

The Ninth Book

A Universal Sermon to Asclepius.

1. Hermes: All that is moved, O Asclepius, is it not moved in some thing, and by some thing?

2. Asclepius: Yes, indeed.

3. Hermes: Must not that, in which a thing is moved, of necessity be greater than the thing that is moved?

4. Of necessity.

5. And that which moveth, is it not stronger than that which is moved?

6. Asclepius: It is stronger.

7. Hermes: That in which a thing is moved, must it not needs have a Nature, contrary to that of the thing that is moved?

8. Asclepius: It must needs.

9. Hermes: Is not this great World a Body, than which there is no greater?

10. Asclepius. Yes, confessedly.

11. Hermes: And is it not solid, as filled with many great bodies, and indeed, with all the Bodies that are?

12. Asclepius: It is so.

13. Hermes: And is not the World a Body, and a Body that is moved.

14. Asclepius: It is.

15. Hermes: Then what kind of a place must it be, wherein it is moved, and of what Nature? Must it not be much bigger, that it may receive the continuity of Motion? And lest that which is moved should for want of room, be stayed, and hindered in the Motion?

16. Asclepius: It must needs be an immense thing, Trismegistus, but of what Nature.

17. Hermes: Of a contrary Nature, O Asclepius; but is not the Nature of things unbodily, contrary to a Body.

18. Asclepius: Confessedly.

19. Hermes: Therefore the place is unbodily; but that which is unbodily, is either some Divine thing or God himself And by some thing Divine, I do not mean that which was made or begotten.

20. If therefore it be Divine, it is an Essence or Substance but if it be God, it is above Essence; but he is otherwise intelligible.

21. For the first, God is intelligible, not to himself, but to us, for that which is intelligible, is subject to that which understandeth by Sense.

22. Therefore God is not intelligible to himself, for not being any other thing from that which is understood, he cannot be understood by himself.

23. But he is another thing from us, and therefore he is understood by us.

24. If therefore Place be intelligible, it is not Place but God, but if God be intelligible, he is intelligible not as Mace, but as a capable Operation.

25. Now everything that is moved, is moved, not in or by that which is moved, but in that which standeth or resteth, and that which moveth standeth or resteth, for it is impossible it should be moved with it.

26. Asclepius: How then, O Trismegistus, are those things that are here moved with the things that are moved? For thou sayest that the Spheres that wander are moved by the Sphere that wanders not.

27. Hermes: That, O Asclepius, is not a moving together, but a countermotion, for they are not moved after a like manner, but contrary one to the other; and contrariety hath a standing resistance of motion for resistance is a staying of motion.

28. Therefore the wandering Spheres being moved contrarily to that Sphere which wandereth not, shall have one from another contrariety standing of itself.

29. For this Bear which thou seest neither rise nor go down, but turning always about the same; dost thou think it moveth or standeth still?

30. Asclepius: I think it moves, Trismegistus.

31. What motion, O Asclepius?

32. Asclepius: A motion that is always carried about the same.

33. But the Circulation which is about the same, and the motion about the same, are both hidden by Station; for that which is about the same forbids that which is above the same, if it stand to that which is about the same.

34. And so the contrary motion stands fast always, being always established by the contrariety.

35. But I will give thee concerning this matter, an earthly example that may be seen with eyes.

36. Look upon any of these living Creatures upon Earth, as Man for example, and see him swimming; for as the Water is carried one way, the reluctance or resistance of his feet and hands is made a station to the man, that he should not be carried with the Water, nor sink underneath it.

37. Asclepius: Thou hast laid down a very clear example, Trismegistus.

38. Hermes: Therefore every motion is in station, and is moved of station.

39. The motion then of the World, and of every material living thing, happeneth not to be done by those things that are without the World, but by those things within it, a Soul, or Spirit, or some other unbodily thing, to those things which are without it.

40. For an inanimated Body, doth not now, much less a Body if it be wholly inanimate.

41. Asclepius: What meaneth thou by this, O Trismegistus, Wood and Stones, and all other inanimate things, are they not moving Bodies?

42. Hermes: By no means, O Asclepius, for that within the Body which moves the inanimate thing, is not the Body, that moves both as well the Body of that which beareth, as the Body of that which is born; for one dead or inanimate thing, cannot move another; that which moveth, must needs be alive if it move.

43. Thou seest therefore how the Soul is surcharged, when it carrieth two Bodies.

44. And now it is manifest, that the things that are moved are moved in something, and by something.

45. Asclepius: The things that are, O Trismegistus, must needs be moved in that which is void or empty, Vacuum.

46. Be advised, O Asclepius, for of all the things that are, there is nothing empty, only that which is not, is empty and a stranger to existence or being.

47. But that which is, could not be if it were not full of existence, for that which is in being or existence can never be made empty.

48. Asclepius: Are there not therefore some things that are empty, O Trismegistus, as an empty Barrel, an empty Hogshead, an empty Well, an empty Wine-Press, and many such like?

49. Hermes: O the grossness of thy Error, O Asclepius, those things that are most full and replenished, dost thou account them void and empty.

50. Asclepius: What may be thy meaning, Trismegistus?

51. Hermes: Is not the Air a Body?

52. Asclepius: It is a Body

53. Hermes: Why then this Body doth it not pass through all things that are and passing through them, fill them? And that Body doth it not consist of the mixture of the four? Therefore all those thou callest empty are full of Air.

54. Therefore those things that thou callest empty, thou oughtest to call them hollow, not empty, for they exist and are full of Air and Spirit.

55. Asclepius: This reason is beyond all contradiction, O Trismegistus, but what shall we call the Place in which the whole Universe is moved?

56. Hermes: Call it incorporeal, O Asclepius.

57. Asclepius: What is that incorporeal or unbodily?

58. Hermes: The Mind and Reason, the whole, wholly comprehending itself, free from all Body, undeceivable, invisible, impassible from a Body itself, standing fast in itself, capable of all things, and that favour of the things that are.

59. Whereof the Good, the Truth, the Archetypal Light, the Archetype of the Soul, are as it were Beams.

60. Asclepius: Why then, what is God?

61. Hermes: That which is none of these things, yet is, and is the cause of Being to all; and every one of the things that are; for he left nothing destitute of Being.

62. And all things are made of things that are, and not of things that are not; for the things that are not, have not the nature to be able to be made; and again, the things that are, have not the nature never to be, or not to be at all.

63. Asclepius: What dost thou then say at length, that God is?

64. Hermes: God is not a Mind, but the Cause that the Mind is; not a Spirit, but the Cause that the Spirit is; not Light, but the Cause that Light is.

65. Therefore we must worship God by these two Appellations which are proper to him alone, and to no other.

66. For neither of all the other, which are called Gods, nor of Men, nor Demons, or Angels, can anyone be, though never so little, good, save only God alone.

67. And this He is, and nothing else; but all other things are separable from the nature of Good.

68. For the Body and the Soul have no place that is capable of or can contain the Good.

69. For the greatness of Good, is as great as the Existence of all things, that are both bodily and unbodily, both sensible and intelligible.

70. This is the Good, even God.

71. See therefore that thou do not at any time, call ought else Good, for so thou shalt be impious, or any else God, but only the Good, for so thou shalt again be impious.

72. In Word it is often said by all men the Good, but all men do not understand what it is; but through Ignorance they call both the Gods, and some men Good, that can never either be or be made so.

73. Therefore all the other Gods are honoured with the title and appellation of God, but God is the Good, not according to Heaven, but Nature.

74. For there is one Nature of God, even the Good, and one kind of them both, from whence are all kinds.

75. For he that is Good, is the giver of all things, and takes nothing and therefore God gives all things and receives nothing.

76. The other title and appellation, is the Father, because of his making all things; for it is the part of a Father to make.

77. Therefore it hath been the greatest and most Religious care in this life, to them that are wise, and well-minded, to beget children.

78. As likewise it is the greatest misfortune and impiety for any to be separated from men, without children; and this man is punished after death by the Demons, and the punishment is this, To have the Soul of this childless man, adjudged and condemned to a Body, that neither hath the nature of a man, nor of a woman, which is an accursed thing under the Sun.

79. Therefore, O Asclepius, never congratulate any man that is childless; but on the contrary, pity his misfortune, knowing what punishment abides, and is prepared for him.

80. Let so many, and such manner of things, O Asclepius, be said as a certain precognition of all things in Nature.