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Media Watch for March 2008

(Issue 76)

Hermetic Wisdoms: In "Unraveling The Secret," David Rippe points out that [The Secret](#) by Rhonda Byrne begins with, "As above, so below. As within, so without," from the [Emerald Tablet](#), circa 3000BCE but makes no further reference to it. Rippe goes on to discuss some of the important teachings attributed to the person thought to be the author of the Tablet, Hermes Trismegistus.

Seven Hermetic principles are explained in [The Kybalion](#), a textbook written by "Three Initiates." We believe that they are part of a revelation of metaphysical knowledge that is as important today as they were in ancient times. In brief, they are (paraphrasing Rippe):

1. **Mentalism.** Everything is spirit in the form of infinite living mind;
2. **Correspondence.** The whole is the sum of its parts and each part is a sum of its part;
3. **Vibration.** Everything is in vibration and the rate of that vibration determines the character of everything;
4. **Polarity.** Everything manifests from the one with a dual nature with degrees in between. (Parenthetically, the Ancient Wisdoms teaches the seeker to find the middle way, reminiscent of "an even mind.);
5. **Rhythm.** Everything is in motion between the extremes;
6. **Causation.** Every cause has its effect and every thought has a direct and indirect response in a continuous reality;
7. **Gender.** Everything has masculine and feminine properties and all creation requires both properties.

These principles have been handed down as traditions and it is a good practice to translate them in terms of your understanding of the world. We believe that you will see strong similarities between these and the principles of Spiritualism.

From: [Institute of Noetic Sciences](#), *Shift*, August 2007.

Meditation Physically Alters the Brain: Sara Lazar and colleagues at Massachusetts General Hospital scanned the brains of twenty people who meditated for an average of forty minutes per day and fifteen controls with no meditation experience. The meditating participants were practitioners of Buddhist Insight meditation, which involves concentrating on stimuli "in the moment," in a non-judgmental way and without cognitive elaboration—a process known as "mindfulness."

Controlling for age and education, the researchers found that specific areas of the cortex were thicker in the participants who meditated, as compared to controls. These areas included the right anterior insula, known to be involved in monitoring bodily functions, and parts of the prefrontal cortex involved in attention and sensory processing. Parts of the prefrontal cortex showed evidence of thinning in the older control participants but not in the older participants who meditated.

From: "Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness," *NeuroReport*, by Lazar, S. W., Kerr, C. E., Wasserman, R. H., Gray, J. R., Greve, D. N., Treadway, M. T., McCarvey, M., Quinn, B. T., Dusek, J. A., Benson, H., Rauch, S. L., Moore, C. I. & Fischl, B., 16, 1893-1897, www.yale.edu/scan/Lazar_2005_NR.pdf

Reminders of Death Bring Out the Good in Us: A social psychologist, Thomas Pyszczynski, and his colleagues got some interesting results from a survey that they did on the streets of Boulder Colorado. Two groups were given identical surveys. One group took the survey in front of a funeral home with a large sign reading "Howe's Mortuary" while the other group was interviewed a few blocks away. The survey showed that the group interviewed in front of the mortuary was more positive about charitable donations and more likely to say that kindness and generosity were qualities that were personally important to them.

From: [Washingtonpost.com](#), "Reminders of Mortality Bring Out the Charitable Side," by Shankar Vedantam, 12/24/2007.

Giving is Powerful: Just thinking charitable thoughts can help us. A new study from

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the National Institutes of Health shows that merely making a decision to donate to a charity caused the release of two feel good chemicals, dopamine and serotonin. Neal Krause of the University of Michigan followed 976 churchgoing adults over a period of three years and found that offering social support to others reduced the anxiety of those doing the supporting when they faced their own economic stress situation. Krause also found that praying for others had health benefits for those doing the praying. A new Harvard University study even shows that just watching a movie of helping activity boosts the immune system.

From: *Why Good Things Happen to Good People: The Exciting New Research that Proves the Link Between Doing Good and Living a Longer, Healthier, Happier Life*, by Stephen Post and , Jill Neimark

www.whygoodthingshappen.com/main.php?section=science

Image of Pope Paul: Gregorz Lukasik was attending a service at Beskid Zywiecki near John Paul's birthplace on the second anniversary of his death. A bonfire was lit during the service and Gregorz took some pictures. Later he looked at the pictures and discovered this figure in the fire. "I showed them to my brother and sister and they, like me, were convinced the flames had formed the image of Pope John Paul II. I was so happy with the picture that I showed it to our local bishop who said that Pope John Paul had made many pilgrimages during his life and he was still making them in death."



Jarek Cielecki, a Polish priest and friend of John Paul II, is convinced the picture shows the former pontiff. In October, the picture was continuously broadcast on Italian TV and also posted on religious websites, some of which crashed as thousands logged on to see the figure formed by the flames.

From: *The Daily Mail*, "Is this Pope John Paul II waving from beyond the grave? Vatican TV director says yes," by Nick Pisa, 19/15/2007. Picture is from Daily Mail website, www.dailymail.co.uk

Evidence Evaluation System: Miles Edward Allen, author of *The Survival Files*, has proposed a system for establishing a rank for phenomena reports. In effect, by following an online decision tree, website visitors can answer questions that lead to a number for Certainty of Discarnate Source (CS), Witness Reliability (WR) and Information Complexity (IC). Results of the three decision trees are combined for a total score which can be compared to the score of other reports of phenomena.

If you use the same system for an example you have, say a reported apparition, then you can compare your score with other reports the system has been used on to have a sense of how well received your report might be by the public. Allen's "Top 40" examples are listed on his website at www.thesurvivalfiles.com. The system is still being refined and Allen is asking for input from the public. You can contact him at m-media@comcast.net.

From: Field Testing the Evidence Evaluation System, Academy of Spirituality and Paranormal Studies, Inc., Searchlight, December 2007.

AARP Survey: A survey done by the American Association of Retired People found that more women than men believe in an afterlife. They also found that as those sampled got older, they tended to worry less about what happens after they die. Other statistics: ninety-four percent believe in God, fifty-three percent believe in the existence of spirits or ghosts, eighty-six percent believe in heaven and seventy percent believe in hell.

From: "Thoughts on the Afterlife Among U.S. Adults 50+," *Research Report*, Jean Koppen, AARP Knowledge Management, Gretchen Anderson, AARP Knowledge Management, June 2007, www.aarp.org/research/endoflife/death-dying/afterlife.html

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