The Teachings of Hermes and Satori Zen: what passes and what remains

What the Absolute Being does is the full deconstruction of the barriers that crystallize, imprison us and create lenses which distort the Absolute Truth.
The texts attributed to the scholar Hermes Trismegistus were written about 2000 years ago in Alexandria. For nearly 1000 years, those texts were unknown to the Western world, but they were partially recovered during the Renaissance, thanks to the work of Cosimo de Medici and Marsilio Ficino.

In fact, these texts are a testimony of a much older esoteric tradition, linked to ancient Greek and Egyptian mysteries. The very name of Hermes Trismegistus is often associated with the Egyptian god Thoth.

The contemporary idea of hermetic wisdom is that it is something strange and exotic. However, such a teaching has much to say about the human being in all of its complexity. Its central focus is to stimulate in us our dormant higher consciousness, the same consciousness which will guide our steps towards a liberating spiritual path.

In order to approach this teaching, we would like to establish a link between the teachings of Hermetic texts and the teachings of Zen Buddhism to show that the mainstay of life and wisdom knows no geographical boundaries.

Zen Buddhism emerged in China and gained strength and form in Japan, pervading the culture of the entire Far East and gradually permeating the West from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards. The central aim of Zen adepts is to reach the Satori, which would have been the experience Gautama Buddha went through at his enlightenment. Everything that has been written about the Satori reinforces its condition of being inexplicable, indescribable, unintelligible, which is the same as saying it cannot be defined.

Therefore, those who are interested in learning more about the Satori by means of discourse practice can only rely on the reports of the Zen masters who were willing to talk about their own experiences. One of those reports can be found in Alan Watts's The Spirit of Zen:

When I looked around, up and down, the whole universe, with its many sensory objects, seemed completely different; everything that once was repulsive, along with ignorance and passions, came to be seen as the simple flow of my deepest nature, which in itself remained bright, true and transparent.
This narrative tells us that the Satori is the experience responsible for presenting to the seeker its "deeper nature," which some Buddhist traditions agree to call Buddha-nature: that which remains amid the constant flow of existence.

**Hermes, landscape and de-landscape**

As for Hermes Trismegistus, also known as the "thrice great", it is not important to know whether he was one or several messengers, or simply an eternal prototype of the "Being that is", which we are on our way to become. The fact is that the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Emerald Tablet and The Exhortation of the Soul, works attributed to him, survived time and space and went through countless interpretations until they truly touched our heads and hearts, awakening the reminiscence of our true Self.

As above, so below.

As within, so without.

As in the great, so in the small.

Language is used for expressing, but also ends up restricting concepts. It is a double-edged sword, which can both release deep ideas and imprison them, crystallizing them forever.

Regarding the sacred texts of all time, we can say that our interpretations resemble the experience of a young monk in his pupilship. According to a Zen teaching, for the young monk who begins his studies, mountains are mountains, trees are trees and men are men. Then mountains cease to be mountains, trees cease to be trees, and men cease to be men. When he reaches the Satori, mountains become mountains again, trees become trees again, and men become men again. This enlightens us about the so-called spiritual consciousness, which, in essence, shows the reality of things as they are.

Many who came into contact with the Hermetic texts thoughtlessly considered that they could be useful for mastering and collecting space-temporal knowledge linked to
the cosmos, macrocosm and microcosm. However, this was never its purpose, which is the liberation of human consciousness from its illusions. Collecting knowledge will not lead us to such liberation.

For example, the Emerald Tablet relates what is "above" with what is "below", showing the oneness of all manifestation. However, following a questionable mystical interpretation of these texts, we continue to oppose high and low, inside and outside, large and small. In a grandiloquent reading, we may even get lost in an overestimation of our ego. By "connecting" in a negative way with the divine, we may feel great and live an elevated and inner life "up there" and "in there", and let the outside world be "small" and "low". Or we may lean towards a masochistic mystique, full of prejudices inherited from unbalanced religious traditions, from the devaluation of our human condition (we are the "little ones", we are "down here" and always "outside"). Nothing could be more wrong!

If we allow ourselves to be touched by Hermetic teachings, without thoughts, feelings or other reactions based on the culture of our country or time, we will realize that Hermes' warning is very clear, without comparisons, ramblings or metaphors. What he points out to us is the following:

It does not matter whether it is above, below, within, without, great or small. What does matter is the Whole and its/our essence.

What the text points out to us is that the divine, the Absolute Being, completely deconstructs the boundaries, which crystallize and imprison us, creating lenses that distort the Absolute Truth. It removes us from the landscape! Thus, without context, previous culture or any acquired knowledge, we cease to be seekers, and simply start to be.

We are therefore able to see that the profound understanding of the teachings of Hermes leads us (like the Satori Zen) to "access" our real nature, which remains "bright, true and transparent", even in front of the apparent changeability of everything. Brilliant because it fills our inner vision and stands out invincibly among all the objects of our thoughts. True because it does not reach us through bridges made of words or insinuations, but rather deconstructs all the bridges that bound our fragmented being, leading us to see that the oneness of existence is one with the Truth. Transparent because by fixing our vision in it we may see everything that exists, since its reality does not blur the reality of any other being.
When we realize that our space-temporal location is only appearance, we will understand that there can only be equality or proportionality arising from eternity, essence, and oneness with the Whole.

We will no longer worry about conceptualizing how far the divine goes and how far we go. After all, when we get to that point, we once again become One with the divine!