

SECRET SERMON ON THE MOUNTAIN (THE INITIATION OF TAT)

From *The Corpus Hermeticum* translated by G. R. S. Mead, adapted for modern readers.

The Secret Sermon on the Mountain is the thirteenth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum in the collection that has come to us through fifteenth century Constantinople. It is a dialogue between Hermes and his child Tat regarding mystical rebirth. The tractate concludes with a great invocation to the Divine.



Tat: In the General Sermons, father Hermes, you spoke in very unclear riddles about Divinity, and when you said that no one could be saved before Rebirth, you concealed your meaning.

Further, when I became your Suppliant, on descending the mountain, after you conversed with me, and when I longed to hear the Sermon on Rebirth (for this beyond all other things is just the thing I do not know), you said that you would give it to me, “when you have become a stranger to the world.” For this reason, I prepared myself and made my thought a stranger to the world-illusion. Now, complete what I lack with what you said you would give me, the tradition of Rebirth, setting it forth in speech or in the secret way.

O Thrice-greatest one, I do not know from what matter and what womb we come to birth, or from what seed.

Hermes: Wisdom that understands in silence is the matter and the womb from which human beings are born, and the True Good is the seed.

Tat: Who is the sower, father? I am altogether at a loss.

Hermes: It is the Divine Will, my child.

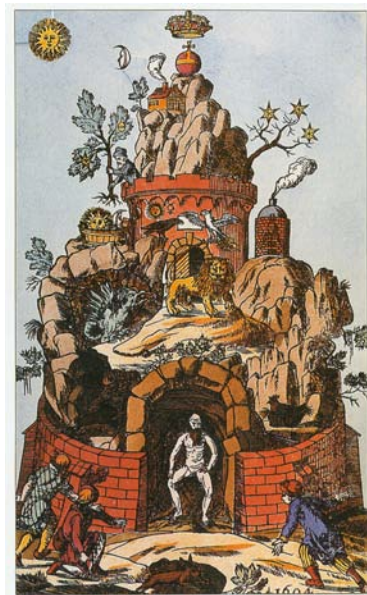
Tat: And of what kind are those that are begotten, father? For I have no share of that essence in me, which transcends the senses. The one that is begotten will be another one from the Deity, a Divine Child?

Hermes: All in all, composed of all powers.

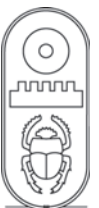
Tat: You are telling me a riddle, father, and you are not speaking as a father to a child.

Hermes: This heritage, my child, is never taught; however, when the Divine wills, human memory is restored by the Divinity.

Tat: You are saying impossible things, O father, things that are forced. I would have direct answers to these things. Am I a child foreign to my father’s heritage? Do not keep it from me, father. I am a true-born child: explain the manner of Rebirth to me.



The Mountain of the Philosophers (1785)
in *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians*.
From the Rosicrucian Archives.





Achilles Bocchius, *Hermes-Mercury* (1555) in *Sybolicalarum Quaestionum*. From the collection of the Rosicrucian Research Library.

Hermes: What can I say, my child? I can only tell you this. Whenever I see the simple vision born of the Divine Mercy within myself, I have gone out of myself into a Body that can never die. Now I am not as I was before; but I am born in Mind.

The way to do this is not taught, and it cannot be seen through the elementary combinations by means of which you see here below. Indeed, I have had my former composed form dismembered for me. I am no longer touched, but I have touch. I have dimension too, and yet I am a stranger to these things now. You see me with eyes, my child; however, you do not understand what I am, even with the greatest effort of physical sight.

Tat: You have plunged me into a fierce frenzy and mind-fury, father, for now I can no longer see myself.

Hermes: Would that you, my child, had passed through yourself while awake, as they who dream in sleep.

Tat: Tell me this too! Who is the author of Rebirth?

Hermes: The Child of the Divine, the One Person, by the Divine Will.

Tat: Now you have completely confused me, father. The perception which I had before has stopped, for now I see your greatness identical with your distinctive form.

Hermes: Even in this, you are wrong. The mortal form changes every day. It is turned by time into growth and waning, since it is not a true thing.

Tat: What then is true, Thrice-greatest One?

Hermes: That which is never troubled, child, which cannot be defined; that which has no color, nor any figure, which is not turned, which has no garment, which gives light; that which is comprehensible unto itself alone, which does not suffer change; that which no body can contain.

Tat: Truly I lose my reason, father. Just when I thought that you would make me wise, I find the senses of my mind blocked.

Hermes: That is how it is, child. That which is borne upwards like fire, yet is borne down like earth, that which is moist like water, yet blows like air: how will you perceive this with your senses—that which is not solid nor moist, which nothing can bind or loose, of which humans can only have any perception through its power and energy—and even then it must be a person who can perceive the Way of Birth in the Divine?

Tat: Then am I incapable of this, O father?



Victoria Franck Wetsch, SRC, *Three Sprouts—Eternal Knot*.

Hermes: No, Heaven forbid, my child! Withdraw into yourself, and it will come; will it, and it comes to pass; let go of the body's senses, and your Divinity will be born; purge the brutish torments from you—things of matter.

Tat: I have tormentors in me, O father?

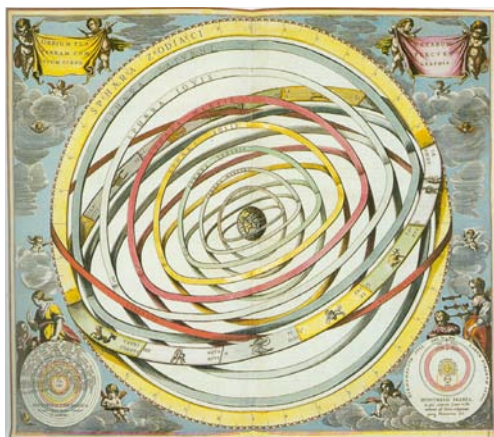
Hermes: Yes, and not a few, my child; indeed they are fearful and manifold.

Tat: I do not know them, father.

Hermes: The first Torment is Ignorance, child. The second one is Grief; the third, Intemperance; the fourth, Concupiscence; the fifth, Unrighteousness. The sixth is Avarice; the seventh, Error. The eighth is Envy; the ninth, Guile. The tenth is Anger; the eleventh, Rashness. The twelfth is Malice.

These are twelve, however, under them are many more, my child, and creeping through the prison of the body they force the person who dwells there to suffer through the senses. However, they depart (although not all at once) from those whom the Divine has shown pity, and this constitutes the manner of Rebirth and its path.

Now, my child, be still and keep a solemn silence! In this way, the mercy that flows to us from the Divine will not cease. From this point forward, rejoice, O child, for you are being purified for the articulation of the Word by the Divine Powers.



Andreas Cellarius, *The Superlunary World with the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac* (1646) in *Harmonia Macrocosmica*. From the collection of the Rosicrucian Research Library.



Hildegard of Bingen, *Representation of the Trinity as the True Unity* (twelfth century), in *Scivias*. From the collection of the Rosicrucian Research Library.

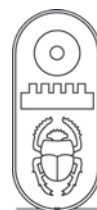
Divine Gnosis has come to us, and when this comes, my child, Ignorance is cast out. Gnosis of Joy has come to us, and with its arrival, child, Sorrow will flee away to them who allow it entry. I invoke the Power that follows Joy, your Self-control. O Power most sweet! Let us very gladly welcome it, child! As it arrives, it chases Intemperance away!

Now fourth, I call on Continnence, the Power against Concupiscence. This step, my child, is the firm seat of Righteousness. For without effort she has chased Unrighteousness away. We are made righteous, child, by the departure of Unrighteousness.

I call the sixth Power to us—that which acts against Avarice, that is, universal Sharing. Now that Avarice is gone, I call on Truth. Error flees, and Truth is with us.

See how the Good is complete, my child, with Truth's coming, for Envy is gone from us and the Good is united with Truth, and with Life and Light. No torment of the Darkness comes near. They have all been vanquished and have fled with whirring wings.

Now you know the way of Rebirth, my child. When the Ten have come which drive



out the Twelve, your Birth in understanding is complete, and by this birth, we are made into divinities.

Those who achieve this Divine Birth through the Mercy of the Deity, abandoning the physical senses, know themselves to be of Light and Life, and they consist of these, and are filled with bliss.

Tat: Made steadfast by the Deity, father, I no longer look at things with my physical sight, rather with the energy the Mind gives me through the Powers.

I am in Heaven, in earth, in water, in air. I am in animals and in plants. I am in the womb, before the womb, after the womb. I am everywhere!

Further, tell me this: How are the twelve torments of the Darkness driven out by the ten Powers? How does this happen, Thrice-greatest one?

Hermes: This dwelling-place of the human body through which we have just passed, my child, is constituted from the circle of the twelve signs of the Zodiac, this being composed of elements, twelve in



Heinrich Khunrath, *Divine Tetrakys and the Cosmic Rose* (1595) in *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae*. From Wikimedia Commons.

number, but of one nature, having one appearance. To confuse us, they appear separate; however, when they act they are one. Not only can we never separate Rashness from Wrath, they cannot even be distinguished from one another.

According to right reason, the Twelve naturally withdraw for the last time, because they are chased out by no less than ten powers, that is, the Ten.

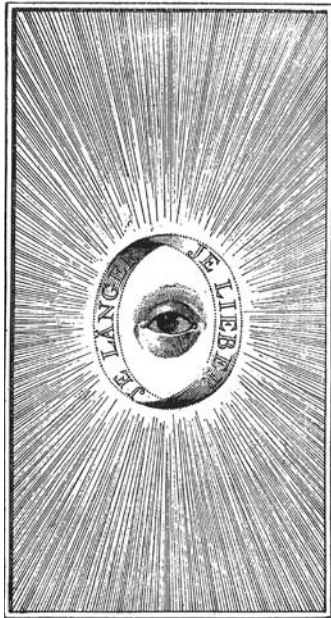
For, child, the Ten is that which gives birth to souls. Life and Light are unified there, where the One has being from the Spirit. According to reason, the One contains the Ten, the Ten the One.

Tat: Father, I see everything. I see myself in Mind.

Hermes: This is Rebirth, my child: No longer to understand things from the body's viewpoint, extended in three dimensions. This is accomplished through this discourse on Rebirth, which is just for you and not made public, so that we may not communicate it to those not yet ready, only to those to whom the Divine wills.

Tat: Tell me, O father: This body which is made up of the Powers, is it ever dissolved?

Hermes: Be quiet, child! Do not speak of impossible things, lest you sin and your



The Two Eyes (eighteenth century) in *Little Flower Garden of the Seraphim* from the *Works of Jacob Boehme*. From the collection of the Rosicrucian Research Library.



Victoria Franck Wetsch, SRC, *Abundance*.

Mind's eye be closed. The natural body which our senses perceive is far removed from this essential birth. The first must be dissolved, the last can never be. The first must die, the last, death cannot touch. Do you not know that you have been born Divine, Child of the One, even as I have been myself?

Tat: O father, I desire to hear the hymn of praise which you said you heard when you were in the Ogdoad of Powers.

Hermes: Just as Poimandres foretold that I would when I came to the Eight, my child.

It is good that you are free of the physical body, for you have been made pure.

Poimandres, the Mind of all masterhood, did not pass on to me more than has been written down, for he knew very well that I would be able to learn it all for myself, and would hear what I desire, and see all things. He left me to create beautiful things, since the Powers are within me, just as they are within all, and they break into song.

Tat: Father, I wish to hear. I long to know these things.

Hermes: Be still now, my child. Hear the Praise that keeps the soul in tune, the Hymn of Rebirth—a hymn I would not have thought to sing so soon, if you had not completed everything. That is why this is not taught, but is kept hidden in silence.

My child, stand in a place open to the sky, facing the southern wind, near the setting of the Sun, and make your worship. In the same way, when the Sun rises, do so facing the east wind.

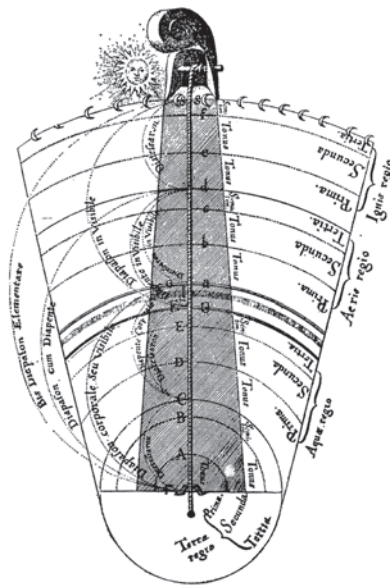
Now, child, be still!

The Secret Hymnody

Let every nature of the World receive the sound of my hymn! Earth open yourself! Let every bolt of the Abyss be drawn for me. Stir not, you Trees! I am about to hymn creation's Sovereign, both All and One. Heavens open and Winds stay still, and let the Deity's deathless sphere receive my word!

For I will sing the praise of the One who founded all; who fixed Earth, and hung the Heavens, and gave the command that the Ocean should provide sweet water to Earth, both to those parts that are inhabited and those that are not, for the support and use of everyone. The One who made Fire to shine for divinities and humans for every action. Let us together all give praise to the One, sublime above the Heavens, Sovereign of every nature!

It is the One who is the Eye of Mind. May the One accept the praise of my Powers!



Robert Fludd, *Elemental Violin* (1618) in *De Musica Mundana*. Each of the four elements is shown with its harmonic levels. From the Rosicrucian Archives.

