

HERMETICISM AND THE RENAISSANCE:
A NEW CYCLE OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION

Imagine the sun as it slowly rises, breaks through the shadows until it lights the entire sky. Such is an analogy for the era of the Renaissance. It begins as an elusive movement of perception which one might consider as the recognition of human and natural magnificence, whether or not of Divine origin. This spirit then intensifies and results in intellectual, social and creative masterpieces whose sublime artistry and inordinate perfection, even today, one might see as the reflection of timeless connection among all generations. Many prior cultures also share this view of life yet it almost disappears beneath the Medieval influence of the Church. The Renaissance renews this sense of potential and admiration for the spirit of living creations. Actually, "the great forward movements of the Renaissance all derive their vigour, their emotional impulse, from looking backwards . . . progress was revival, rebirth, renaissance of antiquity." ¹

With one explosive beginning, the era of the Renaissance removes the shadows of the Dark Ages and the light of creativity, imagination and clarity spreads across the earth's continents and cultures. Enlightened thoughts and implicit truths return to the collective consciousness and inscribe forgotten knowledge within individual minds. Man frees his potential from the power of the clergy and steps forth from the prison built of Medieval dogma that holds nature and humanity locked in an irreversible state of sin. The image of the Divine escapes the confines of the Church and rejoins human innovation and intellect. This surge in estimation for the miracle of human potential brings forth scientific advances and artistic miracles. The transformed perspective regards the nature and the significance of humanity with admiration and expectation. This renewed respect applies to the living and as well to those who have already lived. Hence, the educated eyes of society turn to the entire range of the Greek and Roman classicists, from the pagan gods to the poet philosophers. As these once dormant ideas revive, they stimulate a magnificent array of artistic, intellectual and scientific achievements. The past and the present marry and give birth to the Renaissance.

Many of the incomparable achievements from this epoch contain a unique characteristic: They reflect the synthesis of apparently contradictory influences – Catholic theology blends with Greek philosophy– Aquinas and Augustine encounter Plato and Aristotle. The philosophy of this period must confront the intersections of Biblical scripture and the Copernican cosmology. In art, traditional religious symbolism merges with a new vision of the body's form; the great King David proudly displays a sinewy body and the vestal Mother sensuously reveals a tumescent breast as she nurses her holy child. In every aspect of human creativity, the Renaissance blends "Christian and pagan, modern and classical, secular and sacred, art and science, science and religion, poetry and politics."² Into this atmosphere of dawning awareness, the philosophy of Hermeticism offers an harmonic alternative that successfully blends the invisible microcosm with the visible macrocosm.

Hermetic philosophy begins long before the age of the Renaissance. In the fourteenth century a large corpus of ancient Latin and Greek works appear for the first time. These date from the third century B.C. through the third century A.D.³ These texts share a fundamental theme, one that in fact, identifies the purpose of the Hermetic tradition. The works profess to resolve the mystery of unity. In fact, the characteristics that identify this philosophy – correspondence and analogy – insists upon the unity between antithetical concepts. This concern over unification occupies the minds of philosophers since the time of ancient Greece. The quest is to discover the correspondence between the sempiternal quality of the Divine and the earth-bound limitations of man and nature. This conundrum stands as the foremost question for all philosophical and theological theories, whether they be the autochthonous cultures of the hunters-gatherers ; the

Gospel of the Catholic church; or the disciplined philosophical arguments of the rationalists.

The tradition of Hermeticism rests on the premise that such ostensible opposites – the part and the whole; the One and the many; the Divine and the temporal; the body and the soul; the past and the present– actually provide the way in which to understand the world. In Hermeticism, empirical verification represents only one aspect of the complete phenomenon. Sentient reality manifests the impetus born from the potential idea and the immaterial concept -- whether as thought, belief or image -- contains the momentum and seed that give birth to the physical form. Both material reality and invisible reality thus exist as real as the other; the twofold world is merely an illusion. However, this unitive perspective disappears almost completely as modern, technological society adopts the Cartesian dualistic paradigm and the Newtonian deterministic mechanism as the new ethical code.

Two exemplar representatives of the Hermetic tradition, Marsilio Ficino (1433 - 1499) and Giordano Bruno (1548 - 1600), illustrate the unique qualities of Renaissance life – the synthesis of the old and the new: in ideas, in beliefs and in action. Marsilio Ficino and Bruno Giordano represent two such Hermetic thinkers. Both men – one successfully and one at the cost of his life – extend the parameters of normative Catholic theological principles to include the essential gift of Hermetic philosophy: The truth that every individual has the capability to attain direct and personal knowledge of the Divine. The two philosophers constitute the two primary paths of this era. Ficino, a priest, a doctor, a writer and the translator of the complete work of Plato and Hermeticism, portrays the battle between faith and the Hellenic credence of philosophy. Bruno, also a priest and a teacher, illustrates the conflict between the authority of the Church and the proof of science and logic. The period of the Renaissance resolves the ageless choice between the heart and the mind; between the body and the soul; between trust and reason: and does this as in the analogy of birth – two separate beings give rise to a new and independent life. In this way, the inspiration of the Renaissance ignites a multitude of human endeavors which produce the monuments that reflect the inexhaustible potential of human creativity.

The term Renaissance identifies the period of European history that lasts from the early 14th century to the late 16th century. As with most epochs, scholars often date the end of the Middle Ages and the simultaneous birth of the Renaissance in respect to the changes in the territorial complexion of the globe. Thus, most historians agree that the Renaissance begins in the year 1453 which marks two notable events. First, the end of the Hundred Years' War – the war of attrition between England and France, which brings to a close England's possessions on the Continent. Second, the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks – the fall of the Byzantine Empire, which halts the Church's dominance of Eastern Europe. With Germany and Italy already in fragmented city-states and the Roman Empire no longer in prominent rule, the political climate of Europe offers a ripe arena for revival. In conjunction, these phenomena effect the flow of knowledge that generates the cultural and the intellectual marvels produced during the Renaissance.

The remembered names of artists, clerics and statesmen that inhabit this era stimulate the imagination and affirm the regard for human endeavor. In the realms of the visual arts, Giotto, Da Vinci, Titian, Raphael, Michelangelo, Bosch, Dürer, and Botticelli create works of eternal majesty. In literature, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Erasmus, Cervantes and Montaigne write works that celebrate man not Church. In science, Gutenberg, Newton, Galileo and Copernicus enter new arenas of knowledge. In discovery, Magellan, Columbus, De Gama and Ponce de Leon explore virgin routes on earth. And, in organized religion, Luther, Calvin, Loyola and the Inquisition emphasize the awesome might of faith. As one understands the universal impact of these people and events, it becomes evident that the Renaissance primarily differs from the Middle Ages not so much in enlightened rule or social equality but rather in the manner that humanity regards itself. Jacob Burckhardt, the Swiss historian, (1860) popularizes the idea of the Renaissance as a distinct historical period that heralds the modern age. In his manifesto *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Part Two – “The Development of the Individual,” he writes:

In the Middle Ages both sides of human consciousness – that which turned within as that which was turned without – lay dreaming or held awake beneath a common veil. The veil was woven of faith, illusion, and childish prepossession, through which the world and history were seen clad in strange hues. Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation – only through some general category. In Italy this veil first melted into air: an objective treatment and consideration of the state and of all the things of this world became possible. The subjective side at the same time asserted itself with corresponding emphasis: man became a spiritual individual, and recognized himself as such.

Burckhardt views medieval man as drugged, "held awake," under a veil of superstition, prejudice, plague and Christian dogma until the sun emerges and nourishes the seeds of creativity. The period experiences this transformation in a number of vast themes: the rise in respect for the individual; the retrieval of the wisdom of the ancients; the pursuit of scientific inquiry; the quests of geographical exploration; and the growth of secular values. These forces arise in the fourteenth century in the wake of tremendous political, social, scientific and intellectual upheavals.

POPES, MONARCHS AND PREACHERS: HISTORICAL EVENTS AND SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE RENAISSANCE

The ferment and volatility that distinguishes the intellectual, cultural and creative aspects of the Renaissance from the Middle Ages mirrors the historical phenomena of the period. Between the twelfth century and the thirteenth century, vast numbers of people move to urban centers. They bring their needs and their talents; and thus increase the prosperity of the Italian cities. The phenomenal growth of wealth leads to the growth of a series of city-states, that is, individual regions ruled centrally from a single city. In contrast to cities in central and northern Europe, ruled by monarchs, the Italian cities exercise a high degree of autonomy over their own government and that of the surrounding areas. This growth in the power of the city-states marks the decline of the authority of the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor. Thus, essentially five major forces compose the country of Italy: the Papal States; the republics of Florence and Venice; the kingdom of Naples; and the duchy of Milan. Although all of these city-states share the credit for incalculable contributions to Italian culture, Florence shines the brightest. The rulers extol their own prestige and wealth through the patronization of literature, philosophy, science, architecture, and the arts. In this instance, money begets creativity and scholarship as the aristocracy legitimizes its control through direct commissions.

This concentration of wealth and power in the cities precipitates new configurations in the composition of society. For the first time in history, the concentration of wealth spreads from the nobility to the merchants; such as bankers and tradespeople. Italy establishes itself as the mean point for the silk and spice trade between Europe and the East. In addition, the rise of international banking produces a privileged class of merchants. Although this new found wealth allows people the time and freedom to pursue scholarly interests, it also yields, not surprisingly, a fierce struggle for those who still suffered deprivation. The inequitable distribution of wealth arouses class bitterness. In 1378 these resentments surface in the Florentine Ciampi Revolt. Florence, known for the production of high quality woolen cloth, sees the working class members of the industry insist that the employers guarantee a certain amount of work per year. This rebellion affects the skillful Italian weavers who had labored for much of their lives in this one pursuit and it shifts the source of textile wealth to the new burgeoning industry of silk production. ^A It causes a chaotic upheaval in society that lasts almost five decades until Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464), the wealthiest of the Florentines, secretly gains control of the city.

De' Medici deserves recognition for the support and patronage he bequeaths to many

poets, scholars, painters, and sculptors. In addition, he establishes the Platonic Academy which permits the revival of Neo-Platonism and the growth of Hermeticism in the western philosophical tradition. His son, Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492), assumes totalitarian rule of Florence and he too contributes vast resources to the arts, literature, and scholarship, perhaps in an effort to legitimize his control. However, De' Medici's grandson, Piero de Medici, loses control of Florence to the monk, Savonarola.

The Italian Dominican reformer Girolamo Savonarola (1452 - 1498), institutes a theocratic government in Florence. Savonarola exercises a strict and puritanical rule over Florence. In fiery sermons, he attacks the Medici for their support of philosophy and the arts. Many citizens fall sway to his orations and the Medici must relinquish their rule. He exhorts the citizens to burn books, paintings, sculptures, luxuries and fineries, essentially to destroy everything that stands between man and God. To accomplish this materialistic *cleansing*, he arranges the "great Burning of the Vanities." ^B As always, restrictions generate reactions and the Florentines eventually reach saturation with the restraints on the good life they enjoyed under the Medici. They overthrow him and return the Medici to the throne. At the same time, internal strife among the various contenders for power shift alliances and balances between the different city-states. In one contest, Florence and Naples join against Milan. This alignment provokes the ruler of Milan, Ludovico il Moro to request assistance from the French king, Charles VIII (1483-1498). France, with an historic claim to Neapolitan throne, answers the call to arms with enthusiasm and alacrity.

Charles VIII of France speedily conquers Florence, the Papal States and Naples. The efficiency of Charles' march through Italy, as well as the seemingly unstoppable power of an alliance between France and Milano, ignites fear in the other city-states. King Ferdinand of Aragon, Sicily and Spain instigates the formation of the League of Venice in 1495. It consists of Spain, Sicily, Venezia, the Papal States, and the Holy Roman Empire. Ludovico il Moro also joins in deference to the ease and the swiftness of Charles' conquests. Charles loses his edge in the face of the strength of this alliance and he leaves Italy. This conflict, however, lasted well into the sixteenth century; the politics of this conflict helped such radical cultural changes as the Reformation in Germany.

The French, however revive and return under the leadership of Louis XII, who reigns from 1498 to 1515. Pope Alexander VI, the cohort of the Borgia family, supports the Neapolitan invasion of Milano. Like Ludovico il Moro, Alexander VI views an alliance with France as the solution to his struggle with the Italian state of Venice. The Papal States reside in close proximity to the territory governed by Venice.. Even though Venice calls herself an ally of the Papal States, Alexander VI nevertheless turn away from the League of Venice and joins forces with Louis XII. This alliance causes the delicate balance that maintains the unity of the city-states to shatter. In 1499, Louis XII conquers Milan and in 1500 he and Ferdinand of Aragon vanquish Naples and share the land between them. Thus, only Venice and the Papal States remain as contenders for the dominance of Italy. Julius II, who rules the Papal territories between 1503 and 1513, seeks to return Italy from the presence of the Venetians in Rome and the French from Italy. He recognizes that these foreign conquerors threaten the autonomy of the position of Pope. In 1509, Julius accomplishes his goals and permanently secures papal power in Romagna. Two years later, Julius decides the French represent the greater menace to the papacy and so he forms an alliance with Venice and the Spanish king, Ferdinand of Aragon. Together, they force the French to leave Italy.

Julius professes to act from both patriotism for his country and from self-interest. As the Pope, one would expect him to attend to his religious functions rather than to his political ambitions, yet he follows the previous Renaissance popes in the pursuit of secular activities. In 1516, France invades again during the reign of Francis I (1515 - 1547) only to suffer defeat from the forces of another soldier-pope, Leo X. The two parties negotiate a settlement which permits the Papal States and France to divide the authority: the King of France controls the clergy and the pope commands the church councils. This remains the face of Italy until 1527 at which time, the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V invades and brings an end to the power of the Papal States. This

act commemorates the final event of the Italian Renaissance.

The Papacy of the Renaissance era can claim responsibility for both the monuments that speak of the potential for human creativity and for the corruption that draws forth the temptations of human frailty. The Renaissance Popes, in addition to their political aspirations, desire to mark their stay on earth with artistic testaments that proclaim their near godly egos. Yet, to finance these projects, they acted with utter disrespect for the ethic values they preached. These Popes, Sixtus IV (1471 - 1484), Innocent VIII (1484 - 1492), Alexander (1492 - 1503) and finally Julius, all adulterate the very tenets of the faith they represent.

Sixtus practices nepotism: He promotes his nephews to roles of authority within the Church and he authorizes participation in nefarious political plots. Innocent publically acknowledges his sons and daughters. He then compounds his religious offences with moral errors: He exploits their personal lives and arranges marriages that preserve and increase his political future. Alexander truly portrays "a depraved scoundrel who bribe his way to the papal throne, uses his spiritual authority to free his daughter Lucrezia Borgia to contract new marriages useful in papal politics, and allowed his brutal son Cesare Borgia to undertake the violent creation of a hereditary Borgia within the papal territories. The sexual incontinence of the pope himself was not, as in the case of Innocent VIII, a matter of his youthful past, and the families of his mistresses also were rewarded with Church offices." ^C

Alexander, and the other popes, engage in simony, the sale of sacred offices. Pope after pope also sell 'indulgences', Church benedictions, and each man discovers the riches that the Church can elicit with its false promises and authoritarian reputation. The atmosphere of the clerical world reveals extravagant luxury and excessive vice. Thus, not only do the Renaissance popes contribute to the social upheaval that stirs the Italian city-states but they also taint the creative panoramas that memorialize the Renaissance, such as St. Peter's Basilica, the Vatican and the works of art that decorate these apparent edifices dedicated to the Divine.

In conjunction with a common lifestyle, the papacy, from the mid-fourteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century, also pursues consistent objectives that they believe justify any action. They seek to reassert the dominance of the pope over practitioners of the Christian faith; to eradicate unorthodoxy and build a uniform Christianity; to regain stability in the Papal States and thus to protect their domain from European and Italian power struggles; and to guard Christianity from the threat of Islam, therefore the need to eject the Ottoman Turks from Europe and to free Constantinople from Turkish domination. These reflect apparently tenable and laudable goals for leading figures of the Church, yet their implementation cannot excuse the "disgraceful conduct; the frequently inordinate luxury; the political intrigue; nepotism beyond all measure, unscrupulousness in all things, simony that was often blatant . . . which for the people of the time, were unbearable." ^D

CHURCH DOMINANCE TO CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT: THE END OF PAPAL SUPREMACY

The character of the papacy – a supposedly non-political entity – in Renaissance society precipitates its own demise in both the religious and the philosophical arenas. The transformation of the role of the pope from the spiritual leader of Christianity to a despotic, secular politician inspires severe criticism and thus opens the way for Martin Luther and the European Reformation. With the Reformation, comes an end to the authority of Rome and the papacy. In regards to the intellectual climate, the fallibility of the religious leaders prompts new and revitalized philosophical conceptions that emphasize the glory and magnificence of the individual and of nature. Luther does not alone challenge the Renaissance Catholic Church with his heretical notions. A vast range of belief systems emerge in this period: as diverse as logic, Newtonian mechanism, mystery cults, eastern religions, Kabbalah, magic, witchcraft, and ancient mythology.

Now that the Church can no longer claim absolute authority over the minds and the life of human beings, these various paths vie for dominance. Each path to ultimate knowledge acts as a separation from the totality of human contemplation; all but one, that is: Hermeticism ascribes importance to the synthesis of all phenomena and endeavor as it also assigns eminence to man as the mirrors the Divine creator.

Not coincidentally, the two most fundamental changes that characterize Renaissance vision – the recognition of the worth of man and the renewed respect for the gift of nature – can exist only within the space the church releases. A form of seemingly Divine justice permits the circumstances to reveal the true nature of the Medieval organized institution of the church. The papacy's role in politics destroys the possibility that the church retains its aura of God-like infallibility. Thus, the will to power that drives the battles for territorial supremacy and hedonistic excess generates its own defeat: the papacy's own actions bring about its demise as the true authority. Now, each person can more easily acquire the knowledge to govern his or her own life.

However, these innovative intellectual traditions and belief systems owe their existence to influences other than mere political phenomena. It is the area of invention that contributes the catalyst for humanity's movement from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The mind and the heart of man, always in search, discovers mechanical innovations that offer ways to expand his domain.

NATURE PROVIDES FOR HUMANITY'S PURSUITS: TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS AND DISCOVERIES

All ideas derive from their predecessors. Growth and development are the results of an incremental, gradual process than extends beyond the specific subject rather than an independent, definitive cause that apparently relates to a single phenomena. This holds true for the community as well as for the individual. Thus, to understand the climate in which Hermeticism arises, it is also useful to recognize the contributions from both other areas of human knowledge and other periods of the human story. The notable motifs of the Renaissance – the ascension of human value; the rediscovery of ancient wisdom; the investigation of nature's ways; the urge to investigate the unknown earth; and the evolution of esteem for the human being's divine nature over the church's secular values. These paths of wonder that distinguish the Renaissance owe much to the technological advances that originally flow from previous generations and other cultures. These significant inventions directly influence the changes in Renaissance society that allow Hermeticism to thrive: mechanical clocks; gunpowder and artillery; eye glasses; the printing press; the microscope and the telescope; and the mechanical clock.

"Four in particular, all with Oriental precursors, had been brought into widespread use in the West by this time, with immense cultural ramifications: the magnetic compass, which permitted the navigational feats that opened the globe to European exploration; gunpowder, which contributed to the demise of the old feudal order and the ascent of nationalism; the mechanical clock, which brought about a decisive change in the human relationship to time, nature, and work; separating and freeing the structure of human activities from the dominance of nature's rhythms; and the printing press, which produced a tremendous increase in learning, made available both ancient classics and modern works to an ever broadening public, and eroded the monopoly on learning long held by the clergy." ^E

The knowledge of magnetism; its complementary principle that a piece of magnetized iron invariably moves into a north-south position; and the inspiration to apply this natural phenomenon to navigation; appears to have an unverifiable origin. The Chinese, the Arabs, the Greeks, the Etruscans, the Finns and the Italians all, at one time or another, receive credit for this invention. With the aid of more secure means of navigation, in addition to new designs for ships that incorporate sails, exploration to new lands becomes possible. Thus, the Renaissance

receives the influences of the ancient Egyptian, Hebraic, Muslim, Indian and Greek civilizations. No longer could Europe remain immune to the heritage of other cultures. This influx of other belief systems and ways of life expands the traditionally held concepts that hitherto had defined European life.

Gunpowder advances the demise of the old feudal order and the ascent of nationalism. Armies now possess the means of distant destruction. As gunpowder expedites the means of destruction by man of man, it masks its actual devaluation of human life in the guise of power and thus breeds greed and arrogance. At a time of increased respect for the individual, China first develops gunpowder and Europeans learn of it as early as the thirteenth century. The awareness increases as Europe journeys across the ocean to obtain silk and spices. Other travelers return from Arabia and also disseminate information about the invention and its military potential. Europe's political structure – the wars between the royal dynasties; the wars generated by religious differences; and the ocean journeys dedicated to foreign expansion maintain the demand for armaments. This need in turn, propels on itself as it ensures the continued growth of the armament industry. Europeans now have the power to vanquish the indigenous people that inhabit the new lands. A sense of hubris descends upon the European man, a pride born of the power to kill with impunity and efficiency.

The significance of the mechanical clock resides in two aspects: time no longer relies upon a clear sky and the clock requires intricate mechanisms. The clock releases man from the dominance and dependence of nature's rhythms to an apparent control over its forces. It exemplifies an important transition for man as he goes from an integral relationship with nature to one of distance and mistrust. "Equally important," the clock represents the "new mechanical triumph" of the Renaissance and "provides a basic conceptual model and metaphor for the new era's emerging science – indeed, for the entire modern mind – profoundly shaping the modern view of the cosmos and nature, of the human being, of the ideal society, even of God." ^F

The invention of the printing press affects the ordinary person. Its existence generates a tremendous increase in learning, allows an ever-broadening public to read ancient classics and modern works; and erodes the monopoly long held by the clergy on knowledge. Prior to the 1440's and the discovery of moveable print by Gutenberg, scribes write every book by hand. This entails a tremendous outlay of both money and time. The advent of movable print permits a wide dissemination of even unpopular books, with only a limited readership. This enables more people to read and to learn about new ideas and practices. In consequence, people begin to question long established notions and thus to yearn for change.

The literacy rate in Europe increases as published books continue to flourish. Concurrently, opportunities multiply for contact with the printed word. The greater number of people who read for their own enjoyment and edification, the greater the extent of autonomous and fresh modes of thought. Education escapes the bounds of an elite minority. The possibilities increase for interaction with new ideas and extended choices other than those of conventional ideologies. The increased availability of books allows more people, from more varied backgrounds, the opportunity to read.

The compass and the printing press engender the discovery and the eventual Latin translation of classical Greek. The accessibility of this primary source material stimulates the subsequent formation of new academic universities. These universities adopt classical texts as an integral part of a curriculum that had remained unchanged for too long. People now glimpse the variety and the possibilities of alternative perspectives and foreign experiences. This change indicates the denouement of the Medieval Christian paradigm that views "personal identity as largely absorbed in the collective Christian body of souls." ⁴ The Renaissance individual regains the inalienable right to modify and to master fate. Into this climate, the gate opens to welcome intellectual expansion. Philosophical trends that exalt man, such as Humanism, captivate the intellectual pursuits of Renaissance thinkers. Nature also assumes her rightful place of respect as society rejuvenates the notions of natural wonder that the Church had previously deemed

unacceptable. Along with this change in the perception of the authority of the church, humanity now acquires the freedom and the means to pursue almost unrestricted themes. Hermeticism, a synthesis between the way of faith in a Divine presence and the path of esteem for the Divine's creations in the universe, finds its niche among the other more constrained belief systems.

FROM RELIGIOUS DOCTRINES TO REFLECTIVE DEPTHS: RENAISSANCE INTELLECTUAL, RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CURRENTS

In the Middle Ages, the prohibitions imposed by the tenets of Christianity circumscribe all aspects of society: the culture, the behavior and the intellectual life. The Holy Roman Church forms the common relationship between the majority of European nations and peoples. War, political ambition, avarice and hope all contribute to the evolution of the Christianity: from a faith, as espoused by Jesus and the disciples; to an institution, as demonstrated by the papacy. From its power base -- lands across the globe -- it assumes the authority to accept or reject intellectual ideas. The church leaders reach such decisions with regard to only one point of comparison: To what extent does this concept threaten the infallibility of church doctrines and thus weaken its hold on the truth. Thus, the church considers as possible contenders for dominance both the traditions born prior to its establishment -- such as paganism and natural magic -- and those that awake through the consequences of Renaissance science, such as Neoplatonism and Hermeticism. This oppositional character of their perspectives underlies their very existence. They arise in exact counter point to whatever doctrine inhibits people's freedom. They exist to represent a mirror perception; a reverse position to the limits imposed by the other. And the process continues as with a human birth: two opposites beget a synthesis, a third way to look at the world. The first comes into existence from a variety of factors; the second arises in response to the first; and the third evolves from the resolution of the other two. Thus, an entity comes into existence that unites elements of two opposites.

At the root of the Renaissance synthesis of philosophy and religion lies the ideas of Plato and Aristotle. Their divergent perspectives offer another choice in the brew. Now, in addition to society's religious ideas of man and nature which they derive from the influence of the church and the folk arts indigenous to the peasant population; philosophical notions of Platonic or Aristotelean origin; and cultural advances such as science and technology. That Plato and Aristotle, stand as indicative of the alternative frameworks in perception, implies the whole notion of *twoness* that characterizes the very nature of the world: left and right; front and back; and up and down. Their oppositional points of view allow a description of the complete composition of the universe.

The question arises as to the means by which Medieval scholars access the Greek philosophical texts. After the fall of Rome in 529 AD, the Emperor Justinian abolishes Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum thus restricts the availability of the majority of Greek philosophical texts. However, Islamic scholars rescue and preserve ancient manuscripts from Byzantine libraries from the library at Alexandria. Between the 8th and 9th centuries, Islamic scholars like Avicenna (980-1037) and Averroës (1126-1198), as well as the Jewish scholar Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), study these texts and write commentaries on them. By the 12th century, the Crusades and the new trade routes return these manuscripts and their commentaries to Europe by way of Spain, Sicily and North Africa. The reparation of these texts to Europe contributes to the intellectual environment that produces the era of the Renaissance. The invention of the printing press allows French and Italian universities to acquire copies and thus add the study of Greek philosophy to the curriculum.

Any description of Renaissance intellectual life must include three fundamental categories of human thought -- religion, experience and philosophy. The religious framework seeks the wisdom to return to the source; to know the origin of the natural world. The experiential view

craves to learn the truth of life through physical consciousness – the sensations, feelings and emotions inspired by the temporality of people, thoughts and nature. The philosophical approach strives to understand the truth of existence by mental amplification; by the interpretation or explanation of the phenomena. In an atmosphere of religious variety, scientific advances and social relationships, the church strives to maintain its position. For self-protection, it responds to Jewish precepts, pagan customs and magical beliefs, and Hellenistic thought. Thus, it institutes the Inquisition to defeat the Jewish threat; the death penalties for ‘witches’, the name given to people in close communion with nature; and the burning at the stake for heretical thinkers. These systems of thought differ significantly from Christian theology, in a similar way that reason and faith stand apart. They reflect contradictory methods of the search for truth. The Renaissance refers to the period of history in which scholars pursue ways to combine these two apparent opposites; to incorporate the reasoned concepts of the Greeks into the structure of established theology. In this goal, Hermeticism emerges as a potent answer.

In regard to the Hellenic influences in Renaissance philosophy, Plato (428 BC - 348 BC) and Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC) endure as most fundamental representatives of two contrasting points of view in the Western philosophical tradition. Yet, in spite of the contradictions that Aristotle posits to many of Plato’s basic tenets, their thought shares the common element that differentiates philosophy from religion, a difference described by the etymologies of the words. Philosophy derives from the words, *philos*, which signifies “loving”, and *sophos*, which means “wisdom”. Therefore, love of wisdom defines philosophy. Religion evolves from *regilare*; *re* indicates “again or back”, and *ligare* denotes “binding”. Thus, the rebinding with the Divine source describes the demarcation between religion and philosophy. Philosophy hence separates wisdom from the parameters of religion. Philo of Alexander (30 BC - 45 AD) attempts to incorporate the intellectual reasoning of Plato’s dialectic into the orthodox understanding of Judaism. The Medieval Scholastics and Neoplatonists introduce philosophical arguments into the belief system restricted by Church doctrine. This intellectual process seeks to defend the precepts of faith with the justification of reason; it also allows society to glorify human mentation above Divine commandment. In the Renaissance, the confluence of philosophy and religion generates the pursuit of a balance between the two modes of thought – an objective imminently compatible with the practice of Hermeticism.

The fundamental difference in the thought of Plato and Aristotle entails their perception of the nature of reality. Plato believes that definitions of concepts such as justice must, by necessity, fall short of perfection since they represent only pale and partial reflections of pure Justice; which exists as true knowledge in an invisible higher realm of ideal forms. All attempts to describe such objects requires qualification and thus represent belief rather than knowledge. Aristotle, on the other hand, favors a logical and materialistic scheme for the universe. He regards individual entities, whether human, natural or theoretical, as distinct realities in and of themselves. In effect, Plato attributes creation to a higher plane whereas Aristotle credits created matter with its own existence. The consequence of the two alternate points of view continues to effect philosophy during the Renaissance – as in, the work of Neoplatonism through the writings of such notable philosophers as Philo, Plotinus (205 - 270 AD), Origen (185 - 254), St. Augustine (354 - 430), and in the philosophy of Scholasticism, primarily through the work of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274).

Philo, a Hellenic Jew, adds the tone of philosophy to a tradition centered upon God’s words, as in the attempt to validate the logic of religious belief. He synthesizes the religious Jew’s yearning for a mystical union with God with Plato’s theory that all men desire to attain the highest Good. Prior to Philo, the Jewish faith consists of religious tracts and allegorical legends. Reason and intellectual analysis does not commingle with the word of God. Philo’s work opens the way for the Medieval Jewish philosophers, such as Maimonides (1135 - 1204), Yehudah Hallevi (1075 - 1141) and Baruch Spinoza (1632 - 1677). Plotinus, an Egyptian, professes that all reality emanates first from the One, which corresponds to the highest Good; it then travels through the realm of

the Mind, which brings forth intuition; and it then reaches the Soul, which represents the capacity for logical thinking. Thus, since everything ultimately proceeds from the highest form of the One, everything is Good yet also separate from the perfect state. This idea also reflects Plato's world of Forms: man represents the microcosm of the Macrocosm.

Christian theology finds expression in the voices of Origen and St. Augustine, both followers of Platonism. They contemplate philosophy in their hope to uncover the rational truth that will dispel forever their doubts in Christian dogmatism. Philosophy offers the prospect of faith as a natural extension of reason. "With Origen, Neoplatonism definitively inseminates Christian thought. . . . According to Origen, God the Father, transcendent and incomprehensible, eternally engenders the Sun, his Image, who is at once both incomprehensible and comprehensible. Through the Logos, God creates a multitude of pure spirits and favors them with life and knowledge. But with the exception of Jesus, all the pure spirits estrange themselves from God. . . . In sum, the crisis is explained by the pure spirits' innocence. In withdrawing from God, they became "souls" and the Father provides them with bodies in accord with the gravity of their faults: with bodies of angles, of men, or of demons. . . . Then, thanks to their free choice, but also to divine providence, the fallen souls begin the pilgrimage which will end with their return to God. . . . Salvation amounts to a return to the original perfection."^G With this tableau, Origen proposes the pre-existence of the soul, which reflects the passage from the Platonic world of Forms to the material world. It also foreshadows Ficino's eschatology. In essence, this theory "reinforces the Church's universalism" . . . since it mirrors the idea of reincarnation, a key belief in "Indian religious thought."^H It also supports the Hermetic concept of "as above, so below" in that it applies the observable cycles of nature to those of the invisible world of spirit.

St. Augustine mirrors the Renaissance; His personal and his spiritual life synthesize oppositional heritages. His philosophy blends his religious and philosophical background: He incorporates his paternal heritage of paganism, his maternal lineage of Christianity, Skepticism, Rhetoric and Manichaeism, a Christian heresy that purports to provide a rational Christianity founded on the basis of pure Scripture, and Neoplatonism. Augustine contends that ". . . thought is the measure of being, and what the mind beholds is alone truly real. The proper object of knowledge is the soul and God. Man is a rational being, and his natural end is to know the highest Truth, that *spaiencia* or wisdom which is the Logos or Word of God himself. And man can know the Truth. . . . thought indubitably exists, and there exists a thinker; and in knowing that he is a thinker man has a least one certain truth. The realm of Truth is thus to be approached by turning within the soul, within oneself."^I Augustine exalts the human distinction to reason and emphasizes self-knowledge as the fulcrum necessary to attain the truth. He thus establishes man's ultimate role in mystic union and introduces the seeds of Renaissance Humanism. Into this epistemology, he integrates traditional Christian theology by the limits he sets on man's ability to reach union with the Divine. Born with original sin, no person can entirely govern his own motivations and instincts. To do good and follow God's precepts one must rely on God's grace.

St. Thomas Aquinas attempts to finally resolve the conflict between reason and faith. The son of a count, Aquinas uses Aristotelean logic to conclusively prove the existence of God. The crux of St. Thomas' thought encompasses the conviction that Christian revelation and human knowledge actually represent the same truth rather than reflect conflicting positions. Humanity knows truth through evidence of past truths; man believes truth on the basis of trust in an authority. Religious faith thus requires that man accepts the truth in response to God's revelation. Although it appears that knowledge and faith fall into two distinct realms, Thomas professes that since man can know as true some Divine revelations, he can also know the unknowable mysteries since they derive from the same perfect Source. Aquinas follows Aristotle's ideas of logical demonstration to unify reason and faith. He equates the original cause with the attribute of truth and God with the original cause; therefore God is truth. Thus, the search for truth through reason represents the search the search for God. All that God provides to man exists in harmony within

His universe and thus, reason and revelation share a Divine source.

Although Aquinas employs the style of Aristotelean arguments to validate the existence of God, the church guardians consider even this use of philosophy as dangerous for the perpetuation of Christian doctrines. They worry about the theological implications that could result from reliance on philosophy. The Bishop of Paris issues the Condemnations of 1277 that prohibit teaching the 219 Aristotelian propositions that deny the omnipotence of God. The repression of Aristotle's theories only serves to elicit further interest in Hellenistic philosophy. Islamic expansions restore Greek and Arabic translations of many texts to European scholars. The translations occur through the patronage of de Medici and the linguistic expertise of Marcilio Ficino. Of particular importance, scholars learn that Plato also emphasizes spirituality and immortality; a fact that provides acceptance for the Humanist and the Hermetic ideas of this period.

Renaissance Humanism captures the spirit of learning that flourishes as the Medieval period draws to an end. The diminished authority of the church, the accessibility of Greek texts and the increased respect for the talents and capabilities of human beings initiate this philosophical system. Humanism signifies an appreciation for intuition, feelings, emotions and experiences rather than the Christian penchant for arbitrary faith, authority and revelation. It values ethical behavior and the search for truth. Humanism pertains to life on earth; not the promised life in the hereafter. However, Renaissance philosophers, such as Petrarch (1304 - 1374), Pico della Mirandola (1463 - 1494) and Erasmus (1466 - 1536), restrain these themes within the context of Christianity. They remember their sense of piety even in the face of adulation for the human body. These two divergent institutions, the Catholic church and the physical form, seek the way to use reason to justify faith. One could offer this syllogism: Since all knowledge comes from God, the use of reason proves the existence of God. In simple terms, reason and faith do not necessarily contradict one another; they simply reflect two versions of the whole. This crucial notion introduces the path of the Hermetic.

HERMES REVEALS A SECRET TO HUMANITY: THE PATH OF HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY

The Hermetic philosopher acquires knowledge through his identification of the infinite correspondences that exist in created life. The Hermeticist mirrors the ideal Renaissance Man who integrates "old dichotomies . . . into a larger unity: activity in the world as well as contemplation of eternal truths; devotion to state, family, and self as well as to God and Church; physical pleasure as well as spiritual happiness; prosperity as well as virtue."⁵ Renaissance Hermeticism embraces the synthesis of these apparent contradictions and weaves the strands into a pattern that balances ancient wisdom with new directions.

The philosophy of Hermeticism originates with ancient Egyptian wisdom; passes into written word through the Greeks; reaches a modern formulation in the Renaissance; and enjoys yet another rebirth in society today. Hermeticism offers an epistemology that connects the modes of human thought, such as, philosophy, religion, science and art. Two essential tenets encapsulate the entire body of Hermetic literature – analogy and correspondence. In fact, these practices apply to more than simply a system of knowledge; These perceptions actually define the parameters of Hermetic philosophy. The use of analogy and correspondence governs the way one acts, what one thinks and the way one experiences life. This perspective represents a way to arrange relationships between the many levels of existence that compose the visible world of experience and the infinite potentials of the invisible world. In the Hermetic world view, the individual lives in collaboration with the Divine whose presence in turn, colors daily life.

The first Hermetic texts first appear in Egypt around two thousand years ago, authored by Greek philosophers. "It has long been accepted as a known historical fact that both Pythagoras and Plato studied in Egypt. They must have studied in the schools of the Egyptian priests. And

what was taught in those schools? No one, except the priest themselves, knew what was taught in them; the priests were careful to keep that knowledge to themselves. All that the outside public knew about it was that the priests had in their hands a collection of ancient books, which were said to have been written by the god Thoth, the scribe of the gods and the inventor of the art of writing. . . . From all this it was inferred that Pythagoras and Plato got their wisdom from the priests of Egypt, and the priests of Egypt got it from their sacred books, which were the books of Thoth.”^κ

The legend considers Hermes Trismegistus to be the author of the Corpus: He receives this Divine knowledge of the physical world at the same time as Moses receives Divine knowledge about the moral world. This connection enables the three monotheistic religions to accept the Hermetic tradition. Its ideas find expression in the esoteric components of their faith: Sufism in Islam; Kabbalah in Judaism; mysticism in Christianity. A third century Kabbalistic text, entitled *Sepher Yetzirah*, the *Book of Creation*, elaborates a cosmology of correspondences that relate numbers, Hebrew letters and natural phenomena “with the life and body of man.”^λ For example, the sevenfold one of the planets, days of the week and the openings in the head, and the twelve fold one of the zodiac, directions of space, months and organs of the body. Realization of the macrocosm in the microcosm leads to union with God. The *Zohar*, or *The Book of Wonder*, the foremost text of Kabbalah from the twelfth century, clearly express the Hermetic idea of correspondence:

The skin covering all, corresponds to the firmaments which cover all things. And all these are merely garments to clothe himself withal, for within is the essential man. Everything below corresponds to that which is above. This is the significance of the words: “And God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him.” Esoterically, the man below corresponds entirely to the Man above. Just as in the firmament, which covers the whole universe, we behold different shapes formed by the conjunction of stars and planets to make us aware of hidden things and deep mysteries; so upon the skin which covers our body and which is, as it were, the body’s firmament, covering all, there are shapes and designs – the stars and planets of the body’s firmament, the skin through which the wise of heart may behold the hidden things and the deep mysteries indicated by these shapes and expressed in human form.^μ

The name that designates this philosophy, Hermes, the messenger of the gods, suggests the intent to deliver the truth; a truth that will resolve the apparent dualism of the material world. The Hellenic Hermes finds his antecedent in the Pharonic Thoth, a great god in the ancient Egyptian pantheon; the god of wisdom, learning, magic and the scribe of the gods. His original persona, as depicted in works such as the Egyptian Book of the Dead, furthers his reputation as a being of wonder. These qualities support the credibility of these writings. Religious sects, even those that date from the time of Alexander the Great, accept Hermes as an example of right living.

Thoth represents the god of wisdom, the recorder of the gods and the principal pleader for the soul's safe passage during the judgement of the dead. In Egyptian mythology, Thoth acts as an emissary between the hostile armies of Seth and Horus. He successfully negotiates peace and establishes his role as a mediator between opposite positions. As his name becomes associated with the persona of the Egyptian god Thoth, Hermes dons the mantle of a philosopher-king. He thus exemplifies, for the Renaissance, the memory of those rare sages whose mission is to educate the human race. “The identification of Thoth with Hermes was already known by Herodotus. For the writers of the Hellenistic period, Thoth was the patron of all the sciences, the inventor of hieroglyphs, and a redoubtable magician. The Stoics identified Hermes with the logos and held that he created the world by his word.”⁶

The Greek god Hermes serves as the herald and the messenger of the other gods. In the sculpture and mosaics of the period, he usually wears winged shoes, a hat and he carries a caduceus. Hermes guides the departed souls along their way to Hades. To the Greeks, Hermes represents the god of transitions: the marker of boundaries, the messenger between Olympus and earth and the patron god of learning, writing and language. In Roman mythology, Hermes transmutes to Mercury, the messenger of the gods. The philosophy adopts the name Hermes to emphasize a world that rotates in harmony. Hermes is he who conveys the Divine message and he who bridges the twain of two antithetical components. Hermes reveals his message of wisdom in the works of Renaissance Hermetic philosophy.

Although a number of Greeks mention Hermes⁷, the collection of texts that comprise this tradition first appears in the Western world during the Renaissance. The fall of Constantinople in the fifteenth century provides the opportunity for Western scholars to learn of them. Cosimo de Medici acquires the books from the Byzantine Empire. He asks Marcilio Ficino, the head of the Platonic Academy of Florence, to put aside his translation of Plato and instead to translate these texts immediately. These sacred texts describe cosmological myths, the nature of God, the qualities of the soul, the correspondence that forms the world, and other sacrosanct themes. Their viewpoint diametrically opposes the normative Catholic theology of Aristotle and Aquinas. The Renaissance Hermeticists specify that the route to the Divine requires the knowledge of unity. To reach the Divine presence is to reconcile the poles of the created world. In "The Emerald Table"⁸, the Hermeticist answers with the maxim "as above, so below," the pivotal phrase of the Hermetic path. Although not included in the standard *Corpus Hermeticum* that Walter Scott translates and compiles in the early 1920's, this poem, or declaration, best represents the essence of the philosophy, in that it concerns the Hermetic ontology of the universe. The texts in the standard collection by Scott all speak of theological and philosophical concerns. An Arabic translation from the ninth century stands as the earliest extant copy

The concept of "as above, so below" reflects the epistemic components of Hermetic philosophy and theology. It refers to the connection between the microcosm and the macrocosm, the connection of similarity. This bond bridges apparent opposites, such as, the Divine and His creations; the visible and the invisible realms; humanity and nature; the mind and the body; man and woman. Rather than concur with the mechanistic division of the whole into parts or the differentiation of two congruent aspects, Hermeticism seeks the similarities and the connections. In essence, the mechanistic view depends on cause and effect. One event brings about the next in a finite equation. The Hermetic way emphasizes the relationship that exists between all living entities. One does not cause the other, as the in logical, mechanistic mode of thinking. Rather, one aspect reveals the totality of the phenomenon. For example, a headache springs from a culmination of pressures that aspirin only masks. The pain represents more than simply muscle spasms; it reflects an emotional state that must find release. To ignore the message of the pain and submerge it under drugs or inattentiveness neglects to recognize it in relationship to the person's body and to the person's life. The part reflects the whole, in the Hermetic view. Thus, to perceive this unity; to read the signs that arise in the physical universe, to discover the hidden similarities that join the parts to the whole, to reveal the invisible threads that connect the created world – defines the Hermetic nature of reality.

The texts that constitute this tradition stress the idea that every entity in the world reflects a conjunction between two coordinates. This is to say that although nature encompasses individual forms, each has importance and each illustrates similar qualities. The cardinal goal is to discover the texture of the relationship, in nature and in human experience. Hermetic thought offers two methods that arrive at the truth of as above, so below – analogy and correspondence. Yet, by virtue of the name alone, Hermeticism demands more than reflection; it requires that man model himself as the messenger of the Divine.

The message of this philosophy combines perception and action. "The 'Hermetic

Wisdom,' as it has been called, was in effect dedicated to the notion that real knowledge occurred only via the union of subject and object, in a psychic-emotional identification with images rather than a purely intellectual examination of concepts."⁹ In other words, cerebral understanding maintains a separation between the individual and the phenomena. True knowledge only comes with the experience that the subject reflects the object, that a connection exists between the two; thus permitting the recognition of resemblance. This union exists between the world and the heavens, between man and woman and between humanity and nature. The way to achieve success in this quest is "in a word, the recognition of resemblance."¹⁰ Since the attributes of nature resemble the qualities of man - both contain the Divine spirit - Hermetic philosophers explore science through the lens of correspondence. They look to Alchemy, the precursor of Chemistry to prove the transmutation of microcosm and macrocosm. They witness the movement of the planets and the subsequent effect on people; Astrology foretells astronomy. They explore the natural environment to discover healing correspondences. In this way, Renaissance Hermeticism emerges synchronistically with the scientific advances that demolish the dark bulwarks of the Medieval Ages. The elements that typify all Hermetic thought - "correspondence, living nature and imagination"¹¹ - comprise a method that allows humanity to join with nature and together manifest their mutual Divine spark.

Hermeticism easily blends into the mystical Neo Platonism that blossoms in the Renaissance. The same atmosphere that encourages the re-emergence of Neoplatonism also allows for the development of Hermeticism. As a philosophical system, it continues the effort to join religion and philosophy. Both philosophies pursue knowledge of God and the universe by means of inner awareness and reflection. The effect of the forces of Humanism and Neo Platonism, serve to promote interest in Hermeticism. As the humanists reject scholastic theology and substitute respect for independent study, interest in Hermeticism also increases. They both accentuate the study of the ". . . connections between Christianity on the one hand, and the pre-Christian conceptions concerning human nature and the divine on the other." ^N

The same changes that generate a new understanding in philosophy and art during the Renaissance also affect science. The mystical and magical connotations of Hermetic principles interest philosophers as well as scientists. This period marks the era of Galileo, Newton and Copernicus - the luminaries of the Scientific Revolution. Hermetic philosophers unite these opportunities in science with a senescent understanding of the ancient wisdom. Thus, a new integrated science finds its expression in the pursuit of Alchemy. Many Catholic scholars, such as Marsilio Ficino and Giordano Bruno, initiate experiments under the rubric that the religious should investigate the empirical. Such scientific explorations occur under the mantle of Alchemical science. These philosopher-scientists search for the unity that exists between the visible and the invisible world. They seek solutions within the Hermetic philosophical tradition that illuminates and elevates the correspondence of relationships.

AS ONE IS, SO IS THE OTHER:
CORRESPONDENCE & ANALOGY IN HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY

In Hermetic thought, correspondences exist between the invisible and visible world and between all matter of creations in the visible world. Hence, everything on earth carries a relation to the Source. This connection provides the solution to issues of health and balance. For example:

Gold	corresponds to the Sun
Silver	corresponds to the moon
Mercury (Hg)	corresponds to Mercury
Iron	corresponds to Mars
Lead	corresponds to Saturn

and these in turn relate to organs in the human body:

Sun	corresponds to the Heart
Moon	corresponds to the Brain (hence <i>Lunatic</i>)
Mercury	corresponds to the Male Genitalia

One can see that a kind of logic related to appearances makes them plausible. The bright yellowish appearance of gold is in some sense the counterpart of the bright, yellowish light of the Sun; the moon appears silvery in color; and Mars and both have a reddish cast. These similarities are “signs” that are “sympathetic” magical influences connecting the corresponding bodies. To the medical alchemist the correspondence between gold and the heart was a sign to try gold compounds in the treatment of diseases of the heart.¹²

The correspondences appear “veiled at first glance, and they are therefore meant to be read, to be decoded. The entire universe is a great theater of mirrors, a set of hieroglyphs to decipher. Everything is a sign, everything harbors and manifests mystery. The principle of contradiction, of excluded middle, and of linear causality are supplanted by those of resolution, included middle, and of synchronicity.”¹³ This acknowledgment, that a relationship exists between all living entities, relies primarily upon a method of knowledge grounded by analogy and not by the process of logic.

Analogy allows one to discover the similarities that exist between objects – and similarities often exist in a system of knowledge premised on analogy. Analogy compares and balances two unlike entities with similar aspects. Analogy stands diametrically opposed to logic, in that analogy employs the whole and logic uses the parts. As analogues, phenomena retain their differences as they simultaneously display their affinity. Unlike “digital knowledge which is verbal-rational, abstract and has no particular relationship to what it describes, analogue knowledge is iconic: the information represents that which is being communicated (a loud voice indicates strong emotions)” or a portrait represents a person. “This kind of knowledge is tacit and includes poetry, body language, gesture and intonation, dreams, art and fantasy.”¹³ Such communication affects the observer with a potency lacked by discursive reasoning.

A picture is worth a thousand words. This well known Chinese proverb encapsulates the significance of iconographic knowledge, the type of knowledge acquired through analogy: A picture communicates by an immediate experience of a visual representation. It excludes the censorship, the habitual repetition and the protections that shadow logical thought. In like fashion, analogue thought gives rise to a visceral experience of the complete situation and logical thought furnishes an analysis and commentary of the picture.

The fact that there exist these two “languages” very strongly suggests that they must be representative of two very different *world images*, for it is known that a language does not so much *reflect* reality as *create* it. And indeed, it can be shown how this polarity runs through the millennia of human thought, through philosophy, psychology, the arts, religion, and even the supposedly objective natural sciences – much more frequently as a schism than as harmonious complementarity. It may be useful to recall, for instance, C.G. Jung’s topology which juxtaposes thought with feeling and perception with intuition, and thus expresses two diametrically different ways of grasping reality; a logical methodic, and step-wise approach which at times may not see the forest for the trees; and the other, a global, holistic perception of totalities, of *Gestalten*, which occasionally may find it very difficult to cope with detail – and thus be unable to see the trees for the forest. . . . Unexpected scientific evidence for this duality of the mind has been supplied by modern brain research. ^o

The difference between these two types of thought mirrors the differences in the two hemispheres of the brain. The left brain controls thought composed of words organized in logical sequences. The right brain produces thought expressed in spontaneous, unedited images. Since

each type of thought, the logical and the analogical, have different centers in the body, it follows that each produces a different result. Just as the eyes see and the ears hear, so the right brain perceives analogical knowledge and the left brain explicates logical thought. Thus, each hemisphere, with its own talents and abilities, determines a different knowledge. The empirical validation of these two types of knowledge calls into question the comparative value and import of each. This question, however does not have one definitive answer: it rests on an individual's world view; on each person's own experience of each type of knowledge.

Analogy does not require that the two objects be the same species; an analogic relationship can even exist between a physical object and an emotion. A Biblical example reflects the apparent discrepancy that an analogy overcomes. Analogy means that the two subjects possess points of similarity and points of difference. The presentation of an analogical relationship compares two whole entities in their likeness and unlikeness, it does not divide the whole into parts, as does formal logic. Deduction proceeds from the whole to its parts. Induction begins with the part and moves to the whole. Analogy describes a representation of the whole that includes its parts, both those similar and those different. This means that the part contains the whole since the similarities and differences combine to form the whole. Together, the separate characteristics describe the total object.

In Hermeticism, for example, the planets correspond to character traits (Mercury to intelligence, Venus to desire, Mars to anger), plants and herbs correspond to illness and colors signify emotions. In Hermeticism, the Divine exists immanent in nature and in the human soul. To the modern mind, more than likely, this sounds illogical and unscientific. However, many educated people in modern society do not accept the consensus that science represents an unimpeachable and valid authority. "The hallmark of modern consciousness is that it recognizes no element of mind in the so-called inert objects that surround us . . . Knowledge is acquired by recognizing the distance between ourselves and nature."¹⁴ In the Hermetic tradition, knowledge awakens with the discovery of the mystery of the unity of creation.

Hermeticism considers nature as vital, alive and imbued with consciousness. The physical world, inculcated with celestial influences, personifies a place of beauty and wonder. The works of nature represent a book from which one can read and touch the wisdom of the Divine Mind. Thus, nature not only serves the interests of humanity; but rather "nature occupies an essential place within the cosmos. In this way there came to be grounded a science of Nature, a gnosis infused with soteriological element, and a theosophy based on the triangle God-Humanity-Nature from which the theosophist brings forth dramaturgic correspondences, always new and complementary to one another."¹⁵ Such an equal and balanced perspective entails the acceptance of nature as a collaborator in the cosmic scheme rather than merely as a resource for humanity's desires. Thus, the consciousness of nature participates concurrently with the consciousness of humanity; Together they reflect creations inspired from the potential of its existence, or in other words, from the invisible realm of the Divine.

According to Hermeticism, this recognition of resemblances forms the crucial pursuit of life. One attains, or intuits, knowledge of these correspondences through the method of analogy; the analogy of mind and body, of nature and humanity; of the invisible and the visible; and of the planets and men. These correspondences appear through the vehicle of the imagination. The heavenly realm, governed by the Divine presence and populated by hierarchies of angelic spirits, manifests within the individual's interior vision. It is the "imagination that allows the use of these intermediaries, symbols, and images ... to penetrate Nature's hieroglyphs, to put the theory of correspondences into active practice, and to discover, to see, and to know the mediating entities between the divine world and Nature . Thus understood, imagination (*Imaginatio* is related to- 'magnet') is a tool for the knowledge of the self, of the world, of myth; it is the eye of fire penetrating the surface of appearances in order to make meanings, - 'connections,' burst forth, to render the invisible visible and to forge a link with a treasure that contributes to the enlargement

of our prosaic vision.”¹⁶

In the imagination, all potentials exist. By the precept of “*as above, so below*”, the most fundamental precept of the Hermetic tradition, these possibilities also exist in the visible world: The invisible mirrors the visible. The imagination thus illustrates “an unrivaled capacity to render metaphysical truth. Through its disciplined use, man could bring to his consciousness those transcendent living Forms that ordered the universe. Thus could the mind recover its own deepest organization and reunite itself with the cosmos.”¹⁷ Its pictorial language connects the inner nonphysical reality with the outer concrete reality and the other aspects of material reality with each another. Through the fundamental principles correspondence, analogy and imagination Hermeticism discovers the unity that exists among all in the created universe. This forms the Hermetic path to spirit.

The Renaissance philosophical instinct synthesizes thought systems in the desire to generate a common, universal philosophy – a commingling of Greek, Judeo-Christian, other traditions such as Zoroasterism and the society of the times itself. In this tradition, an indistinguishable line weaves together philosophy and theology in much the same way as the pre-Socratics intertwine belief in a Divine First Principle with ethics. Hermeticism asserts that life has one primary objective, namely: To know the Divine through the correspondence of each individual’s essence. In relation to this concept, Platonism and Neo-Platonism influence Renaissance philosophy to a great extent. It is not as though Platonism ever actually disappeared from the Western tradition nor did the Renaissance discover his writings. Plato’s importance in this period derives from the inventions of navigation and the printing press. Plato enters prominence in this epoch due to Count Cosimo de’ Medici’s request that Marsilio Ficino translate his complete works into Latin.

The principles of Hermeticism hold a distinctive position in philosophy, in the way that they touch actual life rather than remain an intellectual abstraction. In a way, they bring the influence of Platonic ideas into a structure suitable for action. The practice of Hermeticism manifests Plato’s beliefs: “that part of the individual soul was immortal and divine and could become all things,”¹⁸ and “the universal ability of man to envision and attain the highest good.”¹⁹ Hermeticism takes these as fundamental truths and offers concrete means to actualize this potential. The works of Ficino and Bruno contain elaborations of these Platonic notions, expressed through the basic tenets of Hermeticism – correspondence, analogy, living nature and imagination.

The Renaissance Hermetic philosophers sustain these precepts as they apply their individual emphases and talents to classical thought. They explore correspondences in more than simply tombs of philosophy and theology. The tradition also touches the realms of literature, science, music, medicine and art. Their ideas revive and rejuvenate Ancient and Medieval esotericism and thus act as antidotes to the influence of Newton’s mechanism and Descartes’s dualism. Yet, of foremost importance to modern society– Hermetic concepts and perceptions contain significance and relevance for life today.

PHILOSOPHER, SCHOLAR, CLASSICIST, DOCTOR & PRIEST MARSILIO FICINO – RENAISSANCE MAN

Born in 1433 near Florence, Marsilio Ficino “embodies the Renaissance ideal of the complete man. He was first of all philosopher, but he was also scholar, doctor, musician, priest” . . . and patron of the visual arts.²⁰ In 1462, Cosimo de Medici provides Ficino with a villa in Florence so that he can translate and compose in a quiet atmosphere. The villa becomes the location of the Platonic Academy, dedicated to the study of philosophy, and draws the finest minds in Italy. Academies, in Renaissance Italy, refer to groups of people who share a common interest rather than structured organizations. At Ficino’s Academy, the interest is Platonism and

Hermeticism. Of the types of people who join Ficino's Academy, the majority paint and write poetry while only a few pursue scholarly fields. These participants carefully preserve Greek manuscripts and through their interest, establish Florence as a center of learning.

Marsilio Ficino, in a letter he wrote to Francesco Musano of Iesi entitled, *Medicine heals the body, music the spirit and theology the soul*, provides his own direction to understand his philosophy:

As soon as you were cured of your wrongly diagnosed tertian fever by our medicines, both you and Giovanni Aurelio paid your respects to our Academy, as if it were your own doctor. You then asked for and heard the sound of the lyre and the singing of hymns.

Do not be surprised, Francesco, that we combine medicine and the lyre with the study of theology. Since you are dedicated to philosophy, you must remember that within us nature has bonded body and spirit with the soul. The body is indeed healed by the remedies of medicine; but spirit, which is the airy vapor of our blood and the link between body and soul, is tempered and nourished by airy smells, by sounds, and by song. Finally, the soul, as it is divine, is purified by the divine mysteries of theology. In nature a union is made from soul, body and spirit. To the Egyptian priests medicine, music and the mysteries were one and the same study. Would that we could master this natural and Egyptian art as successfully as we tenaciously and wholeheartedly apply ourselves to it!

You asked me yesterday to transcribe for you that maxim of mine that is inscribed around the walls of the Academy. Receive it. All things are directed from goodness to goodness. Rejoice in the present; set no value on property, seek no honours. Avoid excess; avoid activity. Rejoice in the present.²¹

These words encompass the range of Ficino's philosophy. The letter includes acknowledgment of his sources; a summary of his thought; the proscriptions that prevent attaining the highest good; the practices that further the goal; and the promise he sees in return for the effort this path entails. Ficino attempts more than the mere acquisition of worldly knowledge. He does not want people to learn for merely for the sake of intellectual stimulation. Ficino wants people to live this path; He desires society gain wisdom and to understand the moral fabric of the universe so that the Divine spirit reigns on earth.

In this letter,²² Ficino speaks of concerns related to the philosophy of Hermeticism. He acknowledges his admiration for the texts from the *Corpus Hermeticum*. He discovers that Egyptian wisdom includes that which normative Catholic theology lacks: The explanation of the unity of apparent opposites. He speaks of the Platonic ideal to attain the highest good and he emphasizes the divinity of the soul. The maxim inscribed on the wall of the Academy reveals the influence of Judeo-Christian precepts; the admonitions actually reflect the Three Vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, the Catholic version of the essence of the Ten Commandments.²³ In addition, the placement of an important Catholic concept juxtaposed and then joined to a fundamental Platonic ideal indicates "the harmony he believed to exist between it and the Christian faith."²⁴

Ficino emphatically declares his belief in the clear correspondence between the realms of medicine music and theology and the body, spirit and soul. The human being requires a combination of – 'nourishments' – music, sensory experiences and, most definitively, the Divine. Through these disciplines, an individual reaches a balance between the outer world of circumstances and the inner world of the mind.

His final sentence, "Rejoice in the present," displays the wide discrepancy between Hermeticism and the dogma of Catholicism. According to the standard Catholic point of view, this world represents only the means to enter the heavenly kingdom. Thus, it denies the legitimate experience of hardship and deprivation during life. Whereas, to the Hermeticist, this world

reflects the Divine realm in the present moment. In fact, the central idea of Hermeticism, that of the attainment of unity with the Divine, implies that this world already is the heavenly world, if one only can perceive it as such. Such ideas offer solid vindication for a non-dualistic point of view. (See Note 40, P. 19)

Ficino teaches philosophy at the same time as he produces a remarkably copious amount of work of translation and writing, including: the complete works of Plato; much of Porphyry, Proclus and Plotinus; and his own commentaries, letters and books of his philosophy. People also come to Ficino at the villa to cure themselves from an illness. Yet, the significant turn for Hermeticism occurs with De Medici's instruction to postpone the translation of Plato so that Ficino could work on the translation of *Corpus Hermeticum*. In these texts, Ficino discovers what he believes to be an ancient and secret wisdom.²⁵ These arcane works transform his world view and lead him to esoteric truths that he then blends with Catholic theology and Platonic philosophy. This intention represents a departure from the manner in which the Christian theologians, such as Augustine and Aquinas, view the philosophy of Plato. Rather than appropriate Platonic concepts into Catholic dogma, Ficino considers Plato "as an authority comparable to that of the divine law. . . ."²⁶ He teaches these ideas to students, translates Ancient Greek philosophers and writes a large body of letters and books. Ficino uses philosophy to provide a knowledgeable basis for religion and he utilizes religion to guide philosophy in the correct direction, that of the "glorification of the human soul."²⁷ The Hermetic belief in universal correspondence prompts Ficino to construct universal relations that support this foundation.

"The magic of the Asclepius [one of the major texts of the *Corpus Hermeticum*.] reinterpreted through Plotinus enter with Ficino into the Neoplatonic philosophy of the Renaissance, and moreover, into Ficino's Christian Neoplatonism."²⁸ Ficino, a philosopher in his own right as well as the translator of a remarkable number of the newly available Greek texts, reflects this synergy. His work reveals the influence of the varied traditions that flourish in response to the restrictive Scholasticism of the Middle Ages: The Hermetic writings, Zoroastrian oracles, Hebrew Kabbalah and Babylonian and Egyptian texts. This new combination appears in many fields during this era: Art, science, philosophy, technology, medicine, music and literature. With such synthesis of thought and such extensive form of expression, the Renaissance conception of man, nature and the Divine flows through the rigid Catholicism of the Middle Ages. Ficino's philosophy offers a vibrant example of the cohesiveness and compatibility of these various intellectual and religious influences in his description of the Divine spark of man, the vital process of nature and the immanence of Divine.

"CREATED IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF THE DIVINE" FICINO'S VIEW OF MAN'S NATURE AND PLACE

Ficino asserts in his Platonic Theology that man depicts "'the vicar of God' in the great extent of his earthly powers and was of – 'almost the same genius as the Author of the heavens' in the range of his intelligence. The devoutly Christian Ficino even went on to praise man's soul for being capable—'by means of the intellect and will, as by those Platonic wings . . . of becoming in a sense all things, and even a god.'" ²⁹ He incorporates the monotheistic view of Judeo-Christian theology with man's Divine essence by a vision of circular connections. Ficino writes in his letter entitled, *Many cannot be united firmly in anything which is in itself changeable and diverse*:

As long as lines remain within an undivided and immobile centre, individual lines both in themselves stand together undivided and immobile, and in relation to each other are completely the same, or united. But when they are unfolded from the centre towards a divided and mobile circumference, step by step, more and more both individual lines in themselves go forth divided and changeable, and in relation

to each other are rendered disunited; although if, in turn, they are folded back afresh from that same circumference into the centre, they will be seen immediately to recover their former unity and stability. In the centre, the one God; on the circumference, heaven and the elements; and finally, on the lines, souls and minds: thus we ought to consider it.³⁰

Ficino designs a framework that firmly places man's soul as the connection between one God and His heavenly realm. This scenario thus incorporates the influences of traditional theology with Hermeticism. Ficino's perception of man allows him to stand in proximity to the Divine and from that position, to realize his own Divine nature:

For man to be able to retrace the process of emanation, each degree of being had to suggest its ontological function, its defined nature and a higher reality to which it was bound as to a constitutive structure. The soul made the real link between the perceptible and intelligible worlds by uniting itself with that which represented the highest corporeal level, namely the nature of the heavens. By means of its celestial body the soul could make itself the bond between the two worlds since the spiritus omnipresent in the sublunary realm was the instrument of vivification as well as the indispensable medium for its descent into the elementary body.”³¹

Thus, the soul acts as the life force of the Divine in a constant pattern of perpetual movement – one of ascent and descent, from the heavens to the material world and returns to the heavens. This perspective imbues man with the Divine immortal essence that permits him to realize his Divine nature on earth. He shares this light with all other members of the created world. Thus, man and nature play equal roles as creations of the Divine. It is in regard to the relationship between man and nature that the influence on Ficino by the Hermetic writings strongly reveals itself.

DIVINE MIND AND DIVINE MAGIC: THE DIVINE PERCEPTION OF NATURE AND MAN

The *Asclepius*, one of the major texts of the *Corpus Hermetica* that Ficino translates, commands man “to tend” to nature. The world exists in harmony, and all of humanity's pursuits – agriculture, urban development, art, literature, devotion, mathematics and science – every act pursued on earth represent different aspects of one universal spirit, the *anima mundi*. Ficino understands that all of these reflect different expressions of the One God and thus all form a single, organic whole. Ficino writes in the letter entitled *Ideas, according to Plato, exist in the divine mind*:

For truly, however many kinds of creatures there are in this world, there are at least as many ideas in God. These ideas are intelligible principles through which all things are made. Created forms, which are in matter not in itself alive, either do not live or scarcely do so, but ideas have life because they are in the living God. Therefore Plato says in the same book that the divine mind by the power of thought has created with his own substance as many forms in this as he has seen ideas in his living self.³³

All earthly forms derive from the mind of the Divine and contain the spark of the original source. This notion of nature often falls under the rubric of magic since it presupposes the correspondence between humanity and his environment. The word magic derives from the Indo-European words for-‘to be able’ and – ‘might’. In this sense, magic alludes to the ability to

perform mighty feats. Ficino applies this connotation in his view of the inherent power that resides in all manner of nature. He writes in his book, *De vita coelitus comparanda*, “an excursus from Ficino’s commentary on Plotinus that he attaches to a medical treatise whose first two sections were devoted to health and longevity:

Nature is a magician, as Plotinus and Synesius say, everywhere baiting traps with particular foods for particular objects. . . . The farmer prepares his field and seeds for gifts from heaven and uses various grafts to prolong life in his plant and change it to a new and better species. The physician, the scientist and the surgeon bring about similar effects in our bodies. . . . The philosopher, who is learned in natural science and astronomy and whom we are wont rightly to call a magician, likewise implants heavenly things in earthly objects by means of certain alluring charms used at the right moment. ³⁴

Thus, to Ficino, magic alludes to the presence of the Divine spirit as the force that generates the infinite and perpetual gifts of creation. These fruits can take the form of the philosopher’s words, the physician’s treatments or nature’s plenty. Ficino observes God’s presence in every creation on earth and this energy of Divine process reflects the signal of magic. Man, nature and the Divine presence interact every moment. The Divine quality emerges from man’s internal being, with its intrinsic awareness of its proximity to God. This communication occurs through the use of his imagination; this means, man can affect his world. The learned man, or in Hermetic terms, the Magician or Magi, could touch his soul and ascend within his inner being. And, in reverse, he could combine his soul with the identical quality of soul that exists within the family of nature. The planets, stones, flowers, foods, animals and every other component of nature could, in a sense, speak to him of the purpose. Within this way, nature cares in return for man: They share the same marrow as each other, the spirit of the Divine.

This belief envisions nature as a vital, living organism, with the breath and the movement generated from the Divine source. In Ficino’s world view, this dynamic vision of nature opens the way for man to fulfill the purpose of creation; the purpose being to reestablish the connection between temporal life and the heavenly world through the attainment of the highest good. Ficino regards God as intimate, accessible and omnipotent— He is the Divine Creative Force, or as he names it, the soul. This understanding of the Divine inspires a fundamental syncretism in Ficino’s ontology.

ON THE WINGS OF THE SOUL: GOD’S CREATIONS AND FICINO’S ONTOLOGY

The entire physical world simultaneously contains and is contained within the One Divine. God is everything that dwells – and has since before creation – above, within, outside and here. This belief serves as the basis for the practice that reads the correspondences, those connections that exist between the various entities of this physical world. This is the Hermetic path to light and to knowledge. The one and the same flow of the Divine spirit inhabits every entity within creation. This Divine core speaks through the Soul, the force that, once awakened, lights the way to experience God. The Soul must learn to see its Source. According to Ficino philosophy, the Soul acts as the spokes of a wheel, it links the inner individual to the Spirit that surrounds. He expands his image of the nature of the soul and the nature of God in the letter entitled, “A Theological Dialogue Between God and the Soul:”

We have often talked together of moral and natural philosophy, beloved Michele, and even more often of divine philosophy. I remember you used to say again and again that morals are developed through practice, natural things discovered by

reason and the divine begged of God by prayer. I have also read in the works of our Plato that the divine is revealed through purity of living rather than taught by verbal instruction. When I seriously considered these things I sometimes began to feel sick at heart, for I had already come to distrust reason but still lacked faith in revelation. From this there arose an intimate conversation between the soul and God. Listen to this, if you please, although I think you may already be nearer to speaking with God than I.

GOD: Why do you grieve so much, my unhappy soul” O my daughter, weep no more. Behold, I, your father, am here with you. I am here, your cure and salvation.

SOUL: Oh that my father enter into me. If I believed such a grace could befall me, ah! I should go mad with joy. As it is, I do not see how that can come about; for if , as I thought, the creator of the world created me, his offspring, nearer to himself than his own created world, he who is only outside me is not my highest father. Nor could he who was only within me be my father, for my father is certainly greater than I, yet he who is contained in my must be smaller. But I do not know how anything can be both inside me and outside me at the same time. What sorely distresses me, stranger, whoever you may be, is this: that I do not wish to live without my father, yet despair of being able to find him.

GOD: Put an end to your tears, my daughter, and do not torment yourself; it is no stranger who speaks to you but one who is your very own, more familiar to you than you are to yourself. Indeed, I am both with you and within you. I am indeed with you, because I am in you; I am in you, because you are in me. If you were not in me you would not be in your-self, indeed you would not be at all. Dry those tears, my daughter, and look upon your father.. Your father is the least of all things in size, just as he is the greatest of all things in excellence; and since he is very small he is within every thing, but since he is very great he is outside everything. See, I am here with you, both within and without, the greatest smallness and the smallest greatness. Behold, I say, do you not see” I fill heaven and earth, I penetrate and contain them. I fill and am not filled, for I am fulness itself. . . . I pass into everything unmingled, so that I may surpass all; for I am excellence itself. I excel everything without being separate, so that I am able to enter and permeate at the same time, to enter completely and to make one, being unity itself, through which all things are made and endure, and which all things seek. ³⁵

Ficino expresses his ontological ideas about the origin of creation through the correspondence between God and the Sun. The light of the Sun flows upon the entire world, as it permeates within and around every manner of creations. The Sun occupies the central position in the cosmos and mediates the planets, the spheres and the heavenly beings. The sun’s light illuminates the darkness as it also generates life. The Sun’s light brings to bloom the potential that lies hidden in the earth. In an analogous way, the Spirit also enlightens that which remains dormant and in shadow. Spirit, according to Ficino’s interpretation, acts as rays of light. It travels from heaven to Earth. God extends His spirit to His creations through the mediation of the Soul. This anima mundi participates in all created forms; it is the soul of the world and causes the movement of life. “Spirit is an element essential to life. It is the factor which accounts for the activity of soul in the material world. Without spirit you cannot have soul. Just as soul is the link between the mind and body, spirit is medium between soul and the world. . . . Spirit can be felt as an emanation, a subtle-‘substance’ that emerges from bodies and situations.” ³⁶

Humanity participates in this World Soul and in this way, establishes the human connection to God. The Soul circulates throughout the cosmos. It moves from the root of the tree to the highest level of the Divine and thus acts as the intercession between all the entities of creation and their elements. The soul transfers the communication of spirit from God and delivers

it to humanity. It moves from man's mind and sends it to man's body. It spreads spirit that causes the Intelligence of man and extends it the spirit that informs the Intelligence of nature. Thus, the Spirit of God weaves together the creations on earth and those in the heavens just as the light of the Sun reaches everywhere on Earth. In an essay on the Alchemical Art, Ficino writes:

We place the soul of the world chiefly in the sun. For there is nothing in the soul of the firmament, beside a soul, which represents a greater similitude of God than light itself. Since everything does challenge to itself so much of God, as I may say, as they are capable of light. And since nothing is more conspicuous or bright-eyed than the sun, many have termed the sun, the eye of the world. Because all things were seen and shown themselves in it as in a certain most bright mirror. Hence Heraclitus says, that all things would perish, should you take the sun out of the world. What is this small body of ours, if the soul be away? No vein having a pulse is to be felt there, there is in it no show of sense, no vital breath nor any respiration therein. Wherefore it also seemed good to some to call the sun the heart of heaven. Because as in the heart there is the only fountain of blood moistening and reddening the other members of the human body, and infusing a vital motion: So there seemeth to be in the sun the vegetation and preservation of all, as well inferior as well as superior things. Because he by this light inspires as it were, life and heat into inferior things. But light is a certain simple of single action converting all things unto itself by an enlivening warmth, passing through all beings, carrying their virtues and beings, qualities through all and dispersing darkness and obscurity. What is therefore Nature? God is Nature, and Nature is God: understand it thus: out of God there arises something next to him.³⁷

Nature as the Divine; Humanity with the conscious attribute of God; Both Nature and humanity exist within and of God. This resemblance determines the care and affection that the Hermetic tradition demands from man for nature. Nature exists as a complement to humanity. In the same way that man attends to the needs of nature so nature provides for the needs of man. This reverence for nature leads to the magic quality of Ficino's views. The play of the imagination also allows Renaissance Hermeticists to direct man in the care of nature. The Renaissance magus could channel the Divine spirit into the realm of nature. In his imagination, he reshapes the plight of nature, or on behalf of man, the symptoms of the illness. As his imagination connects to the Divine, he then repairs and heals the condition. Through sensory images, the wise man carries the Divine spirit into the world of the senses. It is the imagination that reveals the threads of light that weave the Source and his creations into a singular whole. They contain and breathe the essence of God.

THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE MANIFEST ON EARTH FICINO'S THOUGHTS ON MAN AND NATURE

The relationship between man and nature corresponds to the connection between man and the Divine. In fact, this analogy forges the root of the ancient ways of natural healing that Ficino and the other Renaissance doctors practice. The Spirit of the Divine travels in company with the Soul and so imbues humanity with Divine light. The Spirit of the natural world travels with the Soul to nourish humanity with the fruit of this light. In Ficino's cosmogony, nature locates herself in reflection to his map of truth. In his words: In the centre, the one God; on the circumference, heaven and the elements; and finally, on the lines, souls and minds: thus we ought to consider it.³⁸ In the canvas of life that Ficino paints, the only viable purpose in life is the realization of this truth, to attain the highest good, which is God:

In both respects, therefore, with regard to the intellect and with regard to the will, the effort of the soul is directed (as it is said in the metaphysics of Avicenna) toward this end: that the soul in its own way will become the whole universe. Thus, we see that by a natural instinct every soul strives in a continuous effort both to

know all truths by the intellect and to enjoy all good things by the will.
.....

For this reason the inquiry of the intellect never ceases until it finds that cause of which nothing is the cause but which is itself the cause of causes. This cause is none other than the boundless God. Similarly, the desire of the will is not satisfied by any good, as long as we believe that there is yet another beyond it. Therefore, the will is satisfied only by that one good beyond which there is no further good. What can this good be except the boundless God.
.....

Therefore, it is concluded by necessary reasoning that the immortality and brightness of the soul can and must at some time shine forth into its own temperate immortal celestial body and that, in this condition alone, the highest blessedness of man is indeed perfected. Certainly, this doctrine of the prophets and theologians is confirmed by the Persian wise men and by the Hermetic and the Platonic philosophers. ³⁹

Too often however, man does not “consider” the presence of the Divine. And, thus he continues to use his intellect to investigate questions that only lead to further questions; his intellect must, by Ficino’s definition, remain unsatisfied. Yet, the nature of the world affords humanity the repeated opportunities to direct life toward the invisible realm. The spirit of light continually reminds man of its Divine origin. The reminders, or the memories of the original Source exist all around in the correspondences that unite the pieces into the One. The spirit moves the soul near to the knowledge of universal correspondences. The soul, for its part, ascends, returns and moves again in recurring circles. It circulates from the Divine to humanity and to the world of the senses. The seeker must choose to accompany the soul on its journey. This dance is the route of the creative process.

In resemblance to Ficino’s picture, the creative process emulates the progression of Divine light. It can be seen in the analogy of a plant. The rays of creativity flow into the human mind and bestow life force to the act of growth. In a like manner, the sun’s light reaches the seed planted in the earth by someone’s hands. As the Divine spirit touches the currents that follow in the wake of soul’s path, it releases the knowledge of connection. The individual responds in accord with the quality and strength of his experience of the phenomena. This feeling, sensation or thought emanates from the person to the visible world. It speaks its message through the infinite possibilities available for human endeavor. Since Ficino believes that the purpose of life is to attain direct experience of the Divine spirit, he emphasizes specific pursuits that he feels harmonizes with such a search. For Ficino, the way of spirit includes all artistic forms: painting, poetry, music, medicine, mathematics or inner vision. According to Ficino, the pursuit of creativity requires study and contemplation. At the Academy’s villa at Caraggi, he offers a natural location for study and creativity; one distant and quiet from the distractions of city life. Here, he teaches his students to see the invisible and to listen to the unintelligible. The mind communicated in language of the mind; the realm of the invisible occurs in the language of the imagination.

The imagination stands as the vehicle chosen by the spirit to pass the message, the Hermetic message, from the invisible world to the manifest world. This faculty, in turn, carries the soul’s intuitions and inspirations into the mind of living beings. The movement crystalizes in the intelligible world in the form of an infinite number of faces and a corresponding infinite number of possibilities for the expression of creativity. There are as many possibilities as there are faces in the world. What is the faculty of the imagination?

At its most basic, imagination is the action of the mind as it envisions pictures rather than the mind as it thinks words. Visual phenomena like night dreams and

waking dreams are concrete manifestations of a movement of energy that flows through abstract intellection to concrete sensory experiences. Hence, all visual phenomena are revelatory and need to be translated into statements about existence that include options available for fulfillment; avenues or possibilities closed off from fulfillment; and pointers toward the action that must be taken to concretize the fulfillment. The action and the practice of imagination not only permits the seeing of possibilities but also the doing of possibilities, the effects of which are brought back to concrete reality and are actively used to create one's existence. ⁴⁰

Often a synaesthetic experience accompanies an imaginary process. Visualizations can pierce the layers of habitual patterns and shrouded darkness, which left untended, manifest in the signs of physical and emotional sickness. The physical and mental aspects form the two sides of the mirror reflection of the person. The outside reflects the inside as the inside reflects the outside: "*as above, so below*" The body speaks in the language of experiences. It reveals its message through imbalances that escape in feelings, sensations and actions. In the imagination, whispers become shouts of recognition as the guided instructions invite revelations. "The essential strategy for visualization exercises uses mental images consciously evoked and directed to resolve physical and emotional problems. The ability for the images to affect concrete, visible changes comes from the unique nature of the imaginal language. Images do not recognize the boundaries of mind and body." ⁴¹ All physical signs arise from a mental event, whether they take shape as thoughts, emotions or sensations and they occur simultaneously in the physical and emotional realm. This truth of correspondence writes the dictionary that one uses to translate signs.

HEALING THROUGH CORRESPONDENCE: RENAISSANCE MEDICINE – THE IMAGINATION AND THE MEMORY

Renaissance healers, such as Paracelsus and Ficino, see the physical illness from the Hermetic point of view. They consider it one of the visible signs of interior struggle, an imbalance within any organ of the body. For the Hermeticist, the human being is a single, whole entity who exists simultaneously as a body, a mind and the soul– the life force shared by creation. The soul vibrates and speaks through the three aspects that comprise the human means of communication: body, mind and imagination. Posture, presentation and illness define the soul's language in the body; routine life and intellectual pursuits express the soul's words in the mind; and visions and intuition fulfill the soul's communication in the imagination. Yet, they all relate to the depths and heights of each other, by the principle of Hermetic correspondences. In this way, the soul allows the body to heal through the work of the mind, and likewise, to soothe the mind through physical sensations. These can include art for the eyes; music for the ears; stones for the touch; and scents for the nose. This resemblance between the internal process and the outward body describes the Hermetic idea of the nature of human beings in whom one sensory experience affects the whole being. This point of view diametrically conflicts with that expressed by the Renaissance rationalists, such as Cartesian philosophy, Bacon and Newton. In the Cartesian framework, man is a mechanical being, composed of separate components which work in agreement with the deterministic laws of mechanics. . ."⁴²⁷ The body remains distinct from the mind.

The Hermetic perspective however, holds that the presence and the type of symptoms correspond to blessings of health and to errors in illness. These Hermetic practitioners, or Magi, experience the resemblance that brings together the different realms of reality. The connection to Spirit reaches to the Source through the works of creation, to the extent that each person chooses to recognize the highest good. In regard to man, only he limits how far he wants to ascend in his interior vision and in his exterior circumstances. Man must journey to discover the answer that lies beyond the body and the mind; he must discover a place located near to spirit. He reaches this

higher position through the practice of imagination and the exercise of will. To the Renaissance Magus, the imagination is the bridge that connects the world of the Divine Source with the created world. Its pictures speak the language that translates from aspect to aspect: From one's own internal nature to one's body, the creative process and nature. Ficino uses various techniques and symbols, such as, music, jewels and talismans, to activate the power of the imagination. These act as catalysts and stimulate the man's universal memory of the Divine presence.

The natural healing of the Renaissance utilize the infinite connections that bind the created world. Correspondences exist everywhere and the Divine spirit connects everything. This world view provides the basis for Ficino's magical orientation. Ficino believes that amulets and other representations associated with the heavens, draw the heavenly influences down to earth and man; just as certain herbs draw the nourishing energy from the earth. This type of thought stems directly from an analogical construct of reality.

As compared to the thought process of analogy, logic is the language of verifiable proof. A logical argument represents a preprogramed structure that turns upon itself and leads to whatever conclusion the argument intended to prove. Kurt Godel (1906 - 1978) earns the 1930 Noble Prize for his proof that a mathematical or logical system cannot be verified from within the same system; or, as common parlance describes Godel's proof: every logical system contains the seeds for its own destruction. Godel's theorem indicates that the logical and discursive point of view will, by virtue of its own nature, experience difficulties as it attempts to validate its reason for being. This deficit pertains to the logical modes of thought; The analogical does not attempt to prove a conclusion but rather describes a state.

Descartes states that "There is a great difference between a mind and a body, because the body, by its very nature, is something divisible, whereas the mind is plainly indivisible." ⁴² He means that the body bleeds when cut, and that its material composition foreordains that it can be divided. He regards the mind as a unity that exists beyond the body. However, an indivisible mind would imply that every thought, impression, intuition and memory remains a single, inseparable whole. Confronted by the effects of an illness such as Alzheimer's. disease, Descartes could not claim that the mind always stays inviolable. In such a case, Descartes might face a daunting task to maintain his theory. This example clearly demonstrates that memory, a function of the mind, can be divided, specifically, the logical memory that concerns Descartes, without which he does not exist. Descartes' system encounters another conundrum in relation to the phenomena of bodily sensations. Given his demonstration that the material world stands independent and separate from consciousness, then what connection exists to explain pain, hunger, anger and movement? He appears to prove a difference so profound that it does not allow for the phenomenological truth. The experience of the truth denies his logical theory: mind and body share an essence through which sensations and movements occur. Descartes' logical theory of dualism contains a contrast so complete that it disproves its own validity. Yet, dualism persists as the basis for modern thought, science and medicine – regardless of the incalculable harm that it brings to society. The healing arts suffer particularly in that treatment becomes disassociated from the very people it claims to serve. Ficino believes that the first cause of illness – and the first step toward healing – is attention to the Divine moral code. Ficino writes in a letter entitled, *The nobility, usefulness and practice of medicine*:

The Magi thought that the mind of the sick should first be cleansed with sacred teachings and prayers before they attended to the body. For clearly such an art as this has been received and is practiced through divine grace, because the soul is dependent on God, and the body on the soul. We can see the nobility of medicine from the fact that the arts which are directed towards the good life seem to be of little benefit without its assistance. We cannot live well if we are not alive! In this short span of life, little can be achieved in any skill without good health; and we cannot easily attain great merit among men or with God unless we live a

long and temperate life. The careful application of medicine gives every opportunity to lead such a life. But in the practice of this art there must be the utmost devotion to God, and charity towards men

.....Above all a doctor should remember that the creator of health is God, that nature is God's instrument for establishing or maintaining health, and that the doctor is the servant of both. So he does not provide the strength, but prepares the ground and removes obstacles for the master craftsman. ⁴³

Ficino, himself a doctor, addresses the direction that a healer should follow so as to initiate the memory of the presence of the Divine. For Ficino, the body represents the physical words that one can read to explore the inner consciousness. Divine communication emerges in the physical realm of the person as an illness whose function is to act as a reminder and a herald. He writes: "we should be compelled by frequent illness to remember still more frequently the heavenly physician."²⁸ ⁴⁴ He thus views illness as a signal to remember man's Divine origin. The body speaks in a language perceptible to the senses so that the person can internally translate the message and hence remember. Human beings, by the very fact that they exist in material form, forget the ideal of the Divine source and instead pursue the illusive satisfactions found in material life. Ficino enjoins that "the soul is manifestly afflicted in the sensible world by so many ills because, seduced by an excessive desire for sensible goods, it has imprudently lost the goods of the intelligible world."⁴⁵

A logical conclusion to the notion of correspondences is to view illness as the sign of the soul's despair. The physical body of an individual reflects the interior life, the non-empirical aspects of mind and soul. This aspect of Hermeticism follows from *as above, so below*, which is, *as inside, so outside*. If the first is true, then it includes the other. Each pair of reciprocal relationships holds true as a reflection of the other. Thus, illness on the physical level reveals illness of the spirit.

The soul, as it carries the life force of the divine, wants to remember its Divine nature. This quest drives it to speak through the body and the imagination. The body however, a material substance, promotes the most direct sensory responses, and thus can most effectively, awaken the individual to the truth: The truth that resides in the soul and connects to the Divine spirit. The goal of imagination, of art, of philosophy, of prayer, of illness and of life is to remember the divine nature that composes the soul of man and the soul of nature. This memory frees the soul to return home to God. Ficino elaborates this concept in a letter entitled, *On divine frenzy*:

Souls are depressed into bodies through thinking about and desiring earthly things. Then those who were previously fed on ambrosia and nectar, that is the perfect knowledge and bliss of God, in their descent are said to drink continuously of the river Lethe, that is forgetfulness of the divine. They do not fly back to heaven, whence they fell by the weight of their earthly thoughts, until they begin to contemplate once more those divine natures which they have forgotten. The divine philosopher – considers we achieve this through two virtues, one relating to moral conduct and the other to contemplation; one he names with a common term – 'justice', and the other wisdom'. . . .Socrates teaches in Phaedo that we acquire these by the two parts of philosophy; namely the-'active' and the-'contemplative'. Hence, he says again in Phaedrus that only the mind of a philosopher regains wings. On recovery of these wings, the soul is separated from the body by their power. Filled with God, it strives with all its might to reach the heavens, and thither it is drawn. Plato calls this drawing away and striving-'divine frenzy', and he divides it into four parts. Men never remember the divine unless they are stirred by its shadows or images, as they may be described, which are perceived by the

bodily senses. ⁴⁶

Forgetfulness of the divine; To remember the divine; – the key words that define the Renaissance Hermetic path to the Divine, as the work of both Marsilio Ficino and Giordano Bruno illustrate.

THE RETURN TO THE DIVINE ON EARTH: FICINO'S VIEW OF THE CREATOR

Ficino's philosophical ideas address an entire world view. His writings cover the gamut of human contemplation and action. He presents his vision of life in respect to all matter of human concerns: the Divine, the soul, man, the heavens, the earth, illness, healing, relationships, the ultimate purpose to life and ways to understand and to perceive the events that occur every moment. Ficino's philosophy refers to issues and questions that involve the complete life of man.

Ficino begins with an ultimate Creator whom he envisions from a perspective of mystical monotheism. Mystical identifies a tradition that includes the reality of the existence of the invisible. God, the omnipotent and knowing, stands concurrently at the apex, in the center and within the entire space of the heavenly hierarchy. All creations contain the Divine spirit as it is the ultimate substance that generates life. At the same time that God exists within every creation, God also rests above all else. Thus, he must direct his spirit downwards to touch his creations. He wants to reach both those in the heavens – the planets, the stars and – 'the void that contains pure spirit'– and those on earth – the objects of nature and the attributes of man. This essence descends into the world on the wings of the soul which acts as the bloodline or current through which the Divine spirit flows.

Through the soul's perpetual, circular movement, the spirit of the Divine moves from His sphere of the most high to the realm of the intelligible material world. Since God's spirit provides the breath of life for all his creations, man and nature share the anima mundi – the world soul. The vehicle that conveys the Divine spirit to his visible forms – the soul – emerges in man on either of three primary avenues: Through the intellect, the will and the imagination. In a letter entitled, *Serious words to Giovanni. The soul perceives after death, and much more clearly than when in the body*, he writes: The objects of mind also are more sublime than the objects of sense, because they are universal, vast and eternal, whereas those of sense are particular, limited and mortal.⁴⁷

The will acts as the force that moves the soul along its route. Ficino writes: "Since will desires to perceive things as they are in themselves, it draws the soul to things outside itself; and therefore it is will that is the origin of movement."⁴⁸ This relationship between God and His creations provides the basis for the paramount truth of Hermeticism – *correspondences between the creator and his creations exist throughout all the levels of creation*. And, these correspondences can lead a human being toward the only real satisfaction, which is the memory of the Divine essence. Man, alone among the created world, possess a unique gift; only the human being can complete the circle of the soul. As Ficino recommends:

"We should be compelled by frequent illness to remember still more frequently the heavenly physician and to remember, furthermore, that we have not been put in a place of such unrest as a homeland, but we have been banished, as it were, to an exile."⁴⁹

To return home to the Divine source requires that humanity strive to ignore the distractions reaped upon it by the material world. The mind must discipline itself with focus and direction. To this purpose, the Renaissance Art of Memory, a discipline with of Greek and Roman origins, offers a practice for the journey of the soul.

The definition of the word remembers is: *re* means again; *member* means either a part of

the whole, mindfulness or merit. Thus, to remember connotes to become part of the whole or mindful again. The concept of memory implies to forget; One need not remember that which one knows in the present moment. According to Ficino, and other Hermeticists such as Giordano Bruno, the art of memory can return us to our Divine connection. This discipline, begun as a way to memorize texts and continued as a spiritual practice, offers a way to structure and direct the contents of the mind. With clarity and focus, the mind regains its natural powers and thus, according to Hermeticism, can seek to recover knowledge of its Divine origin.

THE MIND'S JOURNEY TO THE DIVINE: THE HISTORY OF THE RENAISSANCE ART OF MEMORY

The Renaissance emphasis on the art of memory follows the tradition that begins in ancient Egypt and refashions it for the period. The Hermetic magus sees the universe as the manifest image of Divine Ideas and the individual human being as the mirror of these Divine Ideas on earth. Immersed in Neoplatonic thought, they accept Plato's claim that all learning is simply the recollection of things known from the Ideal world before birth into this realm of matter. These notions explain the Hermetic Art of Memory: To recall the images of the Divine world inhabited before birth, the human being becomes a living reminder of the entire realm of Ideas and thus can return to the Divine home in this life. The tradition begins in ancient Egyptian.

The god-king Osiris determines the earthly fate of the recently departed, a role of inestimable power. The Egyptians regard his wife, Isis, as the goddess of wisdom. Seth, envious of his brother Osiris, attempts to seize power and kills Osiris. He cuts him into fourteen pieces and buries each piece in a different part of the kingdom. Isis hears of his fate and decides to redress the crime. She travels throughout the lands and collects each piece of her husband. She remembers him; that is she repairs and pieces together his body so that he may again live. She remembers Osiris and thus resurrects him. Isis corrects the murder of her husband. She remembers Osiris both physically and mentally since her replacement of the pieces of his body brings his soul again to life. She creates him whole.

The second legend on memory relates the tale of Simonides of Ceos, a Greek lyric poet c.556 - c.468 BC. and a native of Athens. A nobleman hires him to recite an ode at a banquet. Following in the custom of the era, Simonides begins with praise for the gods Castor and Pollux as a preface to the intended purpose of his ode, the adulation of the host of the banquet. According to legend, the host decides that since he must pay the poet's fee, and not the gods, the poet should dedicate the entire ode to his employer's personal glory. He reduces half of Simonides' fee and supposedly suggests that should the poet wish full payment, he can request it from the gods he had acknowledged. A servant then informs him that two young men had arrived at the nobleman's door with an important message for him. Simonides leaves the room, goes to the door to investigate and finds no one there. However, the banquet wall collapses while he goes to the door and kills the undeferential nobleman and his guests. Castor and Pollux indeed pay their share of the poet's fee. Workers clear away the remains of the stone only to discover that it has so crushed the guests that their own families cannot recognize them. Simonides, however recalls an image of the hall and the guests at the table, as he remembers it. This image allows him to name the order of the guests. The legend concludes that as he contemplates this event, he creates the first classical Art of Memory.

Although the story appears to be legend, the essence of the techniques conforms to the Hermetic Art of Memory. The two principle guidelines are the formation of mental images and their placement in specific order. Often the practitioner sets the image within a building composed of specific loci or *places*. Into these special places, the practitioner transforms the information into *objects* in each of these loci. In this way, the practitioner can amble through the edifice, in his imagination, and as he passes through the various rooms, he recalls the memory.

The history of the Art of Memory, particularly in regards to its place in Renaissance Hermeticism, must include the connotation that it acquires from Cicero. In his earliest work on rhetoric, *De inventione*, Cicero defines virtue as ‘ a habit of mind in harmony with reason and the order of nature’ a stoic definition of virtue. He then states that virtue has four parts, namely Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. Each of these main virtues he subdivides into parts of their own. The following is his definition of Prudence and its parts:

Prudence is the knowledge of what is good, what is bad, and what is neither good nor bad. Its parts are memory, intelligence, foresight (*memoria, intelligentsia, providentia*). Memory is the faculty by which the mind recalls what has happened. Intelligence is the faculty by which it ascertains what is. Foresight is the faculty by which it is seen that something is going to occur before it occurs.⁵⁰

Cicero understands the connection between memory and morality: Actions in the present time derive from lessons learned in the past. To remember is to allow the space for correction to occur, and thus live a virtuous life without the repetition of error.

The Art of Memory proceeds from the Roman rhetoricians, to a role in the established Catholicism of the Medieval Ages through the Scholastic thought of Alburus Magus and Thomas Aquinas, both members of the Dominican Order. Many of their theological-philosophical treatises concern the nature of “memories-for-words and memories-of-images.”⁵¹ In regards to the Hermetic tradition, Alburus contributes the this clarification of artificle memory, that is the memory that increases through exercise. One “does not need extra images to remind of the *intentiones*” since “the memory image includes the *intentio* within itself. . . . This means that the memory image gains in potency. An image to remind of a wolf’s form will also contain the *intentio* that the wolf is a dangerous animal from which it would be wise to flee; on the animal level of memory, a lamb’s mental image of a wolf contains the *intentio*. And on the higher level of the memory of a rational being, it will mean that an image chose, say, to remind of the virtue of Justice will contain the *intentio* of seeking to acquire this virtue.

This statement emphasizes the living reality of the invisible world, a reality accepted until the advent of dualism. The intention of an individual’s actions, that inner aspect associated with a higher part of the self, instills power to the image. This image, with the quality of power, then becomes a reality that exists within the non-empirical world. And, this invisible reality exists to create the intelligible world, namely the benefits of memory to live with Prudence and naturally, to recall events and words. Thus, images ““move strongly and so adhere to the soul.””⁵²

Aquinas writes of memory as that which stimulates the soul. As aids to a good memory, he recommends that the images “should not be too familiar, because we wonder more at unfamiliar things and the soul is more strongly and vehemently held by them.” He points second to the necessity that “a man should place in a considered order those (things) which he wishes to remember, so that from one remembered (point) progress can easily be made to the next. Whence the Philosopher [Augustine] says in the book *De memoria*: ‘some men can be seen to remember from places. The cause of which is that they pass rapidly from one (step) to the next.’” He also offers the suggestion that “a man should dwell with solicitude on, and cleave with affection to, the things which he wishes to remember; because what strongly impressed on the soul slips less easily away from it.”⁵³ These points lead to the notion that the classics by Dante Alighier, *The Inferno* and *The Divine Comedy*, and *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer actually represent mnemonics for the path to a virtuous life.

The emphasis that the Scholastics place on memory introduces elements that support both Hermeticism and the normative Catholic theology. One new facet from this period to The Art of Memory stems from the change that occurs in the *loci* that the practitioners use to remember. The Medieval writers create memory systems that use other devices than simply buildings; the

techniques touch both the visible and the invisible levels of the cosmos, such as the signs of the Zodiac. In this era, another system for the *loci* becomes the Ptolemaic cosmos of spheres, God stands at the center, and in downward direction, comes the angelic, the celestial and the elemental levels. This choice for the *loci* bestows credence to the Hermetic notion of correspondence in that memory, in relation to Prudence, implies that the soul learns the route of return. "Memory can be a moral habit when it is used to remember past things with a view to prudent conduct in the present, and prudent looking forward to the future."⁵⁴ The importance of memory as the key to ethical action leads the Dominican order of friars to absorb the Art into the church. From this source, Ficino and Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), base their own memory systems.

The concern for order in the writings of Aquinas, and in later Renaissance practitioners, has as its root the Biblical story of creation. Implicit in each of the six days of creation is the idea that everything has its proper time to come into existence. As Ecclesiastics writes, "To everything there is a time and a place under the heavens." Order becomes identical to the notion that an overriding being supervises life. Chaos and disturbance do not have a place in a universe that has purpose and direction. Marsilio Ficino also emphasizes the importance of order within his letter entitled *Precepts for memory*:

One should always remember that there is a definite order present, or at any rate an order that may be deduced, in what has to be learnt. The order consists in a particular proportion and sequence. When things have been arranged in an ordered sequence, if one thing comes to mind the rest immediately and necessarily follows, either by a natural or a deduced connection. And if the mind's attention is directed either to one thing, or to a few things as if they were only one, it acts more powerfully than if it is divided among many things. Just as the complete order and connection of the parts bring to unity the whole composed of those parts, so they also bring to unity the attention of the mind itself.⁵⁵

For Ficino, memory has a dual purpose. He advises that people use whatever device best assists as a "practical means for remembering fundamental images. Amulets, charms, paintings, poems, ceremonies – all of these serve to remind the individual about basic structures of life. Secondly, memory may be less personal and more collective. By recalling the nature of the gods and goddesses, for example, we keep in mind those profound spheres of significance. On the one hand, memory is an imagistic mnemonic device, on the other it is a means of making connections between discrete events and larger patterns."⁵⁶

Ficino's emphasis on the astrological meanings of the celestial bodies speaks to the Hermetic ideas on memory; that of the correspondence between the higher realms and the earthly domains – as above, so below. Mental concentration on the planets brings their significance into the imagination of the person and thence into the individual's actual way of living in the world. The celestial bodies, each with their own inherent mystical attributes and quality, convey their power through their physical reflections in the visible world. This transmission occurs on two levels, that of the personal and that of the collective. On the personal level, the *signs* that represent the celestial creations possess the energy of the celestial persona and thus they evoke that body's specific characteristics in the individual's consciousness. On the collective tier, the signs that depict the celestial entities transmit the Divine soul that imbues all creation and thus they raise the soul to its return path of ascension. The signs contain the essence of the representation. and thus they permit the celestial power to reach the lower level of earth and the minds of men.

THE CREATOR AND HIS CREATIONS: THE ONE AND THE MANY

Upon reflection, the student of Hermeticism might contemplate the apparent impossibility of a correspondence between the **One** Divine – indivisible and omnipotent – and the astounding number of **many** – unique faces of every species, all who share the same Divine essence. The practitioner might ask the teacher of “Analogic Thought and Quantum Correspondence” what analogy Bruno offers as his resolution. What similarity exists between the one Divine and the many faces, forms and shadows whose essence emanates from the mind of the single source?

God exists immanent in his created universe. He is One, infinite and uncreated. Bruno explains:

That God, as absolute, has nothing to do with us except insofar as he communicates with the effects of Nature and is more intimate with them than Nature herself. Therefore, if he is not Nature herself, he is certainly the nature of Nature, and is the soul of the Soul of the world, if he is not the Soul herself Likewise, one Goodness, one Happiness, one Absolute Principle of all riches and fortunes.⁵⁷

Thus, Bruno posits an undivided whole Divine whose essence rests as potential soul in the created objects of the universe. The One Divine source transmits its essence through the glow of the active intelligence which both forms it and emerges from it. Bruno does not perceive God as the monotheistic Supreme who resides afar and above all else. God’s presence permeates the world and all creation. Bruno explains that:

Those wise men knew God to be in things, and Divinity to be latent in Nature, working and glowing differently in different subjects and succeeding through diverse physical forms, in certain arrangements, in making them participants in her, I say, in her being, in her life and intellect; and they therefore, with equally diverse arrangements, used to prepare themselves to receive whatever and as many gifts as they yearned for.⁵⁸

Concurrently as the universe composes a continual, contiguous indivisible whole, the Divine force breathes life into the created entities of Nature and humanity. Bruno uses Jove to present the reflection of the paradox in this manner:

We have here a Jove, not taken as too legitimate and good a vicar or lieutenant of the first principle and universal cause, but well taken as something variable, subject to the Fate of Mutation; he, however, knowing that together in one infinite entity and substance there are infinite and innumerable particular natures (of which he is one individual), which, since they in substance, essence, and nature are one, likewise, by reason of the number through which they pass, incur innumerable vicissitudes and a kind of motion and mutation.⁵⁹

Bruno perceives the differences in the created world as extensions of the *spirit* of the One; entities with unique and singular qualities whose hearts beat from the essence of the First Principle. The Divinity circulates her inherent essence yet neither nature nor humanity actually reflects the Divinity. He considers that the *many* objects in this universe comprise mere temporal representations of that which remains immutable, unknowable and infinite. The specific characterizations of the individual objects do not concern Bruno in the same way as the Infinite. “He saw the particular forms that distinguish one thing from another as ripples in the calm sea of being, mere modes or accidents of universal matter. Nature thrives and breeds transitory forms

out of living matter through her own internal force of soul.”⁶⁰ He establishes this notion through his description of the persona of Jove:

He [Jove] knows that the eternal corporeal substance (which is not producible *ex nihil*, nor reducible *ad nihilum* but rarefiable, condensable, formable, arrangeable and fashionable) the composition is dissolved, the complexion is changed, the figure is modified, the being is altered, the fortune is varied, only the elements remaining what they are in substance, that same principle persevering which was always the one material principle, which is the true substance of things, eternal, ingenerable, and incorruptible.

He knows well that of the eternal incorporeal substance nothing is changed, is formed or deformed, but there always remains only that thing which cannot be a subject of dissolution, since it is not possible that it be a subject of composition; and therefore, either of itself or by any accident, it cannot be said to die; because death is nothing but the divorcing of parts joined in a composite. . . . Although it has familiarity with bodies, it must not be considered as really coming into a composition or mixture with them. . . .⁶¹

Bruno and Ficino, although both lay claim to the influence of Hermeticism, differ in their concept of the Divine and nature. Ficino envisions the Divine as the creator of the world and all of the created items. Bruno conceives of one world with a multitude of “*faces*”. The celestial bodies, the countless constituents of nature and all of the members of humanity receive the “light cast by the Divine and assume many faces.”⁶² These “*faces*” of the Divine spirit give shape to the matters of nature and the ideas of humanity. Thus Bruno considers human thought as the “*shadow*” of the Divine,⁶³ whose nature he describes:

She is most exalted, absolute, and without association with things produced. You see then that there is one simple Divinity found in all things, one fecund Nature, preserving mother of the universe insofar as she diversely communicates herself, casts her light into diverse subjects, and assumes various names. . . .

There is found in all things, Divinity, who since she diffuses and imparts herself in innumerable ways, has innumerable names, and who, by innumerable paths with principles pertaining and appropriate to each way, is sought after as we cultivate her with innumerable rites, because we seek to receive from her innumerable kinds of favors.⁶⁴

What then constitutes the internal force of the Divine? What supreme and permanent ideal allows the comprehension of the Divine? For Bruno, it is truth:

Truth is the divinity and sincerity, the goodness and beauty of things, who is neither driven away by violence, not corrupted by antiquity, nor diminished by occultation, nor dispersed by communication. . . . Thus Truth is before all things, is with all things, is after all things, is above all, with all, after all; she contains the reason for the beginning, middle and end. . . . She is ideal, natural and notional; she is metaphysics, physics, and logic.

For sense does not confound her, time does not wrinkle her, place does not hide her, night does not interrupt her, shadow does not envelop her . . . She is the unity that presides over all, is the goodness that is pre-eminent among all things; because the entity, the good, and the true are one. . . .⁶⁵

This all supreme, reigning concept informs all created entities in the cosmos. The immutable Divine, the One God, becomes the imprint for the substance of all creation through the ideal of truth. The truth of the Divine, the truth of the natural laws, these invariant laws derive from the Divine and wend their way to all creation. God remains apart from the universe and undivided in his supremacy; instead he sends forth his laws to determine the nature of creation. Yet, for Bruno, the immanence of this Divinity does not extend from the most high abode downward to nature and man. Ficino, on the other hand, equate nature with the Divine: There does not exist a separation between the Divine spirit and the constituents of nature. Nature and humanity, for him, remain an extension of the Divine – the lines on the circle whose center and surrounding area exist with God.

For Bruno, however, the very definition of this Divinity is indivisibility. Bruno calls it immutable and unknowable. It is the single nucleic source and simultaneously, the infinite, eternal atmosphere that surrounds all creation. It transmits its energy through the words of the truth. It removes itself by virtue of its nature from the created world and humanity. God is, as Bruno speaks of him in the *Heroic Frenzies*, “the light shining through the obscurity of matter.”⁶⁶ Truth, on the other hand, imbues the entire universe as the internal principle that determines the condition of the universe. The World Intellect, or the World Soul, moves truth from the Divine to the created, and becomes that which generates the energy for the movement of nature and for the growth of humanity. For Bruno, the World Soul is the formative principle that causes the existence and the movement of life. In his book, *Cause, Principle and Unity*, Bruno states:

There is one intellect which gives being to everything, called by the Pythagoreans and the Timaeus giver-of-forms: a soul and formal principle which becomes and informs everything, called by the same thinkers the fountain-of-forms: a single matter out of which everything is produced and formed, called by everyone the receptacle of forms.⁶⁷

The intellect or World Soul resides within the internal nature of all creation and acts as the energy behind all creation. This force determines the particulars of the individual entities of nature and humanity. It is the Prime Mover; the internal cause of life. Bruno continues:

If then the spirit, the soul, the life, is found in all things, and it, according to certain gradations, fills all matter, it certainly becomes the true act and the true form of all things. The soul of the world, then, is the formal and constitutive principle of the universe and of that which is contained in it. I say that if life is found in all things, the soul becomes the form of all things. She presides throughout matter and is dominant in mixtures, effectuates the composition and consistency of the parts.⁶⁸

Bruno envisions God as the immanent precept that defines and describes the created world. For him, the intellect transfers the truth into knowledge so that each individual intellect can comprehend the message. In *Heroic Frenzies*, his story of Jove’s attempt at self-examination, He writes:

Every vision requires an intermediary between its potency and the object. For, just as by means of light diffused in the air, and by the image of an object which proceeds in some way from the thing seen to him who sees it, the act of vision becomes effective, so in the intellectual sphere where the sun of the active intellect shines, by means of the intelligible species which receives its form from the object, and so to speak, proceeds from it, our intellect or some

other inferior one begins to comprehend something of the divinity. For, just as our eye, when we see, does not receive the light of fire or of gold in substance, but in similitude, so our intellect, in whatever state it is found, does not receive the divinity in substance (for then there would be as many gods as there are separate intelligences), but receives it in similitude; and this is why these intelligences are not formally gods, but may be designated divine things, the divinity and the divine beauty remaining one and exalted above them all.⁶⁹

Bruno conceives that the intellect, or the World Soul, performs a similar function as the soul does for Ficino: It carries the essence of the Divine spirit to the created entities of the universe. The difference between the two philosophers issues forth more in their concept of the Divine itself. Ficino sees the Divine as that which encompasses the totality of the universe although in the hierarchy of the universe, he rests above all created matter. Ficino's God does not limit the spread of his light; he spreads his spirituality throughout the entire created realm. Bruno, on the other hand, views the Divine as a concept and he likens it to truth. Yet, the Divine itself, remains unified and indivisible; his infinite nature is the substance of the created world.

This concept affects Bruno's philosophy of man and man's relationship to nature. Essentially, Bruno contends that for man to realize the Divine spirit inherent in all creation, he must understand the various signs that reveal Divinity. Man can ascend to the knowledge of the Divine through his grasp of the Divine remnants that bestow life and being to nature:

Divinity reveals herself in all things, although by virtue of a universal and most excellent end, in great things and general principles, and by proximate ends, convenient and necessary to diverse acts of human life, she is found and is seen in things said to be most abject, although everything, from what is said, has Divinity latent within itself. For she enfolds and imparts herself even unto the smallest beings, and from the smallest beings, according to their capacity. Without her presence nothing would have being, because she is the essence of the existence of the first unto the last being.⁷⁰

For Bruno, Divinity is one. The multitude of creations reflect this spark in the way that one perceives the infinite points of light as it refracts through the fragments of a prism. The many forms that comprise the created world do not endure by virtue of their unique form. Bruno emphasizes the similarity of the source of creation and delegates the various forms to the river of life's process. Forms, by their very identity, change in the process of existence, yet the intrinsic nature of the Divine remains eternally present for all to understand.

This Divine light permeates all creation. Bruno proposes that the light of the Divine shines forth from the created world so that human beings can see and read its message. For Bruno, as for Ficino, light holds an important function in his schema of images that represent the created world. He writes:

Light . . . is the prime substance from whose being all other species of substance are conceived. . . . With that light which is some sort of spiritual substance, with no sun or fire providing light, no object from without instructing our sense's faculty, soul was given, not just ours, but a universal one spreading itself through the immense cosmos.⁷¹

Nature reveals this light to man in signs and portents. Thus, the individual components of nature reflect, in return, the same essence as each other. The infinite and indivisible Divine unveils itself in nature through an infinite variety of impressions. Man discovers the essence of the Divine through the gift of intellect or the World Soul, which can read the correspondences between the Divine and nature and thus, ascertain true knowledge. This idea substantiates Bruno's emphasis on memory systems since, for Bruno, these circles encompass the meaning of all creation and

underscore the truth of the Divine nature in all living things:

Diverse living things represent diverse divinities and diverse powers, which, besides the absolute being they possess, obtain the being communicated to all things according to their capacity and measure. Whence all of God is in all things (although not totally, but in some more abundantly and in others less.) Therefore, Mars can more efficaciously be found in a natural vestige and mode of substance, not only in a viper and scorpion but also in an onion and garlic, than in any manner whatsoever of inanimate painting or statue.... Because just as Divinity descends in a certain manner, to the extent that one communicates with Nature, so one ascend to Divinity through Nature, just as by means of a life resplendent in natural things one rise to the life that presides over them.⁷²

The figures of gods, the creatures and the other symbols that comprise Bruno's memory systems, contain the different essences of the one Divine. By the principle of correspondence, through contemplation and discipline, these memory devices carry the spirit of their representations into the person and so assist in the ultimate goal of the Hermeticist: to reach an experience of the Divine.

TWO SIDES OF ONE WHOLE: BRUNO'S UNITY OF OPPOSITES

Bruno's practice of the memory systems harmonizes with Ficino's emphasis on excursions within the imagination. Bruno adamantly emphasizes the importance of the imaginative process in his works on memory. He calls it "the sense of senses, . . . the most general sense organ and prime body of the soul . . . it occupies the citadel of the organism."⁷³ Both philosophers also offer similar guidelines in another vital area – in respect to the perspective that circumscribes ethical considerations and actions. Bruno and Ficino propose the notion that Bruno calls the doctrine of the "coincidence of contraries", first expressed by Nicholas Cusa (1401 - 1464), a German mystic and scientist. Bruno expresses it thus:

Walking pleases and benefits him who has been sitting or lying down; and he who run about on his feet finds relief in sitting. He finds pleasure in the country who has for too long dwelt under his roof; he yearns for his room who is satisfied with the country. Association with food, however pleasing, is finally the cause of nausea. So mutation from one extreme to the other through its participants, and motion from one contrary to the other through its intermediate points, come to satisfy us; and, finally, we see such familiarity between one contrary and the other that the one agrees more with the other than like with like.

What I wish to infer from that is that the beginning, the middle, and the end, the birth, the growth, and the perfection of all that we see, come from contraries, through contraries, into contraries, to contraries. And where there is contrariety, there is number, there is order, there are degrees, there is succession, there is vicissitude. Therefore, no one who considers well, will ever, because of his being or possession, be abased or exalted in spirit, although in comparison with other conditions and fortunes it may seem to him good or bad, worse or better.⁷⁴

For Bruno, this concept becomes the foundation for his theories on morality and ethics. To appreciate Justice, one must know injustice; to savor harmony, one must experience discord. Just

as opposites attract in terms of magnets, so here, opposites yield the truth; like to like simply repeats the error. He continues later:

And morally, the proud man cannot get together with the proud man; the poor man with the poor man, the greedy man with the greedy man; but the one is pleased with the humble man, the other with the rich man, the latter with the splendid man.

Let us prepare ourselves for our destinies; because just as fate has not denied us the possibility of falling, so it has conceded us the possibility of rising again; therefore, just as we were ready to fall, so are we prepared to get back on our feet. We shall be able to depart without difficulty from that suffering into which through our error we have fallen, and from worse than that which could befall us, by means of reparation which lies in our hands. By the chain of errors we are bound; by the hand of Justice we free ourselves.⁷⁵

Ficino shares this idea of a unity formed of two opposites. In many of his letters, Ficino utilizes this form of expression:

Often poverty is recognized from abundance, as is loss from possession. . . .The desire for abundance, as if it were a possession, arises and grows from poverty, as if that were a loss. * * * Difficulty in life follows the easy path of vice, ease in life follows the difficult path of virtue. * * * For evil men good fortune is bad, but for good men evil fortune is good.⁷⁶

This reversal derives from the Hermetic way. The doctrine of *as above, so below* also applies to all apparent opposites. As one, so the other. The 'one' informs the opposite. Together they form a single whole. And, this process of unification, of two opposites joined or linked to make a single whole – a whole actually greater than the sum of its parts, could be viewed as the essence of practical Hermeticism. The concept of correspondence actually allows two apparent opposites – above and below; internal and external; body and mind – to form a single, indivisible whole. In Hermeticism., to make whole is to reveal the Divine aspect that lies within all created forms. Bruno seeks to demonstrate the absolute Unity of the universe in all the varieties of his thought. For him, memory and imagination lead to the unity that governs the true reality hidden behind the empirical diversity of the world. In this endeavor – to see the whole – Hermeticism offers a clear and direct path.

FICINO AND BRUNO TWO HERMETIC PHILOSOPHERS: ONE HERMETIC TRADITION

In as much as they share the essential Hermetic approach, Bruno and Ficino appear quite dissimilar in other important areas. For one, Bruno professes rabid anti-Semitic views. Commentators seek to minimize the relevance of these diatribes however, to one way of thought, such expressions represent the *sign* of hypocritical and impure beliefs, at least according to the fundamental principle of Hermeticism. Bruno claims that one Unity governs the entire universe; all people share the identical essence. For one who actually accepts this principle, it would be impossible to distinguish one group as different and inferior. Bruno, unlike Ficino, stands as a figure of antagonism and acrimony. His outspoken aggressive attitude toward the established Church leads to his eventual death by fire at a stake. His anti-Semitic views reveal the true nature of his mind: he uses ideas for his own convenience rather than as the firm ground to support his

way of being in the world.

Both Ficino and Bruno premise their thought on the idea of correspondence, along with its epistemological partner, analogy. This type of perception becomes most evident in that both philosophers use the celestial bodies to represent emotions and moral behavior. The planets and humanity correspond by virtue of their shared place in the created world. That an emotional connection exists between the two classes relies solely upon one's point of view. For the Hermetic, this relationship has as much validity as that of the relationship between a smile and happiness. One posits the connection after observation and perusal.

The two emphasize the importance of an interior life of spirit, particularly in response to the lure of the material world. They consider the excess and the greed promulgated by the physical world as the major source of the social and physical ills that plague society. Their creed: Live vibrantly in the imagination and the memory to discover the Divine; Live sparingly among the distractions that deter one from the quest. In this regard, both Ficino and Bruno agree with the primacy of the pursuit of the Divine and the Truth. The goal of life, explicitly for Ficino and implicitly for Bruno, is to discover the presence of the Divine in the universe. To this end, they advocate the path to the truth through images of the celestial bodies, the sight of an amulet or the sound of music – whatever means remind one of the Divine source.

In terms of imagery, the two Renaissance Hermeticists share the repository for the elements that compose the imaginative process: The celestial bodies. Both use the planets, stars and constellations as the symbols that represent emotions, health and most important, the recognition of the Divine. Of all the spheres in the sky, it is not coincidental that the Sun plays the starring role. Light means clarity and awareness of the truth. The Sun is the first source of light and of a light that reaches all people all over the earth. Hence, it plays a predominant role in the writings and thought of both philosophers.

In addition to the differences already described, another divergence in their individual temperaments concerns their style of writing. This issue, when viewed in terms of correspondence, allows one to sense the internal constitution of their minds. Ficino writes in a poetical and eloquent manner. His sentences form aphorisms that the reader retains and reviews. Ficino's style allows the reader to understand his points without the emotional response that drama elicits. Clarity presents the least barriers to comprehension. His words state his message without undue provocation. Bruno, on the other hand, writes in long repetitive sentences replete with adjectives and emotion. He uses ten words where only one word would suffice. Such sentences reveal an almost hysterical attitude, one that detracts from the message. Upon consideration, the intent of the two philosophers, that is to project the Hermetic ideas, succeeds much more fully in the work of Marsilio Ficino.

Ficino represents a remarkable example of the ideal Renaissance man. He is a doctor, a priest and a writer. He translates the complete works of the *Hermeticum*, Plato and other Greek philosophers. He studies philosophy and natural healing methods. He directs the Platonic Academy and teaches students. And, most crucial of all, his words *and* his life express a deep experiential truth of the ideas of Hermetic philosophy; From all that exists concerning Ficino's life, he dedicated himself to the healing and education of society. His letters display an intuitive grasp of the real focus of the author's intention. Ficino reflects the experience of a life lived with one purpose: To return to the Divine; in his knowledge, in his actions; in his perception – the quest of Hermeticism.

One component of this tradition that does not fall within the purview of this essay is alchemy. Alchemy refers to the transmutation of materials, usually base metal to gold. The search begins long ago in China and ancient Egypt. The Renaissance sees a revival in the pursuit, even notables of the Scientific Revolution, such as Newton, explore the process. Alchemy forms a natural practice of the Hermetic way since it depends on correspondences. The idea that one type of matter can transmute into another reflects the intimate and invisible connection that exists between all created entities. In fact, the process of alchemy is actually the goal of the Hermetic

attempt to discover correspondence in the universe. Alchemy itself stands as an analogy: The Hermeticist explores the transmutation of metal as an analogy of his exploration for self-transmutation.

Self-transmutation occurs whenever one reverses a phenomenon from a *base* form to gold; The highest transmutation involves the change from materialism into spirituality. An anonymous friend explained that one can interpret St. Augustine and St. Thomas as Hermeticists in that the first *transmutes* Plato into Christian thought and the second *transmutes* Aristotle. They find the correspondences in Christianity within Greek's intellectual heritage.

Renaissance, rebirth, implies a reminiscence of history. Perhaps, in regards to Hermeticism, one might consider it to be a resurrection: a new life of all that deserves to be eternal, such as the thought of Ficino. His words speak as well for modern society as they do for the time in which he lived.

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1. Francis Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964. P. 1.
 2. Richard Tarnas. *The Passion of the Western Mind*. New York: Harmony Books, 1991. P. 229.
 3. Walter Scott, *Hermetica*, Vol. I. New York, Shambala Press, 1985. P. 17. (Originally published in 1924.)
 4. Ibid, P. 227.
 5. Ibid. P. 228.
 6. Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas: From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity*. Trans. by Willard R. Trask. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. P. 295.
 7. For example, Pythagoras visited Egypt and proceeded to incorporate these teachings into his own philosophy.
 8. See Appendix I.
 9. Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981. P. 73.
 10. Ibid.
 11. Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman, Editors, *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, Crossroad: New York, 1995. P. xv.
 12. Richard Olson, *Science Deified & Science Defied*, Berkeley; University of California Press, 1982, P. 239 - 240. See Appendix II for a complete chart of the correspondences, including the Kabbalistic interpretations of the Hebrew letters and the Spheres of the Tree of Life.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Berman, op cit, P. 69-70.
 15. Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman, P. xvi.
 16. Faivre and Needleman, Op cit, P. xix.
 17. Op Cit. Tarnas, P. 215.
 18. Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Introduction to Marsilio Ficino's Letters*, London; Shephard-Walwyn, 1975. P. 23.
 19. Ernst Cassirer, Editor, *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, Chicago; The University of Chicago Press, 1948. P. 187.
 20. Kristeller, *Introduction to Marsilio Ficino's Letters*, P. 20.
 21. Op Cit. Marsilio Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, Vol. I. P. 40.
 22. The contents of this letter form the organizational basis for the discussion on Ficino. Here is a summary of the major points:

SOURCES:

- * He praises Egyptian wisdom.
- * He speaks of the ideal goals described by Plato
- * He emphasizes essential Judeo-Christian tenets, contained in the Bible.

EPISTEMOLOGY:

- * He indicates the correspondence between the different aspects of soul, body and spirit; and medicine, lyre and theology.
- * He writes of the immortal and divine nature of the soul that resides equally in man and nature.
- * He asserts that the most important action for man is to attain unity with the Divine.

PROSCRIPTIONS:

- * He admonishes his students to guard against their inclinations for material gain, self aggrandizement, excess indulgence and dissolute activity.

PRACTICES:

- * He urges that we master and apply ourselves to the art of study that recognizes the correspondence between medicine, music and mystery.

23.

. Dr. Gerald Epstein, MD, a New York City based psychiatrist and educator, whose work from the Kabbalah and from Hermeticism, writes in his book *Healing Into Immortality* (New York, Bantam Books, 1994. P. 86 - 87): These vows underlie all spiritual systems. *Obedience* is the willingness to obey the invisible reality It is the practice of silencing our personal desires and emotions in the face of our conscience *Chastity* is faithfulness to the One The chastity vow underlies the commandments against adultery, coveting, and putting any god before God *Poverty* means giving up the need to acquire material wealth in favor of the wealth of spirit that can come from the invisible reality The vow of poverty underlies the commandments against stealing, coveting, making graven images and taking *God's* name in vain." See Appendix III for a detailed discussion of Dr. Epstein's work.

24. Op Cit. Cassirer, P. 186. The passage continues: The use of Platonic concepts and arguments to support and develop religious beliefs was of course, not an innovation but rather a return to the tendency of the early Church Fathers. Ficino himself cites Augustine as his guide in judging Platonism to be superior to all other philosophies. However, the earlier writers had either used particular Platonic doctrines divorced from their context or absorbed Platonic ideas in a diluted form from others. Ficino deliberately set out to combine the Platonic doctrine as a whole with the Christian doctrine. . . .

25. The philosophers of the Renaissance accept Hermes Trismegistus -- The Thrice Great Hermes -- as an historical figure who predates Jesus.

26. Op Cit. Cassirer, P. 186.

27. Ibid. P. 187.

28. Francis Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, Chicago; The University of Chicago Press, 1964. P. 68.9. Op Cit. Tarnas, P. 214.0. Op Cit. Ficino, *Letters*, Vol. II, P. 83.31. Charles Schmitt and Quentin Skinner, Editors, *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*; Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1988. P. 238.32. Walter Scott, translator; *Asclepius I; Hermetica*; Volume I, Boston; Shambala Press, 1985. P. 301- 303. 33. Op Cit. Ficino, *Letters*. P. 88.34. Op Cit. Ficino, *Letters*. P. 57 - 58.

29. Tarnas, P. 214.0. Op Cit. Ficino, *Letters*, Vol. II, P. 83.31. Charles Schmitt and Quentin Skinner, Editors, *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*; Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1988. P. 238.

30. Op Cit. Ficino, *Letters*, Vol. II, P. 83.

31. Charles Schmitt and Quentin Skinner, Editors, *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*; Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1988. P. 238.

32. Walter Scott, translator; *Asclepius I; Hermetica*; Volume I, Boston; Shambala Press, 1985. P. 301-303.

33. Op Cit. Ficino, *Letters*. P. 88.

34. Op Cit. Ficino, *Letters*. P. 57 - 58.

35. Thomas Moore, *The Planets Within: Marsilio Ficino's Astrological Psychology*; Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1982. P. 48.

36. Marsilio Ficino on *The Alchemical Art*, Item 7 from Ms. Sloane 3638. Transcribed by Justin von Budjoss. This is a translation of a Latin text, Marsilius Ficinus, '*Liber de Arte Chemica*', which was printed in the *Theatrum Chemicum*, Vol 2, Geneva, 1702, p. 172-183. It can be located at the following URL: <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/6061/ficino.htm>.

37.. See page 13, note 30.

38. Op Cit. Ficino, *Letters*, Vol. II, P. 83.

39. Marsilio Ficino, *Concerning the Mind*. Ernst Cassirer, Editor, *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, Chicago; The University of Chicago Press, 1948. PP. 201-212.

40. Gerald Epstein, MD, *Waking Dream Therapy*, New York; Human Sciences Press, 1981. P. 16.

41. Gerald N. Epstein, MD, *Imaginetics: The Newsletter of the Imagination, the Will and the Memory*. Volume I, April, 1997.

42. Op. Cit. Descartes, Meditation 85. Descartes clarifies his position on the mind body split in this passage: AI have a clear and distinct idea of myself -- insofar as I am a thing that thinks and not an extended thing -- and because on the other hand I have a distinct idea of a body -- insofar as it is merely an extended thing, and not a thing that thinks -- it is therefore certain that I am

truly distinct from my body, and that I can exist without it.” Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, Trans. Donald A. Cress, (Hackett Publishing Company; 1980. Num. 78. With these words, Descartes defines the theme of modern medicine: The separate life of the mind and the body, The mind extends into the physical world without substance and the body cannot begin to touch the interior mind. Descartes emphasizes another point concerning the substance of the mind and the body: AThere is a great difference between a mind and a body, because the body, by its very nature, is something divisible, whereas the **mind is plainly indivisible**. This fundamental argument in support of his dualistic theory contains the seed of its own destruction. 42.

43. Op. Cit. Ficino. PP. 127-129.

28.44. Op Cit. Ficino, *Letters*, Vol. II. P. 7.

45. Op Cit. Cassirer, Ed. Ficino, *Concerning the Mind*. PP. 209-210.

46. Op. Cit. Ficino. *Letters*. Vol. II. P. 43.

47. Ibid. P. 80.

48. Ibid. P. 175.

49. Ibid. P. 7.

50. Francis Yates. *The Art of Memory*. Chicago. The University of Chicago Press. 1966. P. 20.

51. Ibid. P, 65.

52. Ibid. P. 67. Tullius quoted by Yates.

53. Ibid. P. 74 - 75. Aquinas from his discussion of Prudence in the *Summa Theologiae*.

54. Ibid. P. 62. Alburus quoted by Yates.

55. Op. Cit. Ficino. *Letters*. Vol. I. P. 157.

56. Op. Cit. Moore, P. 54.

57. Ibid. P. 240.

58. Op. Cit. Bruno. *ETB*.P. 237.

59. Ibid. P. 75.

60. Brian Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt. *Renaissance Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1991. P. 315.

61. Ibid. P. 34 ; P- 24

62. Ibid. P. 238.

63. See note 65. P. 31 of essay.

64. Ibid. P. 239.

65. Ibid. PP. 139 - 141.

66. Op. Cit. Bruno. *HF*. Second Dialogue. Chapter XIII.

67. Giordano Bruno, *Cause, Principle and Unity*. P.106. Quoted in “Three Exemplars of the Esoteric Tradition,” by Karen-Claire Voss in *Alexandria: The Journal of the Western Cosmological Traditions*, Vol. 3. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Phanes Press. 1995. P. 346.

68. Ibid. P. 189. Quoted in the introduction to *ETB*, by Arthur D. Imerti. P. 53.

69. Giordano Bruno. *Heroic Frenzies*. (Hereafter, *HF* in all further references. Second Dialogue XIII. Translation by Paulo Eugene Memmo, Jr., 1964. Available on the internet at URL: <http://www.avesta.org/bruno/furori.htm>.

70. Ibid. P. 242.

71. Op. Cit. Bruno. *CISI*. P. 36 - 37.

72. Op. Cit. Bruno. *ETB*. P. 235 - 236.

73. Op. Cit. Bruno. *CISI*. P. 40.

74. Ibid. P. 90 - 91.

75. Ibid. P. 90 and P. 114.

76. Op. Cit. Ficino *Letters*. Vol. I P.88; Vol. II P. 69; Vol. II P.76.