thee, O Thou unutterable, unspeakable,
Whose Name naught but the Silence can express.

32. Give ear to me who pray that I may ne'er of Gnosis fail,
[Gnosis] which is our common being's nature; and fill me
with Thy Power, and with this Grace [of Thine], that I may
give the Light to those in ignorance of the Race, my
Brethren, and Thy Sons.

For this cause I believe, and I bear witness; I go to Life and
Light. Blessed art Thou, O Father. Thy Man would holy be as
Thou art holy, e'en as Thou gave him Thy full authority [to
be].