

The Vision of Hermes Trismegistus

Briefly describe the vision's view of God, creation/matter, man, salvation, and death. Bullet-point each item. Must be typed (Times New Roman, 12 pt., single spaced, 1 inch margins).

Vocabulary Key

Universal Life/Archetype/Supreme Mind/The Mind = God

Dragon/Poimandres/Mind of the universe/Light/Reason/Word = Creator of material realm

Seven Governors = Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn

Hermes, while wandering in a rocky and desolate place, gave himself over to meditation and prayer. Following the secret instructions of the Temple, he gradually freed his higher consciousness from the bondage of his bodily senses; and, thus released, his divine nature revealed to him the mysteries of the transcendental spheres. He beheld a figure, terrible and awe-inspiring. It was the Great Dragon, with wings stretching across the sky and light streaming in all directions from its body. (The Mysteries taught that the Universal Life was personified as a dragon.) The Great Dragon called Hermes by name, and asked him why he thus meditated upon the World Mystery. Terrified by the spectacle, Hermes prostrated himself before the Dragon, beseeching it to reveal its identity. The great creature answered that it was *Poimandres*, the *Mind of the Universe*, the Creative Intelligence, and the Absolute Emperor of all. (Schure identifies Poimandres as the god Osiris.) Hermes then besought Poimandres to disclose the nature of the universe and the constitution of the gods. The Dragon acquiesced, bidding Trismegistus hold its image in his mind.

Immediately the form of Poimandres changed. Where it had stood there was a glorious and pulsating Radiance. This Light was the spiritual nature of the Great Dragon itself. Hermes was "raised" into the midst of this Divine Effulgence and the universe of material things faded from his consciousness. Presently a great darkness descended and, expanding, swallowed up the Light. Everything was troubled. About Hermes swirled a mysterious watery substance, which gave forth a smokelike vapor. The air was filled with inarticulate moanings and sighings, which seemed to come from the Light swallowed up in the darkness. His mind told Hermes that the Light was the form of the spiritual universe and that the swirling darkness, which had engulfed it represented material substance.

Then out of the imprisoned Light a mysterious and Holy Word came forth and took its stand upon the smoking waters. This Word – the Voice of the Light – rose out of the darkness as a great pillar, and the fire and the air followed after it, but the earth and the water remained unmoved below. Thus the waters of Light were divided from the waters of darkness, and from the waters of Light were formed the worlds above and from the waters of darkness were formed the worlds below. The earth and the water next mingled, becoming inseparable, and the Spiritual Word, which is called *Reason* moved upon their surface, causing endless turmoil.

Then again was heard the voice of Poimandres, but His form was not revealed:

"I Thy God am the Light and the Mind which were before substance was divided from spirit and darkness from Light. And the Word, which appeared as a pillar of flame out of the darkness is the Son of God, born of the mystery of the Mind. The name of that Word is *Reason*. Reason is the offspring of Thought and Reason shall divide the Light from the darkness and establish

Truth in the midst of the waters. Understand, O Hermes, and meditate deeply upon the mystery. That which in you sees and hears is not of the earth, but is the Word of God incarnate. So it is said that Divine Light dwells in the midst of mortal darkness, and ignorance cannot divide them. The union of the Word and the Mind produces that mystery which is called *Life*. As the darkness without you is divided against itself, so the darkness within you is likewise divided. The Light and the fire, which rise are the divine man, ascending in the path of the Word, and that which fails to ascend is the mortal man, which may not partake of immortality. Learn deeply of the Mind and its mystery, for therein lies the secret of immortality.”

The Dragon again revealed its form to Hermes, and for a long time the two looked steadfastly one upon the other, eye to eye, so that Hermes trembled before the gaze of Poimandres. At the Word of the Dragon the heavens opened and the innumerable Light Powers were revealed, soaring through Cosmos on pinions of streaming fire. Hermes beheld the spirits of the stars, the celestials controlling the universe, and all those Powers which shine with the radiance of the One Fire – the glory of the Sovereign Mind. Hermes realized that the sight, which he beheld was revealed to him only because Poimandres had spoken a Word. The Word was Reason, and by the Reason of the Word invisible things were made manifest. Divine Mind – the Dragon – continued its discourse:

“Before the visible universe was formed its mold was cast. This mold was called the *Archetype*, and this Archetype was in the Supreme Mind long before the process of creation began. Beholding the Archetypes, the Supreme Mind became enamored with Its own thought; so, taking the Word as a mighty hammer, It gouged out caverns in primordial space and cast the form of the spheres in the Archetypal mold, at the same time sowing in the newly fashioned bodies the seeds of living things. The darkness below, receiving the hammer of the Word, was fashioned into an orderly universe. The elements separated into strata and each brought forth living creatures. The Supreme Being – the Mind – male and female, brought forth the Word; and the Word, suspended between Light and darkness, was delivered of another Mind called the *Workman*, the *Master-Builder*, or the *Maker of Things*.

“In this manner it was accomplished, O Hermes: The Word moving like a breath through space called forth the *Fire* by the friction of its motion. Therefore, the Fire is called the *Son of Striving*. The Workman passed as a whirlwind through the universe, causing the substances to vibrate and glow with its friction, The Son of Striving thus formed *Seven Governors*, the Spirits of the Planets, whose orbits bounded the world; and the Seven Governors controlled the world by the mysterious power called *Destiny* given them by the Fiery Workman. When the *Second Mind* (The Workman) had organized Chaos, the Word of God rose straightway out of its prison of substance, leaving the elements without Reason, and joined Itself to the nature of the Fiery Workman. Then the Second Mind, together with the risen Word, established Itself in the midst of the universe and whirled the wheels of the Celestial Powers. This shall continue from an infinite beginning to an infinite end, for the beginning and the ending are in the same place and state.

“Then the downward-turned and unreasoning elements brought forth creatures without Reason. Substance could not bestow Reason, for Reason had ascended out of it. The air produced flying things and the waters such as swim. The earth conceived strange four-footed and creeping beasts, dragons, composite demons, and grotesque monsters. Then the Father – the Supreme Mind – being Light and Life, fashioned a glorious Universal Man in Its own image, not an earthy man but a heavenly Man dwelling in the Light of God. The *Supreme Mind* loved the Man It had fashioned and delivered to Him the control of the creations and workmanships.

“The Man, desiring to labor, took up His abode in the sphere of generation and observed the works of His brother – the Second Mind – which sat upon the Ring of the Fire. And having beheld the achievements of the Fiery Workman, He willed also to make things, and His Father gave permission. The Seven Governors, of whose powers He partook, rejoiced and each gave the Man a share of Its own nature.

“The Man longed to pierce the circumference of the circles and understand the mystery of Him who sat upon the Eternal Fire. Having already all power, He stooped down and peeped through the seven Harmonies and, breaking through the strength of the circles, made Himself manifest to Nature stretched out below. The Man, looking into the depths, smiled, for He beheld a shadow upon the earth and a likeness mirrored in the waters, which shadow and likeness were a reflection of Himself. The Man fell in love with His own shadow and desired to descend into it. Coincident with the desire, the Intelligent Thing united Itself with the unreasoning image or shape.

“Nature, beholding the descent, wrapped herself about the Man whom she loved, and the two were mingled. For this reason, earthy man is composite. Within him is the Sky Man, immortal and beautiful; without is Nature, mortal and destructible. Thus, suffering is the result of the Immortal Man’s falling in love with His shadow and giving up Reality to dwell in the darkness of illusion; for, being immortal, man has the power of the Seven Governors – also the Life, the Light, and the Word-but being mortal, he is controlled by the Rings of the Governors – Fate or Destiny.

“Of the Immortal Man it should be said that He is hermaphrodite, or male and female, and eternally watchful. He neither slumbers nor sleeps, and is governed by a Father also both male and female, and ever watchful. Such is the mystery kept hidden to this day, for Nature, being mingled in marriage with the Sky Man, brought forth a wonder most wonderful – seven men, all bisexual, male and female, and upright of stature, each one exemplifying the natures of the Seven Governors. These O Hermes, are the seven races, species, and wheels.

“After this manner were the seven men generated. Earth was the female element and water the male element, and from the fire and the æther they received their spirits, and Nature produced bodies after the species and shapes of men. And man received the Life and Light of the Great Dragon, and of the Life was made his Soul and of the Light his Mind. And so, all these composite creatures containing immortality, but partaking of mortality, continued in this state for the duration of a period. They reproduced themselves out of themselves, for each was male and female. But at the end of the period the knot of Destiny was untied by the will of God and the bond of all things was loosened.

“Then all living creatures, including man, which had been hermaphroditical, were separated, the males being set apart by themselves and the females likewise, according to the dictates of Reason.

“Then God spoke to the Holy Word within the soul of all things, saying: ‘Increase in increasing and multiply in multitudes, all you, my creatures and workmanships. Let him that is endued with Mind know himself to be immortal and that the cause of death is the love of the body; and let him learn all things that are, for he who has recognized himself enters into the state of Good.’

“And when God had said this, Providence, with the aid of the Seven Governors and Harmony,

brought the sexes together, making the mixtures and establishing the generations, and all things were multiplied according to their kind. He who through the error of attachment loves his body, abides wandering in darkness, sensible and suffering the things of death, but he who realizes that the body is but the tomb of his soul, rises to immortality.”

Then Hermes desired to know why men should be deprived of immortality for the sin of ignorance alone. The Great Dragon answered:

“To the ignorant the body is supreme and they are incapable of realizing the immortality that is within them. Knowing only the body which is subject to death, they believe in death because they worship that substance which is the cause and reality of death.”

Then Hermes asked how the righteous and wise pass to God, to which Poimandres replied:

“That which the Word of God said, say I: ‘Because the Father of all things consists of Life and Light, whereof man is made.’ If, therefore, a man shall learn and understand the nature of Life and Light, then he shall pass into the eternity of Life and Light.”

Hermes next inquired about the road by which the wise attained to Life eternal, and Poimandres continued:

“Let the man endued with a Mind mark, consider, and learn of himself, and with the power of his Mind divide himself from his not-self and become a servant of Reality.”

Hermes asked if all men did not have Minds, and the Great Dragon replied:

“Take heed what you say, for I am the Mind – the Eternal Teacher. I am the Father of the *Word* – the Redeemer of all men – and in the nature of the wise the Word takes flesh. By means of the Word, the world is saved. I, *Thought* (Thoth) – the Father of the Word, the Mind – come only unto men that are holy and good, pure and merciful, and that live piously and religiously, and my presence is an inspiration and a help to them, for when I come they immediately know all things and adore the Universal Father. Before such wise and philosophic ones die, they learn to renounce their senses, knowing that these are the enemies of their immortal souls.

“I will not permit the evil senses to control the bodies of those who love me, nor will I allow evil emotions and evil thoughts to enter them. I become as a porter or doorkeeper, and shut out evil, protecting the wise from their own lower nature. But to the wicked, the envious and the covetous, I come not, for such cannot understand the mysteries of *Mind*; therefore, I am unwelcome. I leave them to the avenging demon that they are making in their own souls, for evil each day increases itself and torments man more sharply, and each evil deed adds to the evil deeds that are gone before until finally evil destroys itself. The punishment of desire is the agony of unfulfillment.”

Hermes bowed his head in thankfulness to the Great Dragon who had taught him so much, and begged to hear more concerning the ultimate of the human soul. So Poimandres resumed:

“At death the material body of man is returned to the elements from which it came, and the invisible divine man ascends to the source from whence he came, namely the *Eighth Sphere*. The evil passes to the dwelling place of the demon, and the senses, feelings, desires, and body passions return to their source, namely the Seven Governors, whose natures in the lower man destroy but in the invisible spiritual man give life.

“After the lower nature has returned to the brutishness, the higher struggles again to regain its

spiritual estate. It ascends the seven Rings upon which sit the Seven Governors and returns to each their lower powers in this manner: Upon the first ring sits the Moon, and to it is returned the ability to increase and diminish. Upon the second ring sits Mercury, and to it are returned machinations, deceit, and craftiness. Upon the third ring sits Venus, and to it are returned the lusts and passions. Upon the fourth ring sits the Sun, and to this Lord are returned ambitions. Upon the fifth ring sits Mars, and to it are returned rashness and profane boldness. Upon the sixth ring sits Jupiter, and to it are returned the sense of accumulation and riches. And upon the seventh ring sits Saturn, at the Gate of Chaos, and to it are returned falsehood and evil plotting.

“Then, being naked of all the accumulations of the seven Rings, the soul comes to the Eighth Sphere, namely, the ring of the fixed stars. Here, freed of all illusion, it dwells in the Light and sings praises to the Father in a voice, which only the pure of spirit may understand. Behold, O Hermes, there is a great mystery in the Eighth Sphere, for the Milky Way is the seed-ground of souls, and from it they drop into the Rings, and to the Milky Way they return again from the wheels of Saturn. But some cannot climb the seven-runged ladder of the Rings. So they wander in darkness below and are swept into eternity with the illusion of sense and earthiness.

“The path to immortality is hard, and only a few find it. The rest await the Great Day when the wheels of the universe shall be stopped and the immortal sparks shall escape from the sheaths of substance. Woe unto those who wait, for they must return again, unconscious and unknowing, to the seed-ground of stars, and await a new beginning. Those who are saved by the light of the mystery which I have revealed unto you, O Hermes, and which I now bid you to establish among men, shall return again to the Father who dwelleth in the White Light, and shall deliver themselves up to the Light and shall be absorbed into the Light, and in the Light they shall become Powers in God. This is the Way of *Good* and is revealed only to them that have wisdom.

“Blessed art thou, O Son of Light, to whom of all men, I, Poimandres, the Light of the World, have revealed myself. I order you to go forth, to become as a guide to those who wander in darkness, that all men within whom dwells the spirit of *My Mind* (The Universal Mind) may be saved by My Mind in you, which shall call forth My Mind in them. Establish My Mysteries and they shall not fail from the earth, for I am the Mind of the Mysteries and until Mind fails (which is never) my Mysteries cannot fail.” With these parting words, Poimandres, radiant with celestial light, vanished, mingling with the powers of the heavens. Raising his eyes unto the heavens, Hermes blessed the Father of All Things and consecrated his life to the service of the Great Light.”

Thus preached Hermes:

“O people of the earth, men born and made of the elements, but with the spirit of the Divine Man within you, rise from your sleep of ignorance! Be sober and thoughtful. Realize that your home is not in the earth but in the Light. Why have you delivered yourselves over unto death, having power to partake of immortality? Repent, and *change your minds*. Depart from the dark light and forsake corruption forever. Prepare yourselves to climb through the Seven Rings and to blend your souls with the eternal Light.”

Some who heard mocked and scoffed and went their way, delivering themselves to the Second Death from which there is no salvation. But others, casting themselves before the feet of Hermes, besought him to teach them the Way of Life. He lifted them gently, receiving no approbation for himself, and staff in hand, went forth teaching and guiding mankind, and showing them how they

might be saved. In the worlds of men, Hermes sowed the seeds of wisdom and nourished the seeds with the Immortal Waters. And at last came the evening of his life, and as the brightness of the light of earth was beginning to go down, Hermes commanded his disciples to preserve his doctrines inviolate throughout all ages. The *Vision of Poimandres* he committed to writing that all men desiring immortality might therein find the way.

In concluding his exposition of the *Vision*, Hermes wrote:

“The sleep of the body is the sober watchfulness of the Mind and the shutting of my eyes reveals the true Light. My silence is filled with budding life and hope, and is full of good. My words are the blossoms of fruit of the tree of my soul. For this is the faithful account of what I received from my true Mind, that is Poimandres, the Great Dragon, the Lord of the Word, through whom I became inspired by God with the Truth. Since that day my Mind has been ever with me and in my own soul it hath given birth to the Word: the Word is Reason, and Reason hath redeemed me. For which cause, with all my soul and all my strength, I give praise and blessing unto God the Father, the Life and the Light, and the Eternal Good.

“Holy is God, the Father of all things, the One who is before the First Beginning.

“Holy is God, whose will is performed and accomplished by His own Powers which He hath given birth to out of Himself.

“Holy is God, who has determined that He shall be known, and who is known by His own to whom He reveals Himself.

“Holy art Thou, who by Thy Word (Reason) hast established all things.

“Holy art Thou, of whom all Nature is the image.

“Holy art Thou, whom the inferior nature has not formed.

“Holy art Thou, who art stronger than all powers.

“Holy art Thou, who art greater than all excellency.

“Holy art Thou, who art better than all praise.

“Accept these reasonable sacrifices from a pure soul and a heart stretched out unto Thee.

“O Thou Unspeakable, Unutterable, to be praised with silence!

“I beseech Thee to look mercifully upon me, that I may not err from the knowledge of Thee and that I may enlighten those that are in ignorance, my brothers and Thy sons.

“Therefore I believe Thee and bear witness unto Thee, and depart in peace and in trustfulness into Thy Light and Life.

“Blessed art Thou, O Father! The man Thou hast fashioned would be sanctified with Thee as Thou hast given him power to sanctify others with Thy Word and Thy Truth.”

The *Vision of Hermes*, like nearly all of the Hermetic writings, is an allegorical exposition of great philosophic and mystic truths, and its hidden meaning may be comprehended only by those who have been “raised” into the presence of the True Mind.