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Socrates and Sages

By Robert Bruce Baird

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You can easily see why it takes more than an Encyclopaedia to be able to follow what is going on from just this little quote. There are many twists and turns to follow in the pursuit of knowledge and its power that has been the purpose of many secret agencies since 'his'-story began. Even before the records of history that extend (by way of stones and symbols) to the beginnings of man's thoughts. These beginnings did not start with language due to some God-given gift and they did not need alphabets or other form and structure such as Locke's 'tabula rasa' would have us believe. Here we see the Jewish and Muslim as well as Catholic myth-makers were involved in cryptic or coded information. It is important to remember that the Islamic people didn't have as complete a 'Dark Ages' destruction of knowledge despite the efforts of Caliph Omar. Hermes Trismegistus is reckoned by many to have been the cause celebré or namesake of Hermetics and yet Barrett would have us believe he and his work did not exist until the Catholic Churchians had developed Hermeneutics. Talk about 'revisionist history' or Hellenized plagiarization!

"Hermes Trismegistus

There is considerable doubt as to when the works of Hermes Trismegistus were written, but it is certain that no one person by that name ever existed. The name means Hermes the thrice-greatest, Hermes being the Greek God of the spoken word – the 'logos' – identified with Mercury, the winged messenger God of the Romans, and with Thoth, the Egyptian God of writing, itself a magical activity not understood by the common man {Emphasis added.}.(Note that Mercury – both the astrological planet and the liquid metal – was of supreme importance in alchemy.) Thoth was the historian, and the creator of the all-important calendar by which not only history, but the movement of the Sun, Moon and stars could be measured. {Marshack is a well-respected authority and has proven a 15–30,000+ year old calendar of great precision existed in the Iberian region of Portugal.} As the scribe of the Gods Thoth was the custodian of all knowledge. Knowledge is power; knowledge known only to the few is even more so. Under the intermingling of philosophers and religious scholars of different cultures {Read propagandists or myth-makers}, Thoth/Hermes became the God of esoteric knowledge and power. A priest, philosopher or magician whose works were ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus, was the human amanuensis of the Gods.

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Whoever or how many people 'he' was {If Moses, then it would have involved his sister Mariae, who has alchemic treatises intact and credited to her, it might mean 'he' is a 'she'.}, Hermes Trismegistus was the author of what became known as the Hermetic texts, or the 'Corpus Hermeticum', a vast amount of writing on esoteric religion. (The complete 'Corpus Hermeticum' in English translation fills three large volumes.) {We will see more factual reference to thirteen.}

It was thought at one time that Hermes Trismegistus lived at around the time of Pythagoras, or perhaps of Moses; references in the Hermetic texts to the teachings of Jesus {Iesa would have been the original name in another language. Jesus of Nazareth was named after this concept of the sun [son] and 'Brotherhood of Man'.} were believed to be prophetic foreshadowings of these great truths. {If Jesus studied to find discipline and truth 'within' 'the living father' so should everyone. Thus the idea of an

easy and accessible, by 'special dispensations' and confessions type of 'Salvation' would not have such credibility or market acceptance. Pardon my coarse use of business terms to apply to the effort of these 'religious scholars' who like to be thought of as having 'Divine Inspiration'.} Later scholarship, however, has shown that the 'Corpus Hermeticum' was written sometime in the first five centuries AD, largely in Egypt, as a fusion of Greek and Egyptian esoteric teachings.

{But Michael Grant, in his well-respected 'The Rise of the Greeks' makes note that the cult of Thoth/Hermes and its equivalent 'Imhotep/Asklepios' was the main intellectual belief during the time of Pythagoras. Others know Pythagoras as a Therapeutae ['Dead Sea Scrolls Deception' by Baigent and Leigh, as well as Rabbis galore.] which is the origin of the Essenes that Gardner tells us are an outgrowth of 'The Great White (not racial) Brotherhood of Master Craftsmen'. The real answer is far more ancient, as we shall see, but for now it is important for you to know these things at a minimum, in order to judge what is being said.}

The Hermetic texts were known to Islamic scholars in medieval times, but it did not come to the attention of the West until they were translated into Latin in 1471 {There are others who even dispute this date. How did Albertus, Aquinas and Bacon get their knowledge? etc.} by the Italian Marsilio Ficino. The texts included works on religion, philosophy, magic, medicine, alchemy and astrology, all of which were closely linked. They include among many others the 'Emerald Tablet', or 'Tabula Smaragdina', which begins with the saying usually shortened to 'As Above, so below', {There is a great book of recent date by this name in New Age bookstores. Barrett uses the Dictum of Hermes Trismegistus on his back cover flap as it is taken from Macoy's 'General History, Cyclopeda and Dictionary of Freemasonry', 1850.} and which discusses the Philosopher's Stone; 'Poimandres', 'The Good Shepherd', a Gnostic text about the infinite light of God, and man's journey to enlightenment, and the 'Perfect Sermon of Asclepius' {A variant of Asklepios which was mentioned before.} which speaks of the divine Unity above a hierarchy of spiritual beings, and of man, who possesses both body and spirit, having a divine nature." (2)

Thus you see the 'living father within' that Jesus taught about; and even Barrett admits the 'Source' of the teaching of Jesus is the Grail which has a lot to do with the Dag (or Nag) Hammadi 'finds'. These were deciphered from Coptic in 1971 and I highly recommend 'The Gospel of Thomas'. So the 'churchians' in hot pursuit of this knowledge the Gnostics hid in protective urns when they were defending Alexandria's Library through four attacks, also wanted to keep people 'ignorant'. Jesus did

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not! The Cathars were later genocidally dealt with in a Crusade. This IS serious business, and it was not long ago that anyone speaking such things would be the victim of 'Blasphemy Laws' (ended in 1951 in England) or worse. I can attest to major problems in my own life despite our apparent freedoms; but this is not the forum for such digressions.

It is important to deal with his assertion that Islamic scholars 'in medieval times' knew hermetics or alchemy. He seems to suggest in a back-handed way that there was no earlier date for these things even in the relatively free Islamic world. This is a lot like the 'flat earth' and a host of other fictions that seek to minimize knowledge before the obvious Empire-builders had destroyed the egalitarian (Gaian or matriarchal in some cases) truth, of even better times. Better than any yet achieved, not just better than Greeks who made an art of slavery and Romans who the Greeks correctly called 'barbarians'.

Forensic analysis is the science and art of detective work. It comes in handy to have been an owner of a Public Relations firm (after being an auditor) for twelve years as I waded through the possibilities of 'spin-doctoring' at work by the Bible Exegesists. They sometimes call themselves hermeneuts or other high-falutin' names that would get any bum a coffee, and some change. Here is the real perspective of

the Arab scholars from a highly credible Encyclopedia from 1996:

"THE SOURCES OF ALCHEMY AMONG THE ARABS

Pythagoras is often mentioned in Arabic philosophy and in gnostic literature. Jaldake calls him 'al-mu' lallim al-awival' because he acquired the science from hermetic texts.

SOCRATES {Teacher of Plato and Aristotle, also mentioned as an alchemist in Mark Haeffner's 'Dictionary of Alchemy along with these same people. Yet no anthology of Aristotle in my local library mentions his 'Secretum Secretorum'.}

Socrates is considered not only as a wise man but also as an alchemist {HIS teacher Archelaos was too.}. Jabir calls him 'the father and mother of all philosophers' and considers him as the prototype of the real chemist. From Socrates to Jabir, there is a continuous tradition which attributes entire treatises to him {All kept from unwarranted viewers.}. Jabir affirms that Socrates was opposed to writing down of alchemic knowledge to avoid its exposition to the ignorance of the masses. Most references to Socrates refer to his arithmetical speculations (theory of balance) and also to artificial generation {Homonunclus to be covered more later.}.

PLATO

In reference to his book the 'Liber Quartorum' he says: 'The contents of this book are mainly alchemic but it contains also information on geometry, physiology and astrology. The ancient authors cited are Aristotle, Ptolemy, Hipparchus, Proclus, the Sophists {Not alchemists and too open about their knowledge for the liking of Socrates who compared them to prostitutes who sell their beauty for money.}, Ostanes, Hermes, Asclepius and Hippocrates

ARISTOTLE

He wrote a book on alchemy for his disciple Alexander... It includes three chapters (1) About the great principles of alchemy; (2) Alchemic operations; (3) The elixir. Pythagoras, Democritus, Asclepiades, Hermes, Plato, Ostanos, and Balinos are mentioned in the text. We also have a dialogue between Aristotle and the Indian Ykh+n sent by the Indian king as messenger to Alexander...

Zosimus and his contemporaries {Third century AD. much after these others, and in line with what Barrett says.} who collected their predecessors' traditions insist on their connections with the Egypt of the Pharaohs or with the Persia of Zoroaster and Ostanos. We can find texts under the name of Agathodaimon compared with Hermes. Some written pieces even say that alchemic texts were engraved in hieroglyphs on steles {Stones that could be rubbed with charcoal and parchment would pick up the symbols and formulas – thus ancient libraries.} but it was absolutely forbidden to divulge them.

HERMES AND HERMETIC LITERATURE

According to Ibn al-Nadim (351, 19) Arab alchemists considered the Babylonian Hermes as the first one to have mentioned the art of alchemy. Exiled by his countrymen, he came to Egypt where he became king {Guilds and knowledge were prerequisites to achieve high office in ancient times, for example the Tuatha de Danaan leader – Lugh.}. He wrote a certain number of books on alchemy and was equally interested in the hidden forces of nature.

The 'Fihrist' gives a list of thirteen books of Hermes about alchemy but in fact some of them are about magic." (3)

At the very least we can be assured that someone knows alchemists weren't hermits hiding in caves working on making manure into gold. That is the way many books and even Time/Life Video portrays them. They called Carl Jung an alchemist as well. That may be, in some definitions of the word; but I never read where Jung thought of himself in that manner even though he wrote a book on Psychology and Alchemy. His interest was more in the archetypal primordial symbology, and the truth aspects of it. If we were to accept Jung as an alchemist, then all Masons or at least the high level ones in Rosicrucianism are alchemists. It is true that some of the attendees at Eranos were alchemists and that Jung was a hermeticist, I suppose. It is not an easy title to throw around and I have been a student of these things for many years, but still wouldn't call myself an alchemist and certainly not a Spagyricist.

Many of the items and people mentioned will be dealt with as we proceed but there are many others who have traveled this awesome road in pursuit of something less than what is right. Personally I agree with Mr. Barrett about no one person being able to truly know so much. The 'Thrice-greatest' appellation is either psychopompous braggadocio or a guise to mislead. The Three laws of the magi require intense study and two would likely be the maximum that anyone has actually achieved unless we are to go back to the designer of the Great Pyramid. The application of all knowledge that exists in that one monument is beyond the perception of all but a few writers, among the hundreds of thousands who hold forth on its meaning.

It would be interesting if the Russians really did have the 'Philosopher's Stone' that some claim they

are selling under the name of 'Red Mercury'. Atomic research is only one way of getting this kind of knowledge and I believe it requires spiritual knowledge and attunement as well. This perception is shared by alchemists who I have befriended, and by Rosicrucian inner sanctum people who think highly of my knowledge in the area. Paracelsus was a prodigy in the field and I have his formula for making the 'Stone'. It would not avail me any good to try to make it, unless I had prepared myself in the manner attributed to Jesus as he spent forty days in the desert without food and water. For esoteric scholars who have not traveled any distance along the path towards such attunements it makes little sense for them to comment on alchemy. Israel Regardie was Aleister Crowley's personal secretary and he wrote books on the subject as well as an educational approach from the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (HOGD). In his book 'The Philosopher's Stone' he said the whole meaning was metaphoric for a spiritual transmutation only. Twenty—some years later when he did a reprint, he knew better.

This is part of my book on Alchemy which is available at World-Mysteries.com

Would Socrates Be A Celebrity Today?

By Maya Talisman Frost

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Last week, as I was standing in the checkout line of my local grocery store, I found myself staring at the dozen or so magazines on display. As I gazed upon the various photos and headlines praising or trashing the celebrity du jour, I got to thinking.

What kind of celebrity would Socrates be if he were alive today? How would we treat him?

In what way would he ask his questions in the 21st century? He never wrote much of anything—we know his ideas mostly through the work of his student, Plato. Would he give speeches? Would he have televised debates? Would he have his own talk show?

If so, who would be his guests?

Socrates was famous in his day. He was loved and admired for his ideas and his relentless questioning, and he was despised for the same things. Like all celebrities, he had his fans and he had his detractors.

Socrates himself said, "I am utterly disturbing and I create only perplexity." He understood his role as a provocateur, but he also had the best of intentions. He simply wanted to give people the opportunity to question themselves in order to become better humans.

Well, there are a lot of celebrities who push our buttons, but we don't tend to think of them as philosophers!

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What if we did? What if we could separate the thoughts from the thinkers? We tend to dismiss the whole package—the persona—instead of taking a good look at revolutionary or inflammatory ideas. We marginalize our radical thinkers.

The rapper Eminem is a radical thinker, though many would say he is just plain radical. In his way, he is true to himself. He has broken through to mainstream consciousness because he touched a nerve—and got a lot of press.

Would Socrates be a rapper today? Would he be a professor? A performance artist? How would we regard him?

He was notoriously unattractive. Would photographers surround him, taking photos to sell to the tabloids? Would we care about him if he didn't make it on the cover of our favorite magazines?

At first glance, it may seem that we are sorely lacking in philosophers today. Perhaps we have an outdated idea of what a philosopher looks like. Not all philosophers have beards!

Do you think of Eminem as a philosopher?

Do you think of Julia Butterfly Hill, the environmental activist who lived at the top of a massive tree for two years, as a philosopher?

Do you think of Rush Limbaugh as a philosopher?

Well, they do think. They do question. They provoke discussion and argument, and they are passionate about their ideas. That makes them a lot like Socrates.

Who inspires you today? Which thinkers make you think?

What is it about them that appeals to you? Is it their ideas or the way they are presented?

We've become quite savvy about packaging. We expect professional presentation. We discount the ideas of those who don't look the part of a thinker. Of course, there are exceptions. Albert Einstein could pull off that wild-haired look. Bill Gates isn't known for his sartorial splendor. Some might argue that Stephen Hawking is actually more compelling and impressive because of his physical challenges.

Whether we admit it or not, we each have our own biases about the appearance, age, sex, nationality, or religion of the thinkers of today. What are yours?

I'm afraid Socrates would need a good public relations team in order to be heard amidst the cacophony of thought-mongers today. The prescribed process for publicizing your ideas now goes something like this: write a book, get a publisher, do tons of interviews and book signings and readings, and cash in. It helps immensely if you appeal to the mainstream culture, or if your book manages to stir up a bit of controversy. Creating buzz is what gets thinkers noticed today.

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Socrates was good at creating buzz, but he would face a lot of competition in the 21st century thinkers market. I like to think that he would find a way to be who he was and that we would appreciate his gifts.

Think about what you read, what you listen to, and what you consider worthy of your attention. As you do so, remember Socrates.

There are loads of passionate thinkers in our world today. Look for the ones who aren't shouting from the rooftops, and consider those who turn you off completely. Expand your view of what a philosopher is. In the process, you'll become a better one yourself.

Maya Talisman Frost is a mind masseuse. Her course, *Massage Your Mind!: Defining Your Life Philosophy*, has inspired thinkers in over 70 countries around the world. She is the publisher of the *Friday Mind Massage*, a free weekly ezine serving up a satisfying blend of clarity, comfort and comic relief. To learn more, visit

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