

## A Brief History of New Thought and Hermetic Thought

by Michael Ireland

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*Those of us who embrace the New Thought realities of our twenty-first century are entering a new vibration, we are transcending our past limitations and opening up to the limitless possibilities of creation. As we have seen, there is an endless sea of cosmic energy available to us—and it allows us to manifest abundantly. So, keep your heart and mind open to receiving your infinite, limitless, creative potential!*

*As an adherent of New Thought concepts, you have no doubt discovered that there are numerous powerful, life-changing,*

*ancient insights that were not taught to you in school. These archaic ideas, known generally as*

*“Hermetic principles,” are the basis of the New Thought (or, as some call it, the “New Age”)*

*movement. These spiritual principles, universal laws, and laws of nature govern every aspect of our world, the universe, and the entire cosmos. They are as real as the law of physics (in fact they are the metaphysical laws of physics!) and they play an intricate part in your life—whether you are aware of it or not.*

*In a nutshell, the Hermetic principles are grounded in the mystical and secret teachings of ancient India, Egypt, and Greece, societies which employed sacred geometry, ancient cosmology, and natural philosophy to confirm their belief that the universe (and all of creation) has its source in an intelligent, Divine design, and that this design was, is, and ever shall be, the source of all.*

*Thus, the same age-old, universal laws that guided and determined the lives and fates of our ancestors are the self-same laws that we can use for self-actualization, to follow our dreams and to fulfill our lives passion and purpose.*

*In this article, we look at a little bit of arcane history—and a little bit of modern history, to discover that when we embrace the principles and belief systems that were used by our forbearers over 5,000 years ago, and apply them to our modern lives, we can become creators with the Divine! But we do not need to become historians of Egyptian philosophy or ancient Greek religions to tap into this wisdom, for our modern philosophers and thinkers have already done all the work for us. Take the powerful “New Age” concepts of the Law of Attraction and the idea that Thoughts are Things, for example. The late Dr. Wayne Dyer talked about these theories in his *Power of Intention* books; Esther Hicks, Jerry Hicks, and Abraham expounded upon them in their *Law of Attraction* series; and Rhonda Byrne addressed them in her famous book and movie, *The Secret*. Countless other human potential writers have played upon these*

*concepts too: Neville Goddard, Bob Proctor, Pam Grout, Eric Pearl—all have embraced these inspirational ideas. Their books explain that if you put these notions into practice you can improve your life and manifest your destiny. Their books are filled with unique, imaginative ideas about routines and systems you can use to make your dreams a reality—and they are all based on the conviction that the Law of Attraction is a fundamental law that works in tandem with the concept that thoughts are things. When you look a little deeper, you realize that many of these authors are actually writing about the seven principles of Hermetic Thought!*

*The principle that thoughts are things was first modernized by the insightful, best-selling author Napoleon Hill in his landmark book *Think and Grow Rich*. First published in 1937, it sold twenty million copies and taught ordinary people how to make a fortune by thinking positively and strategically. *Think and Grow Rich* was based upon Hill's earlier book, the 1928 *Law of Success* which he wrote at the behest of the great Dale Carnegie, author of the blockbuster book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and the first twentieth century thinker to introduce the idea that thoughts are things. Carnegie's book sold five million copies in twenty years.*

*It is a testament to their enduring wisdom that these books have captured the attention of generations of truth seekers. While the language and tone of Hill's and Carnegie's books speak to the sentiments and worldviews of a different era, Dyer, Byrne, the Hicks's, and others have taken these basic ideas and reworked them for the twenty-first century, adding in self-improvement tips and tricks to expand on the basic principles expressed by Hill and Carnegie.*

*But these transformational ideas were not original to these authors—and that is important in the context of our quantum exploration. Carnegie likely got his ideas from*

*nineteenth century essayist, philosopher, and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, who is thought of as a “grandfather of the New Age.” As a leader of the Transcendentalist Movement, it was he who propounded the idea of “the power of positive thinking.” But the idea was not original to Emerson, either, for it was founded in the wisdom of the Neoplatonists of the early centuries CE and the Greek Platonists Plotinus, Proclus, and Plutarch—and they got their ideas from Pythagoras and Trismegistus and Zoroaster. Wow!*

*Ultimately, as you can see, the trajectory of the ideas that “thinking positively creates positive outcomes” and that “thoughts are things” can be traced back through time to the philosophy of such ancient thinkers as the Greek mathematician Pythagoras of Samos; the Egyptian god-king Hermes Trismegistus; the Persian prophet Zoroaster; and even to Babylonian and Akkadian myths! Indeed, we might have to go back beyond written time to find the source of this wisdom!*

*So, in the twenty-first century, we have taken these ideas, rooted deep in history, and incorporated them into a modern self-development paradigm which teaches that we can reconstruct ourselves by thinking positively—how cool is it that! Our modern pursuits are the same as those of our ancestors from hundreds of centuries past! For the ancients, self-development was a sacred calling, inspired by ethereal gods and guided by myth.*

*Today, we reconstruct ourselves, we strive to be the best versions of ourselves for both spiritual and secular reasons, and we follow the “positive thinking” model because we know it works. However, while philosophers, self-help gurus, and healers from arcane to modern times have propounded that thinking positively works, they do not tell us why or how. To find out, we*

*have to look to science, back beyond Greek philosophers, Egyptian sages, and Babylonian mages, to the beginning of time.*



*About the Author:*

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