



Hermes Trismegistus School  
of Self Knowledge

# Introduction To Self-Knowledge

## What is Self-Knowledge?

There is an old legend about a time when the Gods were deciding where to hide the most beautiful and powerful treasure that they possessed.

*"We shall hide it at the top of the highest mountain!"* suggested one, but the others believed that humans would one day climb there.

Another suggested: *"We shall hide it at the bottom of the deepest ocean"*, but they also imagined that humans would one day reach there too.

*"We shall hide it on the moon then, they will certainly never make it there"* suggested another, but yet again, they thought humans would one day travel even there.

The discussion continued for a long time, until at last, one particularly wise God suggested: *"We shall hide it within humans themselves, for there they will never look!"*. And so, it was decided where to hide the treasure.

Now, this is only a legend, but we believe the meaning of this story is more real than we might suspect, that there is indeed a beautiful and powerful treasure hidden within each of us that we do not remotely suspect, and that it is **the tools and techniques of self-knowledge** that will allow us to discover it.

What is self-knowledge? As the name suggests, it is the knowledge and study of ourselves. However, it is not the knowledge of the external side of ourselves, such as our name, age, favourite hobbies, fashion sense etc., but the knowledge of aspects of ourselves which are of a much deeper and mysterious nature.

We will therefore begin our journey into understanding self-knowledge by learning what these hidden aspects of ourselves are.

## 1. Essence

The Essence is an immortal spark within us that animates us and allows us to be conscious of things. For this reason, it is also commonly known as **consciousness**.

Let's quickly do an exercise:

Take a few moments and pay attention to all the things that we can **hear** right now, wherever we are.

Now, pay attention to the things we **see**, such as the colour of the ceiling, the details of the flooring, our clothes, the furniture etc.

Finally, pay attention to the sensation of our body, really **feeling** it sitting or standing, and checking if we are relaxed or not.

Perhaps we can observe from this exercise that there is something within us that allows us to perceive and be aware of things, and that when we make an intentional effort to use this perception, we perceive more. We hear more, see more, feel more etc. This awareness belongs to our Essence.

Students who begin these studies and start to practice using this consciousness more in their daily lives often share observations such as *"I never realised how beautiful my journey to work is!"*, or *"I walk here every day and yet I never noticed those lovely trees before"*.

The Essence is also responsible for the positive qualities that exist within us, such as our determination, creativity, willpower, intelligence, kindness, patience, humility, wisdom etc, etc.

The more we learn to focus and develop our Essence, the more these qualities will develop within us too.

For this reason, we believe the factor which most influences our success in all our endeavours in life, whether it is managing our relationships, performing well in work, learning something new, overcoming a difficult situation etc, is our ability to focus and develop our Essence. If we develop our Essence, we develop in everything.

Our Essence is like a muscle within us, it develops the more we use it. Whereas an athlete improves their physical condition, we improve our psychic condition.

The Essence only grows through intentional and conscious efforts. Naturally, since even knowledge of the Essence is rare today, it is usually undeveloped within each of us. It is like a muscle that has become atrophied through lack of use. Speaking in other terms, we can say that it is *asleep*, and that we need to *awaken* it...

How much can we develop our Essence and these positive qualities that exist within us? Infinitely. There are no limits to its development whatsoever. With self-knowledge, any human being can improve and transform themselves to their heart's content. It only depends on their interest to do so.

To give us an idea of this, we can look at artists like Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, or composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, whose creativity and imagination are dazzling and marvellous, and whose works are timeless and magical. We can look at people like Plato, Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, Aesop, Seneca, whose wisdom and intelligence are brilliant and still practiced thousands of years later. Or we can look at figures like Buddha, Krishna, Lao Tzu, Hermes Trismegistus, Christ, whose knowledge and teachings on the mysteries of life and death are simply extraordinary.

How do these individuals have such incredible abilities? We would say not because of their genetics or their brains, but because of the development of their Essence. Recalling our story from the beginning, we could say these are people who have started to discover that hidden treasure within...



*As our consciousness develops, we perceive more...*

These same abilities and more exist within every human being, without exception, in a potential state. We only need to learn to activate them.

There is a saying engraved at the entrance of the great Temple of Apollo by the Oracle at Delphi, which echoes throughout the ages: *"Man, know yourself and you will know the Universe and its Gods!"*.

What does it mean to *"know yourself"*? Precisely to discover that Essence and these qualities that we have within. And how would knowing ourselves allow us to *"know the Universe and its Gods"*? Naturally, as our consciousness, perception, intelligence etc. grow within us, our ability to perceive and understand the world around us, including the mysteries of life, grows too.



*Temple of Apollo at Delphi*

Our true potential is infinite, and this potential lies in the development of our Essence.

## 2. Ego

Let's continue to the second hidden aspect of our psychology: The Ego. Or better said: Egos, since there are not one but many of them.

Whereas the Essence is responsible for our consciousness, the egos are responsible for our unconsciousness.

Whereas the Essence is responsible for our positive qualities, the egos are responsible for our negative qualities, such as laziness, anger, self-doubt, nervousness, jealousy, greed etc, etc.

The egos condition our behaviour. They condition how we think, feel, and act from moment to moment.

If we are stuck in traffic, an ego of impatience may emerge within us. If we have work to do or duties to fulfil, an ego of laziness may appear within us. If someone criticises or insults us, an ego of anger may arise within us. If we hear of someone doing better than us, or we see our partner or the person we like talking happily with someone else, then an ego of jealousy can emerge with us.

Do we choose to be jealous? Do we enjoy feeling jealous? Do we think it's useful to be jealous? No! Then why do we become jealous? This is the nature of the egos. They condition our behaviour and cause us to live our lives unwisely, unconsciously, and automatically.

No matter how wonderful a human being's external life may be, as long as the egos continue to exist within them, they will never experience true freedom and happiness. After all, the important thing in life is how we react to it, and as long as the egos continue to condition us, we will not be able to react correctly.

What would our daily lives be like if we did not have laziness, impatience, greed, jealousy, worries, fears of what others think of us, anger etc, etc.? Of course, it would be very different...

The key to self-knowledge lies not only in the development of the Essence, but also in the removal of the various egos within us. In fact, within each ego a portion of the Essence is trapped, and can only be liberated by observing, understanding, and eliminating that ego. The egos are therefore an important obstacle to our true potential.

As we begin to remove these psychological egos within us, we will begin to enjoy the precious senses and powers of the Essence.

## The Way Forward

Our aim in this school is to offer the self-knowledge techniques that will allow us to develop our Essence and overcome our Egos.

Along the way we will also discuss other important topics such as The Astral Dimension, Inner States and External Events, The Laws of Karma and Dharma, Self-Observation, Return Recurrence and Reincarnation, Retrospection, and many more.

It is important to emphasise at this point that the heart of this school is **practice**, not information. The important thing is for each of us to investigate and experience the ideas for ourselves, and not to only discuss and believe them.

Self-knowledge is the study and development of ourselves, by ourselves. No one, absolutely no one, can do this work for us. For this reason, self-knowledge is a very demanding study, since its cultivation and development depends entirely upon us. Without the desire to improve ourselves, self-knowledge would be impossible.

The study of self-knowledge is fascinating for any student when they are able to take their first steps in their development, since it allows them to discover a world as incredible as it is unknown, and even though it has always been there, through lack of self-knowledge, it has remained hidden.



Engraving by Flammarion, 1888