



The Kybalion

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The Kybalion (full title: ***The Kybalion: A Study of the Hermetic Philosophy of Ancient Egypt and Greece***) is a book originally published in 1908 by "Three Initiates" (often identified as the **New Thought** pioneer **William Walker Atkinson**, 1862–1932)^[1] that purports to convey the teachings of **Hermes Trismegistus**.

While it shares with ancient and medieval **Hermetic texts** a number of traits such as **philosophical mentalism**, the concept of **'as above, so below'**, and the idea that everything consists of gendered polar opposites, as a whole it is more indebted to the ideas of modern **occultist** authors, especially those of the New Thought movement to which Atkinson belonged.^[2] A modern Hermetic tract, it has been widely influential in **New Age** circles since the twentieth century.^[3]

Seven Hermetic principles [edit]

A central concept in the book is that there are "seven Hermetic principles, upon which the entire **Hermetic philosophy** is based".^[4] These are, as literally quoted from the book:

- The principle of mentalism**

"The All is Mind; the Universe is Mental."^[5]

- The principle of correspondence**

"**As above, so below**; as below, so above." [...] This principle embodies the truth that there is always a **correspondence** between the laws and phenomena of the various planes of being and life.^[6]

- The principle of vibration**

"Nothing rests; everything moves; everything vibrates."^[7]

- The principle of polarity**

"Everything is dual; everything has poles; everything has its pair of opposites; like and unlike are the same; opposites are identical in nature, but different in degree; extremes meet; all truths are but half-truths; all paradoxes may be reconciled."^[8]

- The principle of rhythm**

"Everything flows, out and in; everything has its tides; all things rise and fall; the pendulum-swing manifests in everything; the measure of the swing to the right is the measure of the swing to the left; rhythm compensates."^[9]

- The principle of cause and effect**

"Every cause has its effect; every effect has its cause; everything happens according to law; chance is but a name for law not recognized; there are many planes of causation, but nothing escapes the law."^[10]

- The principle of gender**

"Gender is in everything; everything has its masculine and feminine principles; gender manifests on all planes."^[11]

Relation to ancient and medieval *Hermetica* [edit]

According to **Mitch Horowitz**, the **philosophical mentalism** (the primacy of mind as the active cause of things) described by the *Kybalion's* first principle was inspired by broadly similar notions in the ancient Greek *Hermetica*.^[12]

Nicholas E. Chapel notes that while several aspects such as the philosophical mentalism, the concept of **"as above, so below"** as derived from the *Emerald Tablet*, and the idea that everything exists as pairs of gendered polar opposites, do have a background in ancient and medieval Hermetic texts, other aspects such as the principle of vibration (which originates in the philosophy of **David Hartley**, 1705–1757) are not related to Hermeticism.^[2]

Chapel also points out that there are a number of stark contrasts between the *Kybalion* and the traditional *Hermetica*, such as the *Kybalion's* anti-theological stance versus the heavy emphasis on **theology** in the *Hermetica*, or the *Kybalion's* focus on the practitioner's "mental transmutation" versus the *Hermetica's* preoccupation with reverence for and **unification with** the divine. Chapel concludes that as a whole, the *Kybalion* is too bound up with early 20th-century ideas emanating from the **New Thought** movement to be representative of the broader historical tradition of Hermetic philosophy.^[2]

See also [edit]

- Occultism**

References [edit]

- ↑ On the identification of the author of the *Kybalion* as William W. Atkinson, see **Deslippe** 2011, pp. 18–19; **Chapel** 2013; **Smoley** 2018, pp. ix–xxv; **Horowitz** 2019, p. 195.
- ↑ ^a ^b ^c **Chapel** 2013.
- ↑ See **Horowitz** 2019, pp. 193–194.
- ↑ *Three Initiates* 1908, p. 25 (excessive capitalization removed); cf. **Brînzeu** 2011, p. 263; **Horowitz** 2019, pp. 193-194, p. 196.
- ↑ *Three Initiates* 1908, p. 26.
- ↑ *Three Initiates* 1908, p. 28 (excessive capitalization removed).
- ↑ *Three Initiates* 1908, p. 30 (excessive capitalization removed).
- ↑ *Three Initiates* 1908, p. 32 (excessive capitalization removed).
- ↑ *Three Initiates* 1908, p. 35.
- ↑ *Three Initiates* 1908, p. 38 (excessive capitalization removed).
- ↑ *Three Initiates* 1908, p. 39 (excessive capitalization removed).
- ↑ **Horowitz** 2019, pp. 196–198.

Works cited

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- http://www.kybalion.org (general resource page on *The Kybalion*)

Categories: 1908 non-fiction books | Occult books | Hermetica | Works published under a pseudonym

<i>The Kybalion</i>	
	
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Author	William Walker Atkinson (likely)
Country	United States
Language	English
Subject	Hermeticism / Occultism
Publisher	Yogi Publication Society
Publication date	1908
Text	<i>The Kybalion</i> at Wikisource

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