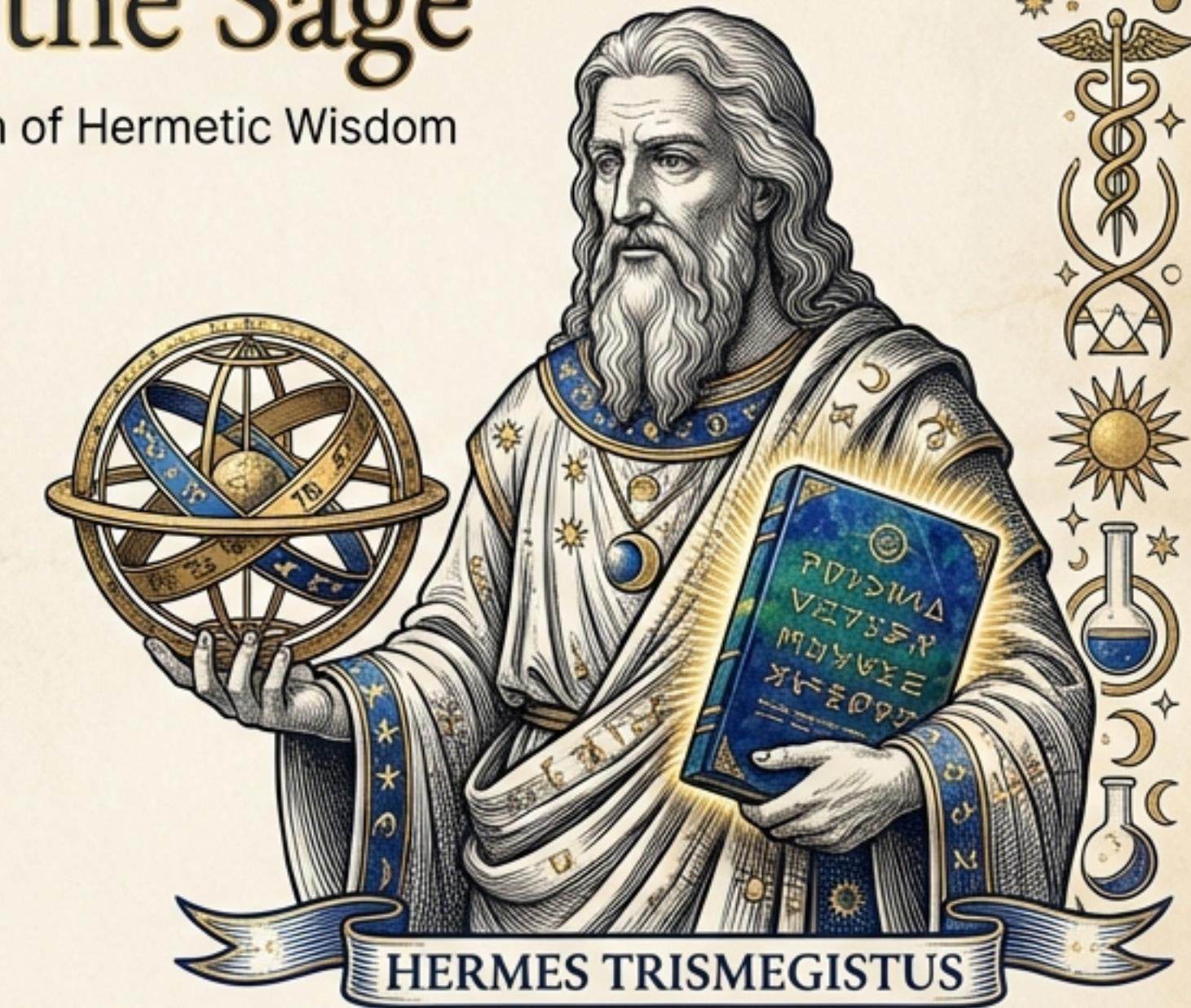


The Saint and the Sage

Albertus Magnus's Critical Integration of Hermetic Wisdom



The Saint: Albertus Magnus (c. 1200–1280). Doctor of the Church, patron saint of scientists.

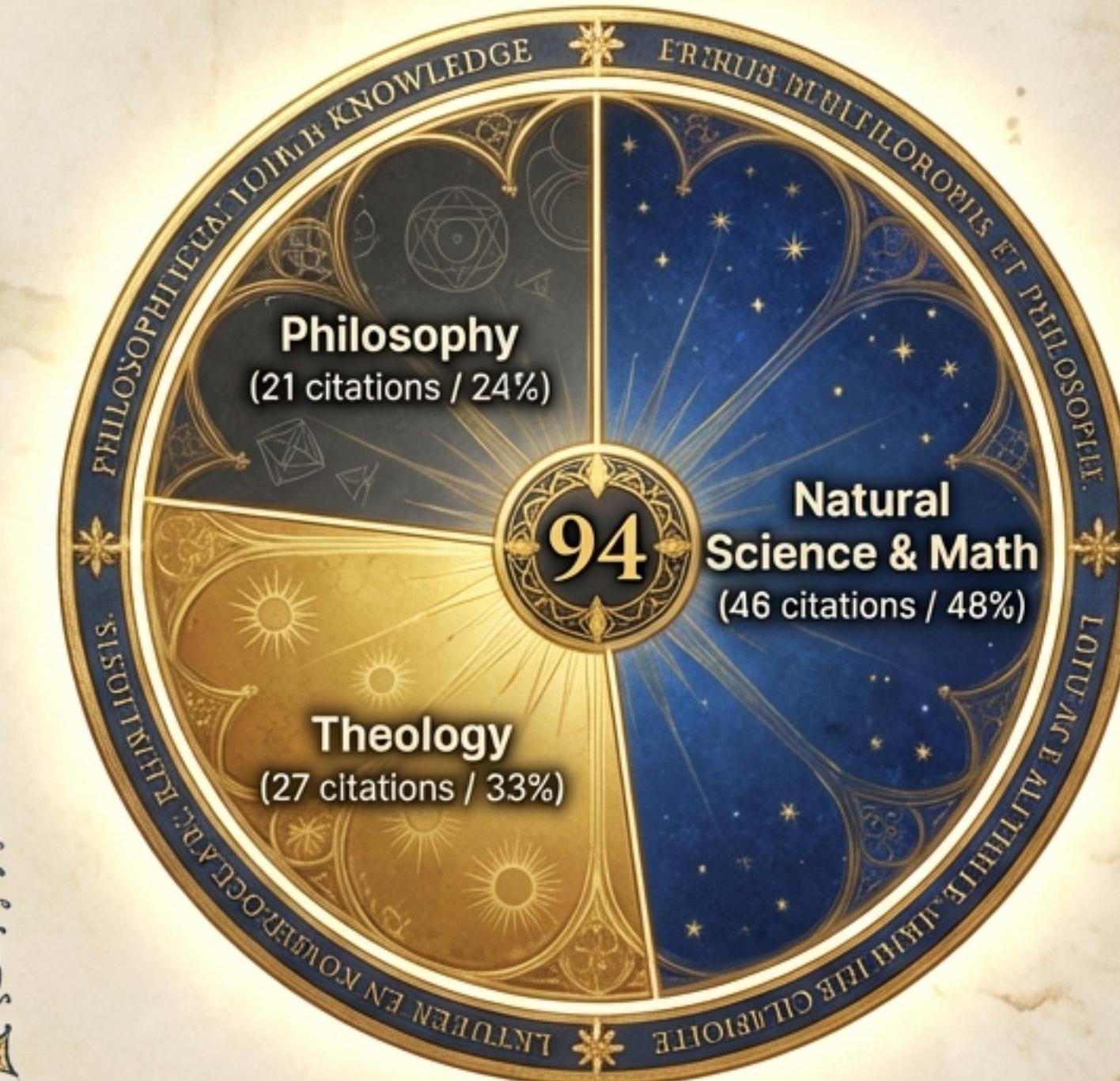
• **The Sage:** Hermes Trismegistus. Mythical 'Father of Philosophers' and authority on alchemy. •

The Inquiry: Why did a pillar of Christian theology cite a pagan occultist 94 times?

An Intellectual Anomaly

Venturing beyond Aristotle into the Occult

Albertus Magnus's stature as an outstanding philosopher of his time is universally acknowledged... yet one aspect sets him apart: his frequent citation of the mythical author Hermes Trismegistus.



Key Insight:
Albert treated
Hermes not
merely as a
magician, but as
the "First
Philosopher"—a
valid authority to
be tested.

The Evolution of an Opinion (1240–1280)

Phase 1: Pre-1250 Negative/Dismissive

Citations in *In I Sent.* view Hermes as a source of idolatry.

Phase 2: c. 1250 (The Watershed)

Albert writes *Physica* and discovers the *Asclepius*.

Phase 3: Post-1250 Nuanced Engagement

Frequent positive citations in *De mineralibus* and *Metaphysica*.



“There is no longer any discernable trend... Albert judged Hermes on a case-by-case basis.” — David Porreca

The Watershed Moment: Discovering the Asclepius

The Shift:

Around 1250, Albert accessed the *Asclepius*. This text provided the philosophical framework to integrate Hermetic thought into Christian cosmology.

Cormorant Garamond on the *Asclepius*. Criticized the framework to integrate Hermetic thought into Christian cosmology.



The Two Hermes

The Philosopher:
Author of *Asclepius*.
Deals with First Cause,
Fate, and the Soul.
(Accepted by Albert)

The Technician:
Author of *Alchimia* and
Tabula Smaragdina.
Deals with metals,
stones, and astrology.
(Tested by Albert)

The Mechanism of Fate (*Heimarmene*)

The Chain of Interlocking Causes

The First Cause (God)



Motion of the Heavens
(Stars/Planets)

Terrestrial Events
(Nature/History)

Albert adopts the definition from *Asclepius*:
Fate is a “chain of interlocking causes” (*implexio causarum*) originating from the stars.

“Ymarmenes is a collection of causes; necessity is their execution... and order is the distribution.” — *De caelo et mundo*

Reconciling Fate and Providence

PROVIDENCE



The “Blueprint” in the mind of the Architect (God). The eternal plan.

FATE



The “Model” constructed from that blueprint in the physical world.
The execution.

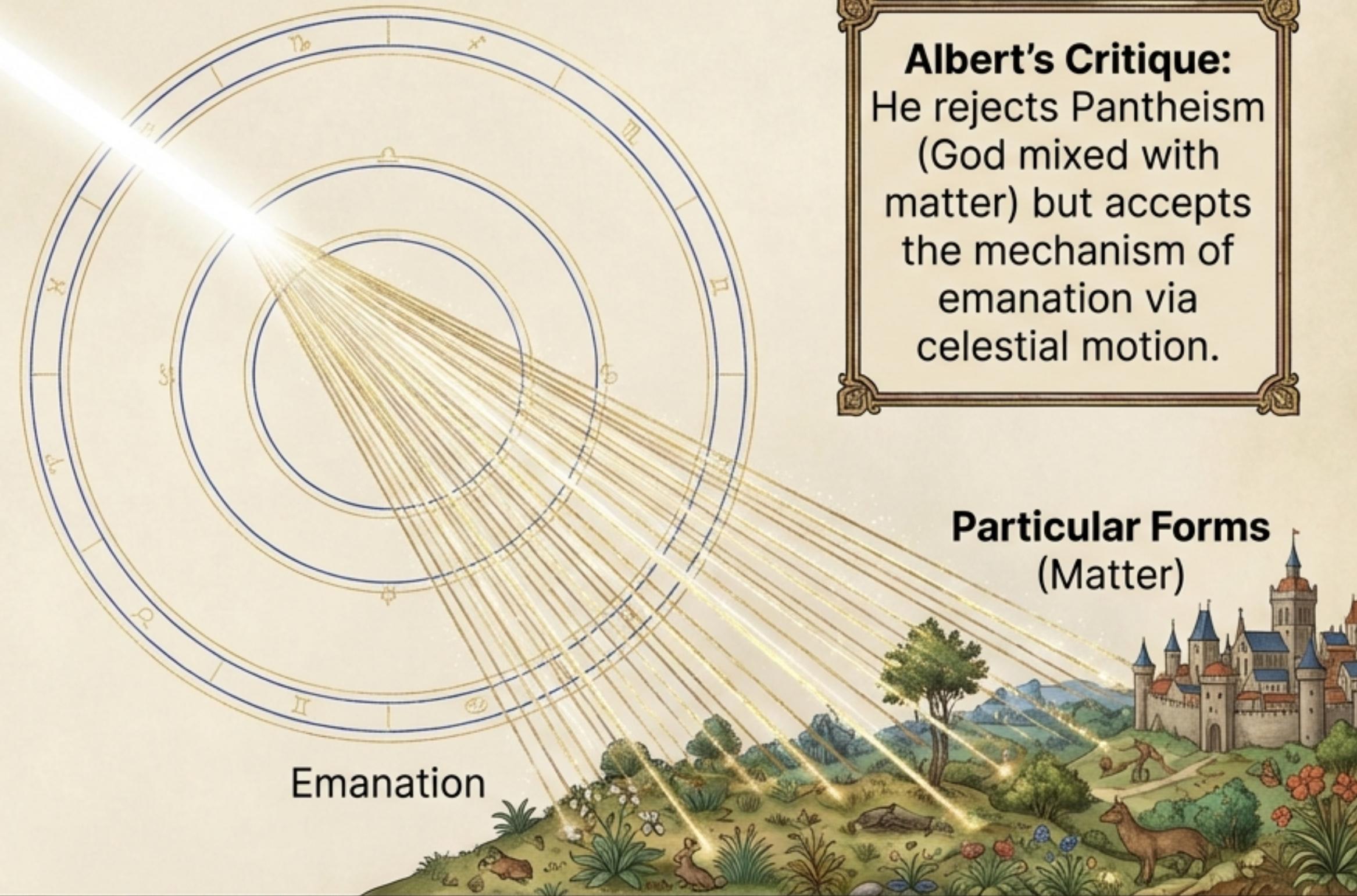
Albert positions Fate as the tool of Divine Providence, validating Hermes by aligning him with Christian order.

“There is nothing inappropriate about this way of describing fate.” — *Summa theologiae*

The Flux of Forms

First Cause

Hermetic View:
An “outpouring” of light and influence from the Creator through the heavens.



Emanation

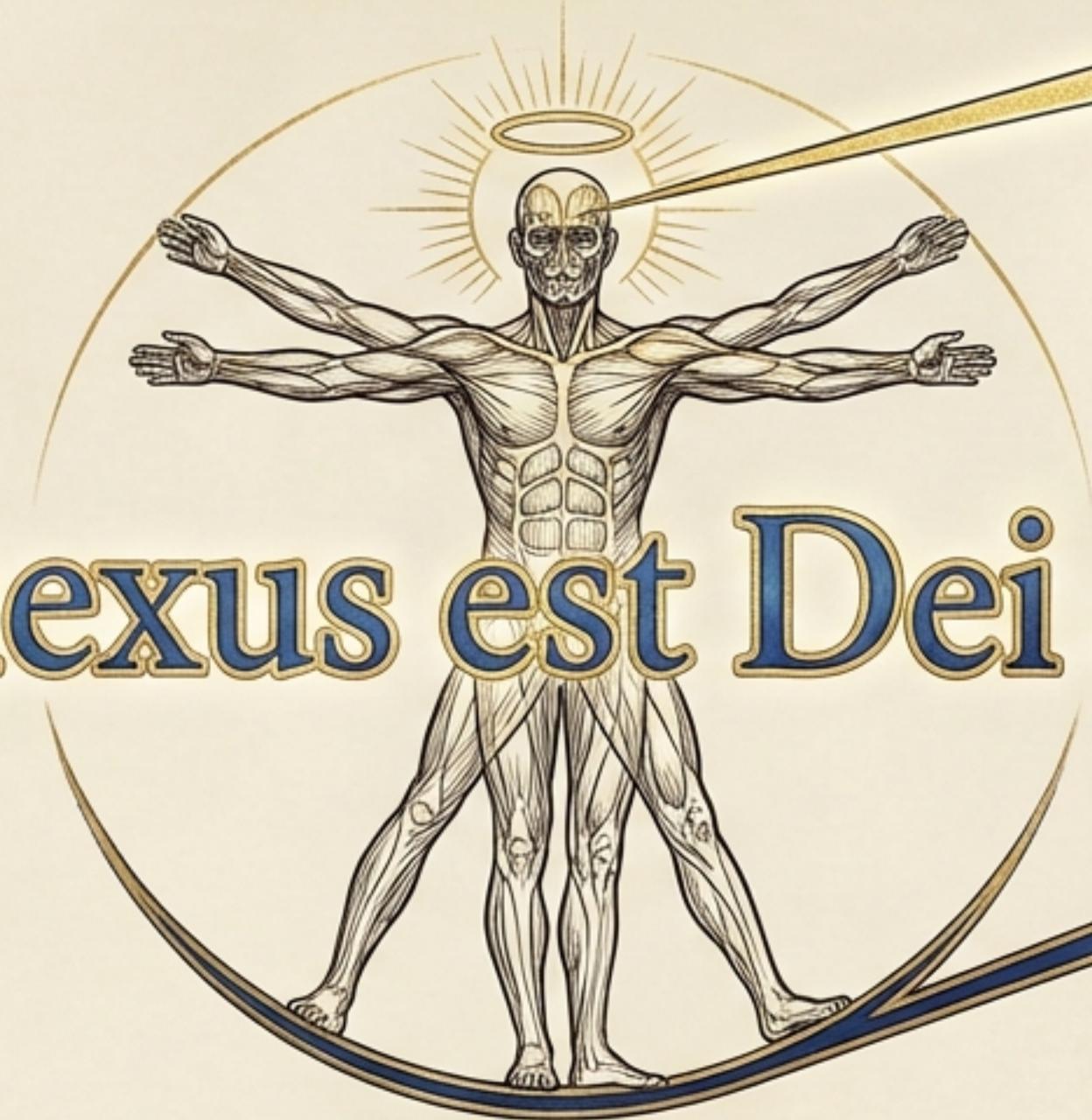
Albert's Critique:
He rejects Pantheism (God mixed with matter) but accepts the mechanism of emanation via celestial motion.

Particular Forms (Matter)

Man as the Nexus

“**Homo nexus est Dei et mundi**”

THE WORLD
(Body)



THE DIVINE
(Intellect)



Because of this dual nature, man is not just a subject of the world but its “Governor.” This justifies the study of natural magic—man is meant to master the material.

Science of Stones and Stars

Applying Hermetic Theory to Geology

The Principle:

Albert cites the *Tabula Smaragdina*: "The virtues of inferior things descend from superior ones."

Geology:

Stones have powers (magnets, gems) not because of demons, but because they channel specific stellar influences. This makes mineralogy a valid *scientia naturalis*.



The Alchemical Validation



The Verdict: Albert accepts the theory of transmutation. He praises the “utmost cleverness of the alchemists” (*summum ingenium alchimicorum*) for understanding how to manipulate elemental virtues.

- **Source:** *Alchimia* (attributed to Hermes).
- **Theory:** Metals are compound substances made of Mercury and Sulphur.
- **Specifics:** Albert cites Hermes on the properties of lead, tin, and gold.

Skepticism: The Case of the Basilisk

Albertus Magnus and the Mythical Creature

The Myth:

Hermes claims a basilisk can be hatched from a cock's egg brooded in dung.

Albert's Reaction:

“I do not believe this to be true.”
(ego non puto esse verum).



Analysis Text:

Albert acknowledges the authority (“the saying is of Hermes”) but rejects the biological fact based on observation. He reinterprets the “basilisk in glass” as a metaphor for an alchemical elixir.

The Theological Boundary



REASON
(Philosophy)

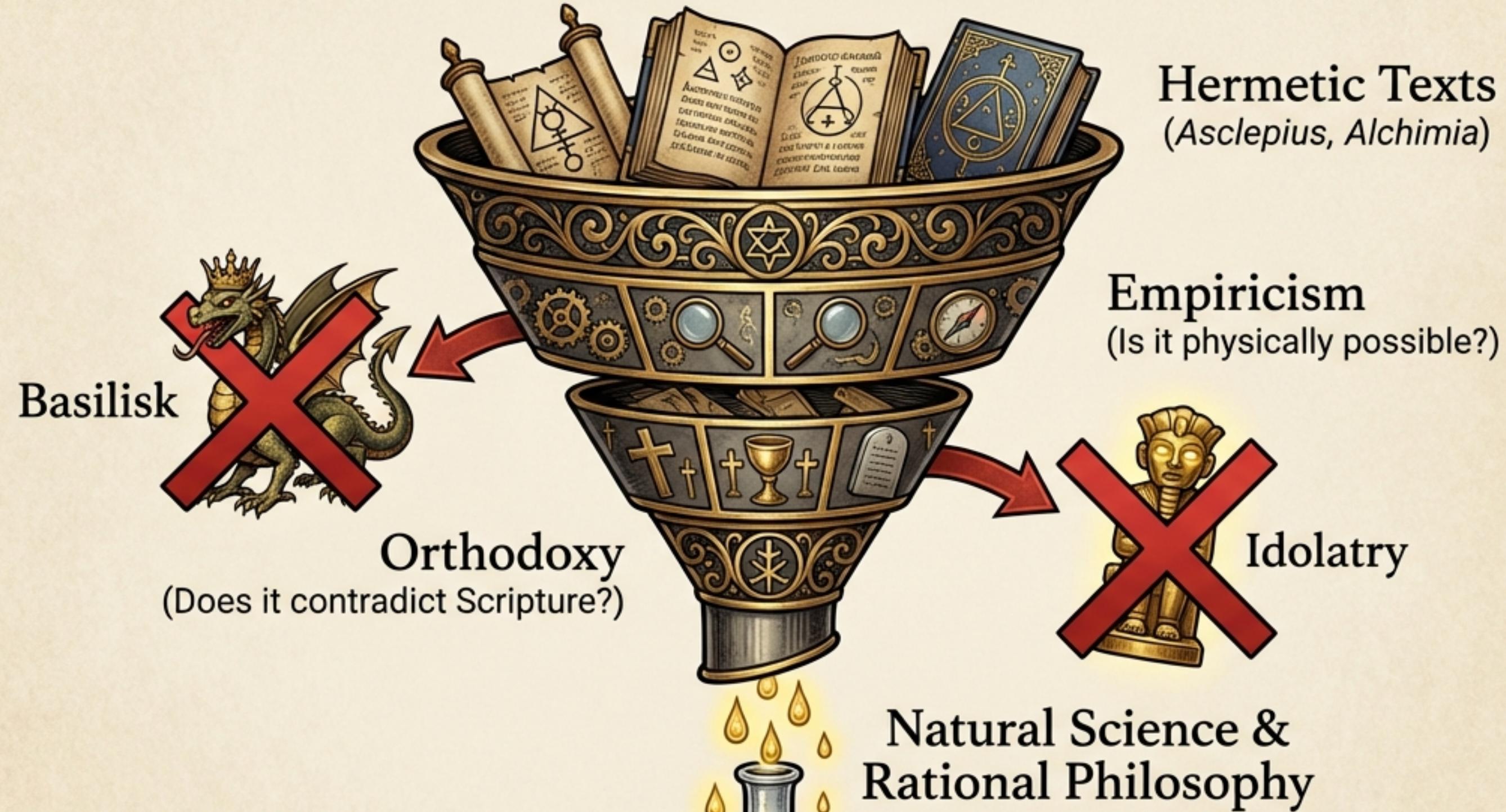


REVELATION
(Theology)

The Question: Did Hermes know the Trinity? (*Prisca Theologia*)

Albert's Answer: **NO.** He rejects the *Liber XXIV philosophorum* as a forgery. Hermes knew God only through Reason (Nature), not Scripture. Therefore, he is a philosopher, not a prophet.

The Albertine Filter



Albert had no
“Grand Theory.” He filtered

“Grand Theory.”
every claim case-by-case.

A Model of Critical Acceptance



1. No Grand Theory

Albert judged every claim on its own merit, without prejudice.



2. The Balance

He walked the tightrope between Orthodoxy (rejecting magic) and Curiosity (accepting fate/alchemy).



3. The Result

He legitimized the study of nature's 'occult' forces, paving the way for the scientific investigations of the High Middle Ages.

The Legacy



Albertus Magnus demonstrated that truth is universal. By sifting the “gold” of natural philosophy from the “sand” of pagan superstition, he proved that a Saint could learn from a Sorcerer.

He accepted the “First Philosopher” not as a god, but as a guide to the hidden powers of the natural world.