

## STUDIA

José Iván Elvira Sánchez, Independent Researcher

### INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD AND THE MAGIC OF OUR MEMORIES

**Category:** Essay.

**Abstract:** It's my purpose to compile and arrange some selected contributions originally published in *Azogue Journal* since the year 2008 (concretely in my digital academic notebook "De Umbris Idearum"), which in my opinion deserve to adopt the shape of essays in the context of SHJ. These contributions have traced for years the mainstream ways of my research activity.

**Key words:** Introduction, *Azogue Journal*, *De Umbris Idearum*.

Once again, I'd like to thank the participation and the disinterested support of the colleagues linked to this incipient project called *Studia Hermetica*, since the year 2008, and especially to Herder Publisher, which has been our sponsor since the very beginning. I've conceived this second special number as inserted within the first issue, inspired and designed with the same "introductory" aim. And the reason to undertake that chore is simple: Hermetism is a really hard academic task, and needs an astonishing dose of patience and time. In other words, we're heading to make an exercise of academic reflection in every moment, and to seek for other sources and bibliographies elaborated from a very different fields of study, which is a task that obviously takes a lot of time and capacity, as well as the effort for learning the so called Classical languages. Certainly, the modern researcher in Hermetism is obliged to attend a great variety of matters, trying to do not lose a "reasonable" perspective, beyond hyper-specializations and unproductive academic endogamies.

Anyway, *Studia Hermetica Journal* is a project aimed by a wide variety of educational, academic and artistic tenets, so we've been supported on several purposes and inspirations at the time to carry on our work, since we're not merely a platform to

elucidate the Esoteric and Hermetic philosophies rooted in the very entrails of the Antiquity, but we're, above all, humanists in the wider sense of the concept. And that's the reason why we allow the participation of historians, scientists and artists "alien" to our fields of study; and much more, we specially demand the participation of researchers who are not involved in the fields linked to our Trismegistus' doctrine, named by certain academic circles with the label "Western Esotericism"<sup>1</sup>.

Following this argument, and in order to establish the necessary boundaries between us and rest of people who love the Trismegistus' doctrines, we're obliged to affirm that we feel ourselves very far away from those researchers (inside or outside the Academy), who link their spiritual worries to their intellectual activities, in the terms of "awakening of the Western World" and other deceitful concepts based on identical premises. For us (i.e. for the researchers who work in *Azogue* and *Studia Hermetica*), the so called "Hermetic Philosophy" is an important piece of a huge puzzle of philosophies and religious thought developed in Western World, and its heterodox condition does not add nothing in this equation, but merely the fact that they have been systematically ignored by the mainstream research activity during decades due to many different reasons (ignorance, religious prejudices, or intellectual disdain), of course apart from the bright exception of a few excellent scholars since the nineteenth century. And we find some good examples in the following personalities: Louis Ménard (1822-1908), Wilhelm Bousset (1865-1920), Richard August Reitzenstein (1861-1931), Karl Preisendanz (1883-1968), Bouché-Leclercq (1842-1923), Eduard Zeller (1814-1908), Franz Cumont (1868-1947), Lynn Thorndike (1882-1965), Louis Massignon (1883-1962) or Julius Ruska (1867-1949).

Let's continue with the question tackled in the first introductory issue: *What is Hermetism?* Undoubtedly, Hermetism is one of the most beautiful philosophies emanated from our inner heart and soul, a murky joint of currents of thought and practices which have produced an unbelievable and extensive amount of literary masterpieces and lavish artistic creations in History, linked to a wide range of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. our paper "Ciento cincuenta años de hermetismo" (MHNH, 2010), where we discuss about the very different perspectives identified inside and outside the Academic world in regards to the Hermetism. Briefly, we follow the lucid proposal of Rodríguez Guerrero, established in his digital notebook within *Azogue Journal*: Cuaderno de notas *Opus Magnum*, entrada de 30 de julio de 2009, URL: <http://www.revistaazogue.com/>, where he distinguishes between three points of view: The Descriptive approach, and the Normative and Interpretative ones.

philosophical and religious concepts not exclusively concern to well-known terms like *gnônis*, *pallingenesia* or spiritual awakening, but also to a special sort of anthropocentrism which has consecrated the humankind as *epitome* of the Creation, frequently based in the idea of a God Who pervades His whole Creation, or in other words an entire theology constructed in base of a curious dialectics between cataphatic and apophatic elements, which often flow to Immanentist, Pantheist and Deist metaphysics. In short, a kind of qualified mysticism, sophisticated magical and theurgic rites, and the attempt to elaborate an artificial memory which integrates the sense of the entire Creation... They have been some of the most remarkable achievements of Hermetism, next to other related currents of thought like the Platonism in all of its forms and the "pre-scientific" practices and visions towards matter. And that's precisely why we feel proud and passionate about this splendid legacy that we're trying to recover for the future generations.

This special "Christmas issue" has adopted the heading of a suggestive title written by the Spanish researcher Ignacio Gómez de Liaño<sup>2</sup>, one of those scholars taken before the solitary path opened by Frances Amelia Yates and her pioneering *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964). Effectively, our *Mundo, Magia y Memoria* is a new contribution of SHJ designed to accomplish the unavoidable attempt to face the study of Hermetic according to the development of the mainstream academic currents in our days, but always aware of the worth of the past contributions, mainly established in the second half of the recently-deceased twentieth century. In addition, it's our intention to recap a portion of our work in *Azogue Journal* since the last four years, in order to construct a solid basis for future proposals. Hermetism, we already know it, is an extremely difficult field of the so called History of Thought which covers a wide variety of scientific and humanistic regions, thus nowadays the researcher in Hermetism should run away from hindering "Esoteric" conceptions.

It has been a sad year for all of us, since we knew the seizure of the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, due to some financial unresolved problems<sup>3</sup>; anyhow, we've just recently know about its happy reopening over the same place and principles. We

<sup>2</sup> *Mundo, Magia, Memoria*, Madrid: Taurus, 1987. It consists in a selection of various opuses of Giordano Bruno, properly commented and annotated by Gómez de Liaño.

<sup>3</sup> See its new website, and concretely the blog developed by Wouter Hanegraaff: <http://www.ritmanlibrary.com/2011/12/per-aspera-ad-fontes/>

trust and hope to maintain our educational projects and institutions during the dark times we're living, and the BPH is one of those undertakings that deserve to persist intact and operative for the very new young generations of researchers in Hermetism and related currents.

Turning back to the very purpose of this special issue, we've tried to collect those *De Umbris Idearum's* "essays" which in our opinion fit better to accomplish the non-easy task to elucidate the main topics associated to the study of Hermetism and its related or contemporary currents of thought. Naturally, this selection has been also established attending to the personal inclinations of his author. For example, the "memory issue" is a central question of the Historical science, as well as other social sciences and humanistic regions. *On the memories*, the three chosen essays: "Angustia, intimidad, serenidad", "El hombre y lo divino" and "Tempus fugit", have been elaborated in base of a passion and obsession engrained in the proper activity of being a historian and humanist. The recovery of our memory and its inner philosophical sense, is one of the most important aims in this project of ours called "Studia Hermetica". We need to go on in our academic tasks armed and proud of our shared heritage, and over its both Hellenistic and Christian pillars.

Concerning the other two topics: the World and the Magic, their logics are easy to support: the vital attitude of a historian is the fifty percent of his future activity, and at length it works as a boundary facing the rest of the academic world. In this sense, "Errante y perplejo" and the other essay concerning to the well-known film *Agora*, delimit which would be our willingness toward the arts and the knowledge in regards to our fields of study and its multiple associations. On the magical topic, we have tried to highlight those concepts linked to the hypothetical Hermetic attitudes in regards to the religious practices and linked beliefs. *Beyond philosophy*, we will find an ample range of metaphorical and gnostic ceremonies, rites and devotions parallel to the magicians' procedures.

It's remarkable the fact that in the last month of November, *Studia Hermetica* had the opportunity to participate in a colloquium in the University of Granada<sup>4</sup>, organized in order to elucidate the wide range of concepts of Magic across the Western History and its associated rites. Briefly, the conclusions of our intervention were clear:

<sup>4</sup> See the notice in: <http://studiahermeticajournal.com/?p=426>

Ancient Hermetism is in general terms a religious piety and a theology without any kind of magical hidden intention, at least in the mechanical sense described by Festugière, and the sources are absolutely conclusive in this particular point<sup>5</sup>.

These seven essays preceded by these two introductory works close the initial stage of the *Studia Hermetica Project*, displayed during the whole year 2011, and we do hope you will find them attractive and useful to your future academic undertakings. Anyhow, you should take account that the tone and the style of these "essays" are in great part informal and highly personal; they have been written using the first person, and they ask for the reader's confidence in many cases. Indeed, they have value for the academic world just attending to become a seed for more developed works. These essays show and display ideas, tenets, bibliographical references and opinions, and they may be the initial step for more serious approaches or merely as a necessary exercise of reflection. And we need such exercises if we want to undertake a project like *Studia Hermetica*.

Thank you for your kindness and support. We wish you a very happy New Year 2012.



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<sup>5</sup> Cf. my paper "Física y Mística: Filosofía, Magia y Religión en la Antigüedad Tardía", *Veredas da História*, Anno III, Ed. 2, 2010. URL: [www.veredadahistoria.com](http://www.veredadahistoria.com)