

Spirituality & Community

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www.spiritualityandcommunity.com

Jarvis the Duck

Kurt Venables



The Corpus Hermeticum

Hermetic Gnosticism

Interview

Stewart Bitkoff

Duality

Kurt Venables

Contents

Who We Are	3
The Corpus Hermeticum	5
Jarvis the Duck Kurt Venables	9
On Sufi Mysticism Stewart Bitkoff	10
Duality Kurt Venables	12

Who We Are

www.spiritualityandcommunity.com

Welcome! Seeking spiritual fulfillment? True happiness and mental wellness? Well, that's what we're all about. Spirituality & Community is a magazine, web site, and online community for those seeking answers to life's deepest questions. ***We are dedicated to promoting spirituality, true happiness, mental wellness, and appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.***

A New Age of Light

Our focus is spirituality, which we view as an inner search for happiness and fulfillment. We are concerned with what lies within the heart. ***We believe that within everyone lies a pure love that we call the Light or the Lord within. We believe that one must open one's heart to the Light to attain spiritual fulfillment and that only this brings true happiness and mental wellness.*** The Light is the essence of humanity. ***Ultimately, we find our way by casting our gaze inward.*** We will search this inner world over until we find our home:

***We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding***

We believe that mankind is entering a new age, an Age of Light. We see a growing spiritual crisis in the world today. Our culture has brought us unprecedented material well being, but we seem further away than ever from true spiritual wholeness. We also perceive an increase in mental health issues in our society and believe this to be linked to spiritual detachment. Many wander endlessly in search of the material gratification that will bring them happiness. Many have lost faith in religions and traditions. Others sincerely believe in traditional religions but remain unfulfilled spiritually and unhappy. Unfortunately, too many are so close-minded they refuse to ask what is missing from their lives. Yet, many hunger for spiritual wholeness and are searching for answers. ***We believe that we are entering a new age of enlightenment in which genuine spiritual progress will be made and that spiritual development depends upon a genuine appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.*** An appreciation for diversity of belief provides us with a fresh view of the beliefs of others, allows us to take from each set of beliefs that which rings true, and enables us to synthesize a personal spirituality that makes sense for each of us. When we view the beliefs of others with our hearts, we see truth shine through. We look with the highest regard to traditional beliefs and religions for guidance, and we also look forward. ***We believe that the past is not the end but the beginning.***



What We Do

Spirituality & Community produces a magazine and encompasses an online community. Both aspects serve as the basis for bringing together those who share our aspirations and beliefs, to meet each other and exchange ideas. We provide many opportunities for exploring spirituality and communicating with others:

- *Spirituality & Community magazine*
- *Features on the site*
- *Online chats* (as interest arises)

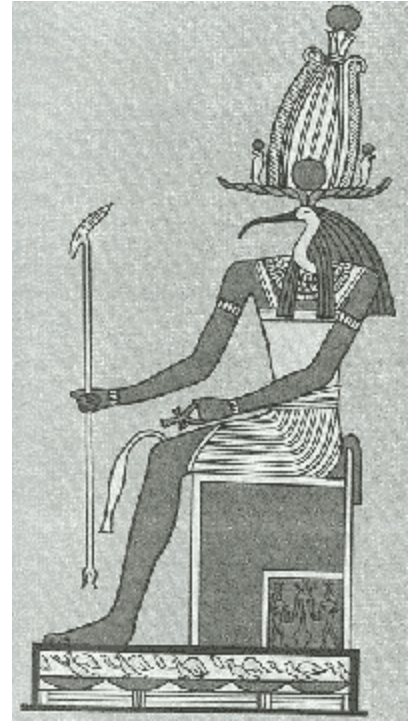
The magazine is based on a Reader's Digest® type model. It is comprised primarily of reader submitted material. It is the primary mechanism for a member to both explore spirituality and communicate his or her ideas to others. Features are also posted on the site. When interest is sufficiently high, we will hold chats online. *We sincerely hope that you will find truth within, and we wish you only the best on your own personal journey!*

The Corpus Hermeticum

(Excerpts)

Translated by G.R.S. Mead (1906)

The Corpus Hermeticum is a collection of writings, probably written roughly circa the first to third century AD. The surviving texts were probably part of a much larger body of work. Arising from Hellenistic Egypt, the ideas in the texts are a synthesis, mainly drawing from Christianity, but also displaying strong influences from Greek philosophy and polytheism along with ancient Egyptian religion. The core ideas of Hermetic Gnosticism, such as the importance of Gnosis, show a strong resemblance to Gnostic Christianity. Differences from Gnostic Christianity, however, exist as well, such as certain aspects of the theology and the lack of any reference to the traditional Christian scriptures, including the Old Testament or the Gospels. The main speaker in the works is the fictitious Hermes Trismegistus, or thrice great Hermes, who is probably the embodiment of the Greek messenger god, Hermes, and the ancient Egyptian god of wisdom, Thoth. In the first chapter, he has a Vision of Poemandres, who speaks with the voice of God.



The Ancient Egyptian God, Thoth

I. Poemandres, the Shepherd of Men

1. It chanced once on a time my mind was meditating on the things that are, my thought was raised to a great height, the senses of my body being held back - just as men who are weighed down with sleep after a fill of food, or from fatigue of body.

Methought a Being more than vast, in size beyond all bounds, called out my name and saith: What wouldst thou hear and see, and what hast thou in mind to learn and know?

2. And I do say: Who art thou?

He saith: I am Man-Shepherd (Poemandres), Mind of all-masterhood; I know what thou desirest and I'm with thee everywhere.

3. [And] I reply: I long to learn the things that are, and comprehend their nature, and know God. This is, I said, what I desire to hear.

He answered back to me: Hold in thy mind all thou wouldst know, and I will teach thee.

...

6. Then saith to me Man-Shepherd: Didst understand this Vision what it means?

Nay; that shall I know, said I.

That Light, He said, am I, thy God, Mind, prior to Moist Nature which appeared from Darkness; the Light-Word (Logos) [that appeared] from Mind is Son of God.

What then? - say I.

Know that what sees in thee and hears is the Lord's Word (Logos); but Mind is Father-God. Not separate are they the one from other; just in their union [rather] is it Life consists.

Thanks be to Thee, I said.

So, understand the Light [He answered], and make friends with it.

...

12. But All-Father Mind, being Life and Light, did bring forth Man co-equal to Himself, with whom He fell in love, as being His own child; for he was beautiful beyond compare, the Image of his Sire. In very truth, God fell in love with his own Form; and on him did bestow all of His own formations.

...

14. So he who hath the whole authority o'er [all] the mortals in the cosmos and o'er its lives irrational, bent his face downwards through the Harmony, breaking right through its strength, and showed to downward Nature God's fair form.

And when she saw that Form of beauty which can never satiate, and him who [now] possessed within himself each single energy of [all seven] Rulers as well as God's own Form, she smiled with love; for 'twas as though she'd seen the image of Man's fairest form upon her Water, his shadow on her Earth.

He in turn beholding the form like to himself, existing in her, in her Water, loved it and willed to live in it; and with the will came act, and [so] he vivified the form devoid of reason.

And Nature took the object of her love and wound herself completely around him, and they were intermingled, for they were lovers.

15. And this is why beyond all creatures on the earth man is twofold; mortal because of body, but because of the essential man immortal.

...

21. Right was thy thought, O thou! But how doth "he who knows himself, go unto Him", as God's Word (Logos) hath declared?

And I reply: the Father of the universals doth consist of Light and Life, from Him Man was born. Thou sayest well, [thus] speaking. Light and Life is Father-God, and from Him Man was born. If then thou learnest that thou art thyself of Life and Light, and that thou [happen'st] to be out of them, thou shalt return again to Life. Thus did Man-Shepherd speak.

But tell me further, Mind of me, I cried, how shall I come to Life again...for God doth say: "The man who hath Mind in him, let him learn to know that he himself [is deathless]."

22. Have not all men then Mind?

Thou sayest well, O thou, thus speaking. I, Mind, myself am present with holy men and good, the pure and merciful, men who live piously.

[To such] my presence doth become an aid, and straightway they gain gnosis of all things, and win the Father's love by their pure lives, and give Him thanks, invoking on Him blessings, and chanting hymns, intent on Him with ardent love.

And ere they give up the body unto its proper death, they turn them with disgust from its sensations, from knowledge of what things they operate. Nay, it is I, the Mind, that will not let the operations which befall the body, work to their [natural] end. For being door-keeper I'll close up [all] the entrances, and cut the mental actions off which base and evil energies induce.

...

26. And then, with all the energisings of the harmony stript from him, clothed in his proper Power, he cometh to that Nature which belongs unto the Eighth, and there with those-that-are hymneth the Father.

They who are there welcome his coming there with joy; and he, made like to them that sojourn there, doth further hear the Powers who are above the Nature that belongs unto the Eighth, singing their songs of praise to God in language of their own.

And then they, in a band, go to the Father home; of their own selves they make surrender of themselves to Powers, and [thus] becoming Powers they are in God. This the good end for those who have gained Gnosis - to be made one with God.

Why shouldst thou then delay? Must it not be, since thou hast all received, that thou shouldst to the worthy point the way, in order that through thee the race of mortal kind may by [thy] God be saved?

27. This when He'd said, Man-Shepherd mingled with the Powers.

But I, with thanks and blessings unto the Father of the universal [Powers], was freed, full of the power he had poured into me, and full of what He'd taught me of the nature of the All and of the loftiest Vision.

And I began to preach unto men the Beauty of Devotion and of Gnosis:

IV. The Cup or Monad

3. Reason (Logos) indeed, O Tat, among all men hath He distributed, but Mind not yet; not that He grudgeth any, for grudging cometh not from Him, but hath its place below, within the souls of men who have no Mind.

Tat: Why then did God, O father, not on all bestow a share of Mind?

H: He willed, my son, to have it set up in the midst for souls, just as it were a prize.

4. T: And where hath He set it up?

H: He filled a mighty Cup with it, and sent it down, joining a Herald [to it], to whom He gave command to make this proclamation to the hearts of men:

Baptize thyself with this Cup's baptism, what heart can do so, thou that hast faith thou canst ascend to him that hath sent down the Cup, thou that dost know for what thou didst come into being!

As many then as understood the Herald's tidings and doused themselves in Mind, became partakers in the Gnosis; and when they had "received the Mind" they were made "perfect men".

...

5. The senses of such men are like irrational creatures'; and as their [whole] make-up is in their feelings and their impulses, they fail in all appreciation of those things which really are worth contemplation. These center all their thought upon the pleasures of the body and its appetites, in the belief that for its sake man hath come into being.

But they who have received some portion of God's gift, these, Tat, if we judge by their deeds, have from Death's bonds won their release; for they embrace in their own Mind all things, things on the earth, things in the heaven, and things above the heaven - if there be aught. And having raised themselves so far they sight the Good; and having sighted it, they look upon their sojourn here as a mischance; and in disdain of all, both things in body and the bodiless, they speed their way unto that One and Only One.

6. This is, O Tat, the Gnosis of the Mind, Vision of things Divine; God-knowledge is it, for the Cup is God's.

VII. The Greatest Ill among Men is Ignorance of God

2. Be ye then not carried off by the fierce flood, but using the shore-current, ye who can, make for Salvation's port, and, harboring there, seek ye for one to take you by the hand and lead you unto Gnosis' gates.

Where shines clear Light, of every darkness clean; where not a single soul is drunk, but sober all they gaze with their hearts' eyes on Him who willeth to be seen.

No ear can hear Him, nor can eye see Him, nor tongue speak of Him, but [only] mind and heart.

XIII. The Secret Sermon on the Mountain

7. Tat: I am incapable of this, O father, then?

Hermes: Nay, God forbid, my son! Withdraw into thyself, and it will come; will, and it comes to pass; throw out of work the body's senses, and thy Divinity shall come to birth; purge from thyself the brutish torments - things of matter.

Tat: I have tormentors then in me, O father?

Hermes: Ay, no few, my son; nay, fearful ones and manifold.

Tat: I do not know them, father.

Hermes: Torment the first is this Not-knowing, son; 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; eleventh, Rashness; the twelfth is Malice.

These are in number twelve; but under them are many more, my son; and creeping through the prison of the body they force the man that's placed therein to suffer in his senses. But they depart (though not all at once) from him who hath been taken pity on by God; and this it is which constitutes the manner of Rebirth. And... the Reason (Logos).

8. And now, my son, be still and solemn silence keep! Thus shall the mercy that flows on us from God not cease.

Henceforth rejoice, O son, for by the Powers of God thou art being purified for the articulation of the Reason (Logos).

Gnosis of God hath come to us, and when this comes, my son, Not-knowing is cast out.

Gnosis of Joy hath come to us, and on its coming, son, Sorrow will flee away to them who give it room. The Power that follows Joy do I invoke, thy Self-control. O Power most sweet! Let us most gladly bid it welcome, son! How with its coming doth it chase Intemperance away!

9. Now fourth, on Continnence I call, the Power against Desire. This step, my son, is Righteousness' firm seat. For without judgement see how she hath chased Unrighteousness away. We are made righteous, son, by the departure of Unrighteousness.

Power sixth I call to us - that against Avarice, Sharing-with-all.

And now that Avarice is gone, I call on Truth. And Error flees, and Truth is with us.

See how [the measure of] the Good is full, my son, upon Truth's coming. For Envy is gone from us; and unto Truth is joined the Good as well, with Life and Light.

And now no more doth any torment of the Darkness venture nigh, but vanquished [all] have fled with whirring wings.

10. Thou knowest [now], my son, the manner of Rebirth. And when the Ten is come, my son, that driveth out the Twelve, the Birth in understanding is complete, and by this birth we are made into Gods.

Who then doth by His mercy gain this Birth in God, abandoning the body's senses, knows himself [to be of Light and Life] and that he doth consist of these, and [thus] is filled with bliss.

Jarvis the Duck

Kurt Venables

Jay, sometimes I
feel like my soul
soars on the wind.



Sometimes I feel like
I soar on the wind ...
wait, that's because I do.



On Sufi Mysticism

An Interview with Dr. Stewart Bitkoff

Also with Sadiq M. Alam

Sadiq: *The word 'mystic' to general people creates a lot of confusion. If you were to define, how would you describe who or what is a 'mystic'?*

Dr. Stewart Bitkoff: The word mystic comes from the word mystery; someone who seeks the mystery. What is the mystery? For different people, this is always different. In terms of the mystery school, the student or traveler was/is taught about the mystery of the universe- in hidden, mysterious, non-traditional, ways. Throughout history, traditions abound concerning the mystery schools and what was actually taught there. Keep in mind, if this knowledge was not a mystery and others knew about it; for practitioners often it would mean death. Throughout time, traditionalists would have required the execution of those involved, because what was taught was not the standard form of religion. It was the inner current, or perception, connection, and alignment with the Truth/Light.

My teacher used to say, as he reflected the Light across our hearts, this was the mystery and learning that was taught in the great pyramids.

When one use the word 'mystic' in the context of sufi path - what is the emphasis here?

People always need to define something; put it into a category, so, it is understood. Followers of the Path are given names so others will understand what is going on. Sufis do not call themselves Sufis; this is considered egotistical. Limiting, and not accurate. Others have called Sufis the original mystics; once again, this is an attempt by them to understand what the Sufi is doing.

For followers of this Path, the mystery or emphasis is connection with the Divine; Love of God and direct perception of the Truth/Light. The traveler does not believe there is a God/Light; the traveler knows there is a God/Light. Through the intervention of the Teacher, the traveler connects, is one with this primordial energy, and aligns their own inner essence (heart) with the Light.

As love, in a worldly context matures, the lover does not say, I think/believe that I love my wife and daughter, the traveler knows he/she loves their family member. It is the same with spiritual studies and knowledge of God. We do not talk about God, or say we believe, we know and experience the Divine Essence.

What does a mystic school consist of?

A mystical school consists of a teacher/Master, student/traveler, and the Path; which is an aspect of the Light. It is the Baraka (grace) of the Path, which the teacher uses to do his/her work. The Light is the life force and the way we connect with God; fused together in a glorious way- which is perceived, known, experienced and loved. Here, words are limitations. Just as Christians speak of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the Path, Light, and God are One interconnected and expressed on infinite levels. The traveler speaks of glimpsing only a small fraction of this; a lock of hair from the beloved.

Can a person be trained to become a mystic? If the goal of a mystic school is that, in person day's respect how an ideal mystic school should / may look like?

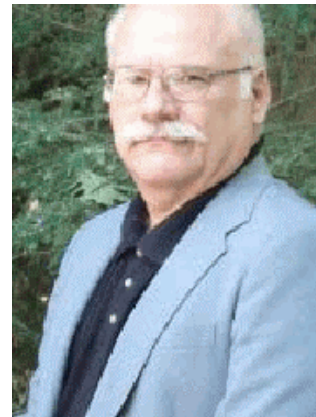
All learning requires training, innate capacity, preparation, and hard work. It is no different with spiritual studies. Each traveler is born with a life plan or destiny; we come here with an agenda of sorts; some of which we choose and some of which is chosen for us. This life plan or agenda presupposes a skill set, or inner sense of what we like and wish to accomplish. Once again, spiritual studies, mystical training, and any other endeavor are linked through pre-existing factors; some of these factors stretch across lifetimes, experience in other realms, and our present requirements. To answer the question, yes, travelers can be trained to be a mystic. This is the natural Way to experience God, before there was formal religion. It has always existed. Does every traveler require this training? Right now. In this present experience? That is up to each traveler and God. Remember, each is given what they require. No one's experience is better than another's; it is different, specifically for them, and guided by the Unseen Forces.

How do you see the concept of a 'complete person'?

A completed person has added a level of spiritual capacity and aligns their action with the higher potential. In order for this to occur, the traveler must be balanced and reasonably adjusted to ordinary life. Spiritual capacity is in addition to all other capacities and serves as an integrating factor; a foundation from which a complete life may be lived. We were created to participate in the world; helping to make it a better place, by aligning personal action with the highest potential in each moment. Now, how does one do this sort of thing? That is the mystery and is at the heart of the Path and mystery school. It begins by submission and love. Because we love, we are willing to do for another.

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Dr. Stewart Bitkoff is the author of the book, *A Commuter's Guide to Enlightenment*. Dr. Bitkoff is a doctoral graduate in education and an expert in Therapeutic Recreation, Psychiatric Rehab and Psychiatric Treatment. He has been on Faculty, serving as Field Instructor (Social Work/Psychology) for New York University, Herbert Lehman College, Iona College, College of New Rochelle, East Stroudsburg University, and Northampton Community College. He has written many works centering on the topic of the completed person and the original human development system. For more, see: www.thedeeganproject.com.



Duality

Kurt Venables

**Emotion and reason
The heart and the mind
Wisdom in harmony
Forever entwined**

**Emotion and reason
Chaos or sanity?
Alone, each is madness
Together, humanity**