



Image from AMORC promotional booklet, 1940s

## {Introduction}

# THOUGHTS HAVE WINGS

*The greatest discovery of my generation is that man can alter his life simply by altering his attitude of mind.*

—*William James (author, The Varieties of Religious Experience)*

I hold it true that thoughts are things;  
They're endowed with bodies and breath and wings;  
And that we send them forth to fill  
The world with good results, or ill.  
That which we call our secret thought  
Speeds forth to earth's remotest spot,  
Leaving its blessings or its woes  
Like tracks behind it as it goes.  
We build our future thought by thought,  
For good or ill, yet know it not.  
Yet, so the universe was wrought.  
Thought is another name for fate;  
Choose, then, thy destiny and wait,  
For love brings love and hate brings hate.

—*Henry Van Dyke (chaired the committee that wrote the first Presbyterian printed liturgy, The Book of Common Worship)*

IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE in the summer of 2007 to watch television, browse the internet, listen to the radio, read newspapers or magazines, or go to bookshops without being deluged with a phenomenon paradoxically known as *The Secret*.

A publishing sensation in its hardcover, CD, audio and DVD entities; on the top of *New York Times* bestseller lists, featured on the Amazon.com home page, stacked on the front tables at Barnes & Noble and Borders. Millions of hits on youtube.com, videogoogle.com, news sites, blogs, and a sweeps-week cavalcade on *Oprah*, *Larry King*, and *Regis and Kelly*. On everyone's lips at the water cooler and yoga class.

The smog of commercial success that hangs over *The Secret* makes it easy to overlook its essential pitch: that the "greatest people in history" achieved their financial, intellectual and political success due to their knowledge and use of forbidden ancient teachings, despite the attempts of church and state to withhold and destroy these ideas.

Author Rhonda Byrne tells us that she originally discovered *The Secret's* secret in the obscure century-old book: *The Science of Getting Rich* by Wallace D. Wattles. The practical directives of Mr. Wattles' occult belief system inspired Ms. Byrne to embark on a quick and voracious consumption of other "secret" texts. These included the ancient Hermetic *Emerald Tablet* and later writings from New Thought, a nineteenth-century philosophical movement that says the physical world can be affected and changed through ideas and thoughts, particularly in regard to wealth and health, as expressed by the Law of Attraction.

For more than a century, Hermetic ideas have been filtered down for the American public as New Thought, Prosperity Consciousness, New Age—and most recently as *The Secret*. *The Secret* has re-introduced Hermeticism into mainstream consciousness on a large scale, but this publication merely scratches the surface of a tradition and knowledge that requires no small amount of discipline, experience and rigor to comprehend its truths. Scholars and alchemists have spent lifetimes attempting to understand the

meaning of the *Emerald Tablet* alone, which is quoted and lionized at the beginning of *The Secret*.

Hermetic wisdom has infused every major religion and countless schools of thought for over two millennia. The Hermetic tradition comes to us in various guises—Platonism, Pythagorean philosophy, Sufism and Gnosticism, even in certain Christian principles.

This information has been kept secret for hundreds of years through brotherhoods, not only to retain a fraternal group's sense of exclusivity, but also to guard the information from competing religious and political power structures, and to protect the ignorant from the power of its implications. If you believe that knowledge must be restricted by the directives of church and state, then the idea of the masses becoming aware of these teachings could clearly cause trouble for those in charge; certainly the misuse of some of these teachings could backlash on the user poorly.

"Fragments of a Great Secret," says *The Secret's* flap copy, "have been found in the oral traditions, in literature, in religions and philosophies throughout the centuries. For the first time, all the pieces of The Secret come together . . ."

What actually comes together in *The Secret* is just one fragment of Hermetic thought which has been otherwise available throughout the centuries in hundreds of books. But *The Secret* artfully simplifies this fragment of Hermetic Law into the kind of language that can be easily digested by modern minds, minds that are constantly distracted by the aggressive multimedia bazaar.

Singing its praises, a yoga teacher says, "I know at least three people where *The Secret* has changed their lives. A friend said his life became immediately much better when he realized that when he complained his life became worse. And when he was grateful for what he had, his mental state and his health improved right away."

As a motivational work encouraging readers to reprogram themselves with a more positive frame of mind, *The Secret* is a spectacular success. But in keeping its thesis simple and positivistic, with an emphasis on material gain and instant gratification, *The*

*Secret* has also neglected to include adequate instruction to guard against potential missteps and disappointments.

Within its pages, *The Secret* intimates, but does not say overtly, that its principles are drawn from the American New Thought movement that developed in the late nineteenth century as both a pantheistic and mystical Christian response to a fast-expanding capitalist environment that saw prosperity as a primary goal. Through positive thinking, affirmations, meditation and prayer, the New Thought movement taught spiritually-inclined materialists how to find health, wealth and happiness through mystical principles. *The Secret* is the New Thought's twenty-first-century corollary.

An early twentieth-century text, *The Kybalion*, attributed to the "Three Initiates," incorporates Hermetic Laws and New Thought movement ideas in a fusion to form the idea of mental transmutation. This mysterious work is thought to have been written by Paul Foster Case (a member of the occult group The Golden Dawn and founder of Builders of the Adytum Mystery School), Michael Whitty and the New Thought movement leader William Walker Atkinson, who is quoted in and given praise by *The Secret*, particularly in respect to his more than a dozen books explaining his use of the Law of Attraction.

The two dozen talking-head "teachers" seen in *The Secret* DVD repeatedly tell the story of their reluctant belief in the Law of Attraction as an immutable spiritual truism, that the Universe is an inexhaustible cornucopia of riches, and that all one needs to do to access them is to believe, be grateful and open to receive. Says "teacher" Joe Vitale, "*The Secret* is like having the universe as your catalogue."

Critics have disparaged *The Secret* as yet another incarnation of mindless hope-peddling for the "power of positive thinking" racket. Considering America's dark history of greedy men profiting from consumer naïveté, this skepticism seems like a completely valid perception. On the other hand, to always comfort ourselves with reflexive naysaying destroys the essential human component of being able to imagine and discover heretofore unheard-of possibilities.

The open-ended, exploratory beliefs of the New Thought and Prosperity Consciousness movements could only have blossomed in a wild, unformed land like America. Wattles' *Science of Getting Rich*, Atkinson's *The Law of Attraction in the Thought World* and *The Kybalion*, pseudonymously authored by the "Three Initiates," will be excerpted within.

The more commercial guise of Hermetic Laws in New Thought and Prosperity Consciousness movement directives has been showered on the American public for more than a century. But what is *The Secret's* essential source? What is the true nature and purpose of the messages of Hermes? The basic tenets of Hermeticism have been so intertwined with Christian, Jewish, Islamic and Greek writings that it has become difficult to discover where one ends and the other begins. And how have the new influences of mystical capitalism transformed the Hermetica?

What is the Hermetic literature, or *Corpus Hermeticum*? Who wrote it, and what does it say? What is the history, in all its tragedies and successes, of the Law of Attraction?

Depending upon whose account we read, Hermes Trismegistus could have been an actual God, a wise sage named after Hermes (the dream-bringing messenger from the Gods to humans) or the Egyptian Thoth, the scribe of the Gods. Hermes Trismegistus is said to have been responsible for countless divine or divine-inspired writings (some say as many as tens of thousands), most of which were lost when the Library of Alexandria was burned, according to scholars, when the Roman emperor Theodosius I ordered the destruction of all pagan temples in 391 A.D.

The *Emerald Tablet* is a brief and cryptic text of universal laws attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. Though no original copy of the *Emerald Tablet* exists, translations have been passed down by priests and occult initiates through the millennia. An early Latin translation calls it "The Secret of Secrets." Roger Bacon, Albertus Magnus, Isaac Newton and even Aleister Crowley have written their translations and variants. Some are excerpted within this book.

The Ancient Mystical Order Rosæ Crucis (AMORC), commonly known as the Rosicrucians, enticed readers of the pulpy magazines *Fate* and *Popular Science* throughout the twentieth century with illustrated advertisements proclaiming “Thoughts Have Wings: You Can Influence Others With Your Thinking!” and “Magic of Mind: The Greatest Power on Earth!” The reader would be shown “how to use your natural forces and talents to do things you now think are beyond your ability.” With its mail-order business of weekly occult lessons, AMORC teaches a more-inclusive variety of Hermetic and New Thought ideas.

This book aims to guide readers through many Hermetic teachings and history, to examine the folklore of the *Emerald Tablet*, and elucidate the shape-changing aspect of the Hermetic tradition and Hermes himself. You’ll learn how large sections of the Christ mythos and Jewish Kabbalistic texts were borrowed from the pages of Hermetic works. We’ll also investigate the revival of Hermetic teachings in their Freemasonic, pop culture and New Age reformulations. We’ll reveal how many of the get-rich-quick schemes borrow from Hermetic laws, utilizing them for strictly materialistic or ego-oriented goals.

We, the authors of *The Secret Source*, are not gurus, nor are we Inquisitors on behalf of the scientific or theological establishment. We intend to examine the history of the concepts expressed in *The Secret* without imposing our views as to their essential validity.

Perhaps the true attraction of *The Secret* lies in its ability to persuade us of new possibilities in a time of suicidal jihad, 2012 apocalypse and the twilight days of the biosphere. After all, everything is possible, isn’t it?

*Namaste,*

Maja D’Aoust  
Adam Parfrey