

FOX & WEBB PRESS

THE KYBALION

Three Initiates

MODERN ENGLISH ANNOTATED EDITION

First published in Chicago, 1908.

FOX & WEBB LIBRARY 01

Copyright

Copyright © 2026 Fox & Webb Press.

Editorial matter, annotations, companion material, original design, and other new material in this edition are protected by copyright. No claim of copyright is made to the underlying public-domain source material described below.

As of 2026, the 1908 text of *The Kybalion* is in the public domain in the United States and in numerous other jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom, the European Union, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and India. Copyright status may vary in other jurisdictions.

First edition, 2026

Published by Fox & Webb Press.

ISBN 979-8-953465-00-7 (paperback)

ISBN 979-8-953465-02-1 (ebook)

Modern English Annotated Edition Note

This edition presents a modern-English reading layer for *The Kybalion*, based on the 1908 text. The book's arguments, sequence, technical vocabulary, aphoristic formulations, and claims about Hermetic philosophy remain those of the historical work.

Modernization reduces unnecessary friction in spelling, punctuation, syntax, and ordinary wording while preserving distinctions and terms that carry substantive meaning. Difficult sentences may be clarified, but arguments are not summarized, reorganized, or silently replaced with later interpretations.

Fox & Webb notes are used where source history, terminology, textual issues, or later scholarship materially improves the reading. They remain visually separate from the historical text so that editorial context is not mistaken for the book's own voice.

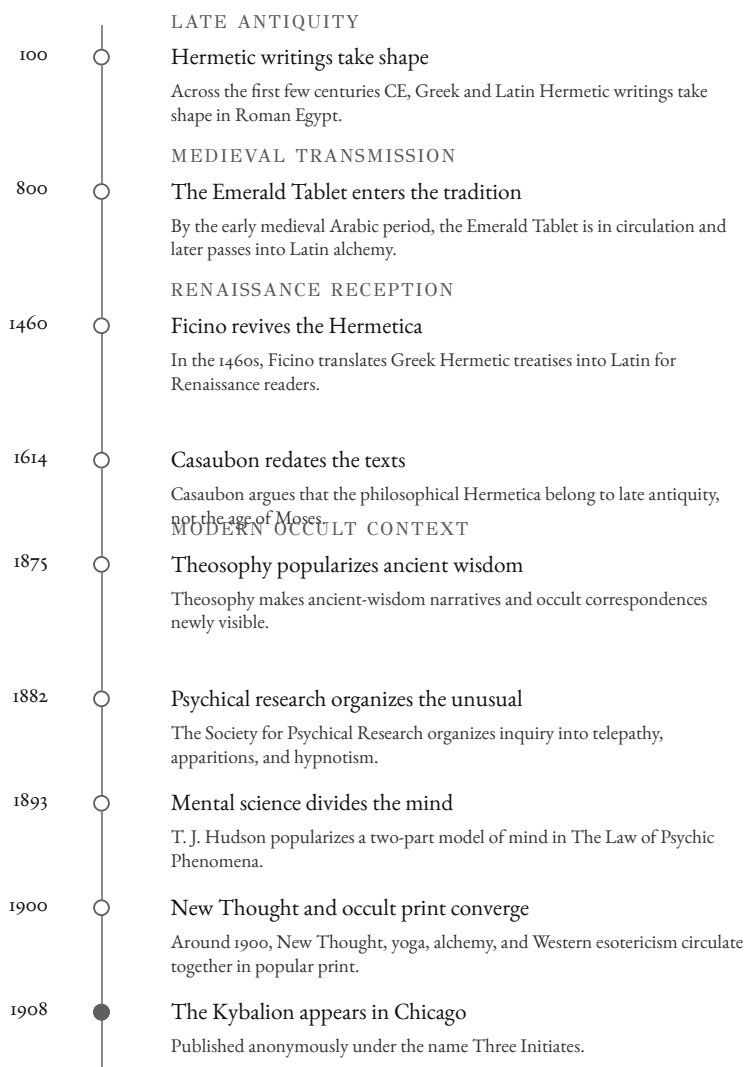
We modernize the language, not the ideas.

Contents

Chronology	5
Introduction	7
Chapter I - The Hermetic Philosophy	12
Chapter II - The Seven Hermetic Principles	19
Chapter III - Mental Transmutation	31
Chapter IV - The All	37
Chapter V - The Mental Universe	43
Chapter VI - The Divine Paradox	50
Chapter VII - "The All" in All	59
Chapter VIII - Planes of Correspondence	67
Chapter IX - Vibration	78
Chapter X - Polarity	84
Chapter XI - Rhythm	90
Chapter XII - Causation	97
Chapter XIII - Gender	104
Chapter XIV - Mental Gender	110
Chapter XV - Hermetic Axioms	119
Glossary	125
Further Reading & Sources	126
Index	127

Chronology

A brief path from the Hermetic writings to The Kybalion



INTRODUCTION

The Book Behind the Veil

The Kybalion presents itself as a doorway into an ancient teaching. Its language of veils, masters, and secret transmission gives that claim much of its power.

Hermetic writings are genuinely ancient, but *The Kybalion* is not one of them. This book first appeared in Chicago in 1908. Read the Introduction with both worlds in view: an old Hermetic name, and a modern occult book using it to frame its teaching.

Introduction

We are pleased to present to students and investigators of the Secret Doctrines this little work, based on the age-old Hermetic Teachings. So little has been written on this subject, despite the countless references to the Teachings in works on occultism, that many earnest seekers after the Arcane Truths will no doubt welcome this volume.

The purpose of this work is not to set out any special philosophy or doctrine. Rather, it is to give students a statement of Truth that can reconcile the many pieces of occult knowledge they may have acquired, but that appear to contradict one another and often discourage or disgust the beginner. We do not intend to build a new Temple of Knowledge. Instead, we place in the student's hands a Master-Key with which the student may open the many inner doors of the Temple of Mystery after entering through its main portals.

No part of the world's occult teachings has been more closely guarded than the fragments of the Hermetic Teachings that have come down to us through the thousands of years that have passed since the lifetime of their great founder, Hermes Trismegistus, the “scribe of the gods.” He lived in ancient Egypt when the present race of men was in its infancy. Contemporary with Abraham—and, if the legends are true, an instructor of that venerable sage—Hermes was, and is, the Great Central Sun of Occultism, whose rays have illuminated the countless teachings proclaimed since his time. All the fundamental teachings embedded in the esoteric teachings of every race may be traced back to Hermes. Even the most ancient teachings of India undoubtedly have their roots in the original Hermetic Teachings.

From the land of the Ganges, many advanced occultists traveled to Egypt and sat at the feet of the Master. From him they received the Master-Key that explained and reconciled their divergent views, and so the Secret Doctrine was firmly established. Learned people came from other lands as well, all regarding Hermes as the Master of Masters. His

influence was so great that, although teachers in these lands have wandered from the path over many centuries, a basic resemblance and correspondence can still be found beneath the many, often widely divergent theories taught by occultists there today. A student of Comparative Religions can perceive the influence of the Hermetic Teachings in every religion worthy of the name now known to humanity, whether a dead religion or one still vigorous in our own time. Despite their contradictory features, there is always a certain correspondence, and the Hermetic Teachings act as the Great Reconciler.

Rather than establish a school of philosophy that would dominate the world's thought, Hermes seems to have devoted his life to planting the great Seed-Truth, which has grown and blossomed in so many strange forms. Nevertheless, the original truths he taught have been kept intact in their original purity by a few men in each age. Refusing large numbers of half-developed students and followers, they followed the Hermetic custom and reserved their truth for the few who were ready to understand and master it. From lip to ear, the truth has been handed down among the few. In every generation and in many lands, a few Initiates have kept alive the sacred flame of the Hermetic Teachings. They have always been willing to use their lamps to relight the lesser lamps of the outside world when the light of truth grew dim through neglect and the wicks became clogged with foreign matter. There were always a few who faithfully tended the altar of Truth, keeping the Perpetual Lamp of Wisdom alight. These men devoted their lives to the labor of love that the poet expressed so well in these lines:

*"O, let not the flame die out! Cherished age after age
in its dark cavern—in its holy temples cherished. Fed
by pure ministers of love—let not the flame die out!"*

★ SOURCE NOTE

These lines are from Edward Carpenter's *Towards Democracy*, a visionary poem first published in 1883. Its image of a flame cherished through the ages fits naturally into the book's language of hidden teaching, continuity, and transmission.

These men have never sought popular approval or large numbers of followers. They are indifferent to such things, because they know how few in each generation are ready for the truth, or would recognize it if it were presented to them. They reserve the “strong meat for men,” while others furnish the “milk for babes.” They reserve their pearls of wisdom for the few elect who recognize their value and wear them in their crowns, rather than casting them before the materialistic vulgar swine, who would trample them in the mud and mix them with their disgusting mental food. Yet these men have never forgotten or overlooked the original teaching of Hermes about passing the words of truth to those ready to receive them. The Kybalion states this teaching as follows: “Where fall the footsteps of the Master, the ears of those ready for his Teaching open wide.” And again: “When the ears of the student are ready to hear, then cometh the lips to fill them with wisdom.” Their customary attitude has also been in strict accordance with another Hermetic aphorism in The Kybalion: “The lips of Wisdom are closed, except to the ears of Understanding.”

Some have criticized this attitude of the Hermetists, claiming that their policy of seclusion and reticence did not show the proper spirit. But even a brief look through history shows the wisdom of the Masters, who understood the folly of trying to teach the world what it was neither ready nor willing to receive. The Hermetists have never sought martyrdom. Instead, they sat quietly aside with a pitying smile on their closed lips while the “heathen raged noisily about them,” amusing themselves in their usual way by torturing and killing honest but misguided enthusiasts who imagined they could force upon a race of barbarians a truth that only the elect, advanced along The Path, were capable of understanding.

The spirit of persecution has not yet died out in the land. Certain Hermetic Teachings, if publicly proclaimed, would bring down upon their teachers a great outcry of scorn and abuse from the multitude, who would once again raise the cry, “Crucify! Crucify.”

In this little work we have tried to give you an idea of the fundamental teachings of The Kybalion. We have aimed to give you the working Principles and leave you to apply them for yourselves, rather than trying to work out the teaching in detail. If you are a true student, you will be able to work out and apply these Principles. If not, you must develop yourself into one; otherwise the Hermetic Teachings will be no more than “words, words, words” to you.

THE THREE INITIATES.

CHAPTER I

Hermes, Egypt, and an Ancient Name

Chapter I places Hermes Trismegistus in ancient Egypt and treats him as a teacher from the age of Abraham.

History gives us a less definite figure. Hermes Trismegistus is the name attached to a body of Greek and Egyptian religious and philosophical writings from late antiquity. Over time, readers gathered those writings into the image of an ancient sage.

Keep that difference in view. The chapter tells a sacred history of transmission; the surviving texts tell a history of traditions meeting, changing, and being read anew.

Chapter I - The Hermetic Philosophy

“The lips of wisdom are closed, except to the ears of Understanding.”—The Kybalion.

From ancient Egypt came the fundamental esoteric and occult teachings that have so strongly influenced the philosophies of races, nations, and peoples for several thousand years. Egypt, home of the Pyramids and the Sphinx, was the birthplace of the Hidden Wisdom and Mystic Teachings. From her Secret Doctrine all nations borrowed. India, Persia, Chaldea, Medea, China, Japan, Assyria, ancient Greece and Rome, and other ancient countries shared freely in the feast of knowledge offered by the Hierophants and Masters of the Land of Isis to those prepared to receive the great store of Mystic and Occult Lore gathered by the great minds of that ancient land.

Ancient Egypt was home to great Adepts and Masters who, through all the centuries since the days of the Great Hermes, have never been surpassed and seldom equaled. There stood the Great Lodge of Lodges of the Mystics. Through the doors of her Temples came Neophytes who later, as Hierophants, Adepts, and Masters, traveled to the four corners of the earth. They carried the precious knowledge they were ready, eager, and willing to pass on to those prepared to receive it. All students of the Occult recognize the debt they owe to these venerable Masters of that ancient land.

Among these great Masters of Ancient Egypt there once lived one whom the other Masters hailed as “The Master of Masters.” This man, if “man” indeed he was, lived in Egypt in the earliest days. He was known as Hermes Trismegistus. He was the father of Occult Wisdom, the founder of Astrology, and the discoverer of Alchemy. The details of his life are lost to history through the passage of time, though several ancient countries disputed the honor of being his birthplace—and

they were making these claims thousands of years ago. The date of his stay in Egypt during his last incarnation on this planet is now unknown, but it has been placed in the earliest days of Egypt's oldest dynasties, long before Moses. The best authorities regard him as a contemporary of Abraham, and some Jewish traditions go so far as to claim that Abraham acquired part of his mystic knowledge from Hermes himself.

After he passed from this plane of life—tradition says he lived three hundred years in the flesh—the Egyptians deified Hermes and made him one of their gods under the name Thoth. Later, the people of Ancient Greece also made him one of their many gods, calling him “Hermes, the god of Wisdom.” The Egyptians revered his memory for many centuries—yes, tens of centuries—calling him “the Scribe of the Gods” and giving him his ancient title, “Trismegistus,” meaning “the thrice-great,” “the great-great,” “the greatest-great,” and so on. In all the ancient lands, the name Hermes Trismegistus was revered and became synonymous with the “Fount of Wisdom.”

Even today, we use the term “hermetic” in the sense of “secret” or “sealed so that nothing can escape,” because the followers of Hermes always observed secrecy in their teachings. They did not believe in “casting pearls before swine,” but instead held to the teaching “milk for babes; meat for strong men.” Both maxims are familiar to readers of the Christian scriptures, but both had been used by the Egyptians for centuries before the Christian era.

✦ SOURCE NOTE

“Casting pearls before swine,” “milk for babes,” and “strong meat” echo Matthew 7:6, 1 Corinthians 3:2, and Hebrews 5:12–14. *The Kybalion* places these sayings within an older Egyptian stream; that earlier use is not visible in the surviving Hermetic texts.

This policy of carefully transmitting the truth has always characterized the Hermetics, even to the present day. The Hermetic Teachings are found in all lands and among all religions, but are never identified with

any particular country or religious sect. This follows the ancient teachers' warning against allowing the Secret Doctrine to crystallize into a creed. The wisdom of this caution is plain to every student of history. The ancient occultism of India and Persia degenerated and was largely lost because the teachers became priests and mixed theology with philosophy. The result was that the occultism of India and Persia became gradually lost amid a mass of religious superstition, cults, creeds, and "gods." So it was with Ancient Greece and Rome. So it was with the Hermetic Teachings of the Gnostics and Early Christians, which were lost at the time of Constantine. His iron hand smothered philosophy under the blanket of theology, causing the Christian Church to lose what had been its very essence and spirit and to grope for centuries before finding its way back to its ancient faith. To all careful observers in this twentieth century, the signs show that the Church is now struggling to return to its ancient mystic teachings.

But a few faithful souls always kept the Flame alive, tending it carefully and not allowing its light to go out. Thanks to these staunch hearts and fearless minds, we still have the truth with us. Yet it is not found to any great extent in books. It has been passed from Master to Student, from Initiate to Hierophant, from lip to ear. When it was written down, its meaning was veiled in terms of alchemy and astrology so that only those possessing the key could read it correctly. This was necessary to avoid the persecutions of the theologians of the Middle Ages, who fought the Secret Doctrine with fire and sword, stake, gibbet, and cross. Even today, few reliable books on the Hermetic Philosophy can be found, although countless books on various phases of Occultism refer to it. And yet the Hermetic Philosophy is the only Master-Key that will open all the doors of the Occult Teachings!

In the early days there was a compilation of certain Basic Hermetic Doctrines, passed from teacher to student, known as "THE KYBALION." The exact meaning and significance of the term have been lost for several centuries. This teaching, however, is known to many who have received it from mouth to ear, handed down through

the centuries. Its precepts have never been written or printed, so far as we know. It was simply a collection of maxims, axioms, and precepts that were unintelligible to outsiders but readily understood by students after the Hermetic Initiates had explained and illustrated them to their Neophytes. These teachings formed the basic principles of “The Art of Hermetic Alchemy,” which, contrary to general belief, dealt with mastery of Mental Forces rather than Material Elements—the Transmutation of one kind of Mental Vibration into another, instead of changing one kind of metal into another. The legend of the “Philosopher’s Stone” that would turn base metal into Gold was an allegory of Hermetic Philosophy, readily understood by all students of true Hermeticism.

✦ SOURCE NOTE

The title *The Kybalion* first appears in the surviving printed record with the 1908 book. The authors present it as an older oral teaching; no earlier text bearing the title is presently known. Historical alchemy also included material practice alongside symbolic and spiritual interpretations.

In this little book, of which this is the First Lesson, we invite our students to study the Hermetic Teachings as set forth in THE KYBALION and explained by us, humble students of the Teachings. Although we bear the title of Initiates, we are still students at the feet of HERMES, the Master. Here we give you many of the maxims, axioms, and precepts of THE KYBALION, together with explanations and illustrations that we believe will make the teachings easier for the modern student to understand, especially because the original text is deliberately veiled in obscure terms.

The original maxims, axioms, and precepts of “THE KYBALION” are printed here in quotation marks, with proper credit given. Our own work appears in the regular body text. We trust that the many students to whom we now offer this little work will receive as much benefit from these pages as the many who have gone before them, treading the same Path to Mastery through the centuries since the time

of HERMES TRISMEGISTUS—the Master of Masters—the Great-Great. In the words of “THE KYBALION”:

“Where fall the footsteps of the Master, the ears of those ready for his Teaching open wide.”—The Kybalion.

“When the ears of the student are ready to hear, then cometh the lips to fill them with Wisdom.”—The Kybalion.

According to the Teachings, then, the passage of this book to those ready for instruction will attract the attention of those prepared to receive the Teaching. Likewise, when the pupil is ready to receive the truth, this little book will come to them. Such is The Law. The Hermetic Principle of Cause and Effect, in its aspect as The Law of Attraction, will bring lips and ear together—pupil and book in company. So mote it be!

✦ CONNECTION

The phrase “Law of Attraction” was already current in New Thought when *The Kybalion* appeared. William Walker Atkinson's *Thought Vibration or the Law of Attraction in the Thought World* was published in Chicago in 1906; here the phrase is woven into the Hermetic Principle of Cause and Effect.