

## **Ἱερός Λόγος: An Esoteric Mythos**

### **A Translation Of And A Commentary On The Third Tractate Of The Corpus Hermeticum**

#### **A Pagan And Esoteric Mythos**

While the title - Ἱερός Λόγος - of the third tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum is generally translated as either "A Sacred Discourse" or "A Holy Sermon", it would perhaps be more accurate to translate as *An Esoteric Mythos* given (i) that it describes a numinous theogony of the kind recounted to initiates of the mystery traditions of ancient Greece, and thus recounts a mythos that pre-dates the Biblical story of Genesis, as given in the Septuagint (LXX), by centuries, and (ii) that Ἱερός λόγος/Ἱεροί λόγοι (an esoteric mythos/esoteric mythoi) were phrases often used to describe such mystery traditions, both Greek and Greco-Egyptian, as, for example, by Herodotus {1}.

For it is possible that the often-stated belief of the tractate being influenced by the story recounted in LXX is incorrect, and that whatever similarities there are between the text of the tractate and Greek text of the Biblical story of Genesis might be due either to the scribe of what was a previously esoteric aural tradition being familiar with LXX or some parts of it and borrowing a particular word or words to try and express an aspect of that pagan tradition (an opinion held by the Christian Byzantine historian Mikhael Psellus, d. 1078 CE), or to the Biblical story of creation itself being influenced by a more ancient Greek mythos or mythoi, just as it was influenced by similar, more ancient, mythoi from Sumeria and elsewhere. In addition, the overt polytheism of the tractate, and Greek concepts such as φύσις (physis) and Πνεῦμα (pneuma) {2}, are at odds with such influence and with that Biblical story.

Furthermore, far from it being (again, as has often been previously believed) a very corrupt, or overwritten text, the Ἱερός Λόγος most probably reasonably represents, like the Pymander tractate, a pagan metaphysical weltanschauung germane to the period of its composition and one which is based upon or recounts an earlier, and most probably aural, tradition. Furthermore, as Wildberg has suggested, the text might simply incorporate some marginalia {3}.

Such an esoteric mythos, as recorded in the *Ἱερός Λόγος* hermetic tractate, had - like the Biblical Genesis story - antecedents. Such as

οἱ Γῆς ἐξεγένοντο καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος

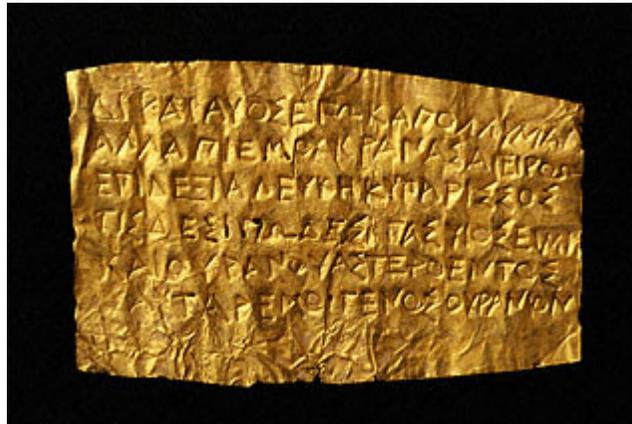
those who came-into-being from Gaia and the starry heavens {4}

from the theogony of Hesiod (106) - written c. 700 BCE - of which there is a remarkably similar expression in funerary inscriptions, from some four centuries later (c. 300 BCE) in Pharsalos, Thessalyon,

Γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστ<ερόεντος>

I am a child of Gaia and the starry heavens

and on a gold funerary tablet (c. 200 BCE) found at Eleutherna, Crete,



ΓΑΣ ΥΙΟΣ ΕΙΜΙ ΚΑΙ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΥ ΑΣΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΟΣ

Γᾶς υἱός ἤμι καὶ Ὀρανώ ἀστερόεντος {5}

and also in a, purportedly Orphic, religious text (the Derveni papyrus) dating from c. 330 BCE {6} which contains the Hesiodian phrase οἱ Διὸς ἐξεγένοντο [those who came-into-being from Zeus]. Thus, it is part of this ancient esoteric mythos, and/or its antecedents, that may well be echoed in LXX (Genesis, 1:1), written centuries later:

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν

In the beginning, Theos produced the heavens and the Earth {7}

and which Biblical text is, interestingly, given by Aquila - qv. the Hexapla {8} - as:

Ἐν κεφαλαίῳ ἔκτισεν ὁ Θεὸς σὺν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ σὺν τὴν γῆν

As foundation, Theos formed the heavens and the Earth {9}

It is thus my view that the third tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum is a valuable hermetic document, presenting as it does - probably after centuries of aural transmission as befitted ἱεροὶ λόγοι - an esoteric weltanschauung that pre-dates, and thus is independent of, not only Christianity but also of the myths, stories, and theology, manifest in the Old Testament.

Understood thus, the Ἱερός Λόγος tractate is the story of genesis according to an ancient pagan, and esoteric, weltanschauung; a text in all probability older than the other texts in the Corpus Hermeticum; and a text which the author of the *Poemandres* tractate might well have been familiar with, as a reading of both texts indicates.

### **Commentary, Translation, and Text**

The references in the commentary here to the *Poemandres* tractate are to my translation of and commentary on that text {10} for I have retained the transliterations, and some of the English phrases, used and explained there, such as physis, phaos, theos. I have also, as there, occasionally used some particular, or some quite obscure English words - or forms of them - in order to try and elucidate the meaning of the text or to avoid using, in what is a metaphysical text, some commonplace term with various connotations (contemporary or otherwise) that may lead to a

misunderstanding of the text. I have endeavoured to explain such obscure words in the commentary. There is thus in this translation, as in my translation of *Pœmandres*, a certain technical - or rather, esoteric - vocabulary.

Purely for readability, I have arranged the translation into (non-poetic) verses rather than long paragraphs. All translations in the commentary and notes are mine.

The Greek text used is that of A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, *Corpus Hermeticum*, Collection Budé, 1946. In the translation, angled brackets < > indicate conjectural readings.

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#### Notes

{1} (a) ἔστι λόγος περὶ αὐτοῦ ἱρὸς λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 48, s3. (b) ἔστι ἱρὸς περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγος λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 62, s2. (c) ἔστι δὲ περὶ αὐτῶν ἱρὸς λόγος λεγόμενος. Book II, Chapter 81, s2.

{2} In ἱεροὶ λόγοι and in many hermetic texts, φύσις suggests something more than what the terms 'nature' or 'character' - of a thing or person - denote. That is - qv. the Pœmandres tractate (see footnote 8) - it suggests to "know what is real" and to apprehend the physis of those real things - νοῆσαι τὴν τοῦ των φύσιν; to thus have an understanding of ontology. For physis is a revealing, a manifestation, of not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being.

In respect of pneuma, qv. DeWitt Burton: *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918)

{3} Christian Wildberg: *The Genesis of a Genesis: Corpus Hermeticum, Tractate III*, in Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz: *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (pp.139-166). *Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum*, 155. Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2013. ISBN 9783161519932.

{4} Pedantically, a more accurate translation of ἀστερόεντος would be stelliferous - hence the 'stelliferous heavens' - but 'starry heavens' is far more poetic.

{5} Interestingly, some similar inscriptions - such as another one from Eleutherna - are gender neutral and simply say ΓΥΑΤΗΡΚΑΙΩΠΑΝΩΑΣΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΟΣ. That is, 'of Gaia and the starry heavens'.

{6} Bernabé, Alberto, and Francesc Casadesús. *Orfeo y la tradición órfica: Un reencuentro*. Madrid: Akal. 2008.

{7} Although I give here, for Ἐν ἀρχῇ, the conventional 'In the beginning', I am inclined to prefer 'In primacy' (the first thing/principle/origin of; cf. Anaximander, where there is also mention of the heavens and 'the world' or cosmos: πρῶτος τοῦτο τοῦνομα κομίσας τῆς ἀρχῆς λέγει δ' αὐτὴν μήτε ὕδωρ μήτε ἄλλο τι τῶν καλουμένων εἶναι στοιχείων ἀλλ' ἑτέραν τινὰ φύσιν ἄπειρον ἐξ ἧς ἅπαντας γίνεσθαι τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς κόσμους. Simplicius, *Physics*, 24:13-21).

An alternative, suggested by the Greek text of Aquila of Genesis 1:1, would be "As foundation, Theos produced..." Furthermore, instead of the 'creavit' of the Latin Vulgate, the older Vetus Latina has 'In principio *fecit* deus caelum et terram.'

{8} Frederick Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quæ Supersunt*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1875.

{9} Literally, "In foundation, Theos built/produced..."

The Latin of Jermone - who, according to certain sources, was acquainted with the text of Aquila - is *in principio creavit Deus caelum et terram*.

{10} David Myatt, *Poemandres, A Translation and Commentary*. 2014. ISBN 9781495470684. A large print edition is also available entitled *Mercvrii Trismegisti Pymander: A Translation and Commentary*. 2013. ISBN 9781491249543.

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## Translation

[1] The numen of all beings is theos: numinal, and of numinal physis.  
The origin of what exists is theos, who is Perceivation and Physis and Substance:  
The sapientia which is a revealing of all beings.  
For the numinal is the origin: physis, vigour, incumbency, accomplishment, renewance.

In the Abyss, an unmeasurable darkness, and, by the influence of the numen,  
Water and delicate apprehending Pnuema, there, in Kaos.  
Then, a numinous phaos arose and, from beneath the sandy ground,  
Parsements coagulated from fluidic essence.  
And all of the deities <particularize> seedful physis.

[2] With all beings unformed and not yet presenced,  
What was lightsome was separated out, upward  
And what was burdensome set in fluidic ground  
With all defined through Fire, then elevated - and conveyed - by Pnuema.  
Thus the heavens became perceivable in seven spheres,  
Deities represented in the arrangements of the stars,  
With the outer revolving in the æther, and circulating by the Pnuema of theos.

[3] Through their distinguishing influence, each deity did what was assigned to them  
So that there came-into-being beasts four-footed and slithering  
And those dwelling in water and those that fly,  
And harvestable seeds and pastures and all kinds of verdant flowers,  
<Seeding within> the semination of rebirth.  
Thus can the offspring of mortals apprehend the works of theos, a living witness of physis,

So that the multitude of mortals can husband all that is below the heavens,  
Appreciate honour, and propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning.

Thus, every psyche - embodied in flesh - can  
By the mirificence of the circumferent deities coursing the heavens  
Apprehend the heavens, and honour, and physis presenced, and the works of theos;  
Can understand divine influence as wyrdful change  
And thus, regarding what is good and what is bad, discover all the arts of honour.

[4] For this is the commencement of their living, of such learning  
As is - by circumferent deities coursing - wyrdful, and the discoagulation of it,  
For the great earthly artialized memorials they have left  
Will, with the passing of the seasons, fade  
Just as, for the generations of psyche-bearing flesh and fruitful seeds and artiselements,  
There will be renewance through incumbency, renewance through the divine  
And by the circumferent coursing of Physis.

The divine is all of that mision: renewance of the cosmic order through Physis  
For Physis is presenced in the divine.

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## Commentary

### 1.

*The numen of all beings is theos. Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς.* The sense of δόξα here, especially given the following mention of θεῖος and φύσις, is of immanence and of transcendent sublimity, encompassing both (i) the interpretation given to the word in LXX and the New Testament, of a divine glory (qv. Exodus 16:10, Matthew 25:31, and Luke 2:9) and thus of what is considered to be - that is, is outwardly manifest as - glorious, or splendid, as in Matthew 4:8, a sense well-expressed in the Latin of Jerome: iterum adsumit eum diabolus in montem excelsum valde et ostendit ei omnia regna mundi et gloriam eorum, and (ii) the classical, more personal sense, of honour, and reputation or repute, the latter as for example referenced by Boethius: Unde non iniuria tragicus exclamat: ὦ δόξα, δόξα, μυρίοισι δὴ βροτῶν οὐδὲν γεγῶσι βίσιον ὄγκωσας μέγαν (Book III, vi).

Hence I have opted for 'numen', rather than the usual 'splendour' or 'glory' which do not, in my view given their modern connotations and common usage, express the sense of the Greek; with the meaning of 'numen' here being expressed by what follows: "numinal and of numinal physis", where by numinal - in this ἱερός λόγος - is meant divine not in the specific sense of a monotheistic and Biblical (a masculine) God but in the more general sense of pertaining to a deity or deities, male or female, as in a paganus (and not necessarily patriarchal) polytheism.

In this paganus context, the numinous is therefore what is, or what manifests (presences) or can manifest or remind us of (what can reveal) what is regarded or understood as sacred, numinal, sublime, awe-inspiring, beautiful, noble, esoteric, beyond the mundane, and beyond our ability, as mortals, to control. Thus, in terms of ἱεροί λόγοι in general, the numen reminds us of 'the natural order of things' (the physis of theos, of theoi, of Nature and of the heavens), reminds us of our own physis, and thus of our duties and responsibilities as mortals (especially in relation to deities)

and thence the need to avoid hubris.

In respect of hubris, Hesiod, in Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι [Works and Days], vv 213-218, wrote:

σὺ δ' ἄκουε δίκης, μηδ' ὕβριν ὄφελλε:  
ὕβρις γάρ τε κακὴ δειλῶ βροτῶ: οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλὸς  
215 ῥηιδίως φερέμεν δύναται, βαρύθει δέ θ' ὑπ' αὐτῆς  
ἐγκύρσας ἄτησιν: ὁδὸς δ' ἐτέρηφι παρελθεῖν  
κρείσσων ἐς τὰ δίκαια: Δίκη δ' ὑπὲρ ὕβριος ἴσχει  
ἐς τέλος ἐξελθοῦσα: παθῶν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω

You should listen to [the goddess] Fairness and not oblige Hubris  
Since Hubris harms unfortunate mortals while even the more fortunate  
Are not equal to carrying that heavy a burden, meeting as they do with Mischief.  
The best path to take is the opposite one: that of honour  
For, in the end, Fairness is above Hubris  
Which is something the young come to learn from adversity.

Notes:

- a. δίκη. The goddess of Fairness/Justice/Judgement, and – importantly – of Tradition (Ancestral Custom). In Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι, as in Θεογονία (Theogony), Hesiod is recounting and explaining part of that tradition, one important aspect of which tradition is understanding the relation between the gods and mortals. Given both the antiquity of the text and the context, ‘Fairness’ – as the name of the goddess – is, in my view, more appropriate than the now common appellation ‘Justice’, considering the modern (oft times impersonal) connotations of the word ‘justice’.
- b. Mischief. The sense of ἄτησιν here is not of ‘delusion’ nor of ‘calamities’, per se, but rather of encountering that which or those whom (such as the goddess of mischief, Ἄτη) can bring mischief or misfortune into the ‘fortunate life’ of a ‘fortunate mortal’, and which encounters are, according to classical tradition, considered as having been instigated by the gods. Hence, of course, why Sophocles [Antigone, 1337-8] wrote ὡς πεπρωμένης οὐκ ἔστι θνητοῖς συμφορᾶς ἀπαλλαγὴ (mortals cannot be delivered from the misfortunes of their fate).
- c. δίκαιος. Honour expresses the sense that is meant: of being fair; capable of doing the decent thing; of dutifully observing ancestral customs. A reasonable alternative for ‘honour’ would thus be ‘decency’, both preferable to words such as ‘just’ and ‘justice’ which are not only too impersonal but have too many inappropriate modern connotations.
- d. νήπιος. Literal – ‘young’, ‘uncultured’ (i.e. un-schooled, un-educated in the ways of ancestral custom) – rather than metaphorical

('foolish', ignorant).

*Theos.* θεός. As with the Pœmandres tractate, I have opted for a transliteration, for the Biblical 'God' is not what is meant here, given the title of the tractate and the content, while the word 'god' (singular, lower case) now has certain connotations (some of which are theological) not always relevant to ancient Greek deities. In terms of theos, what is most probably meant here - cf. Hesiod's Theogony - is the, or a, prime, first, or primordial deity (such as Οὐρανός) from whence came-into-being the other Greek deities, including Zeus (cf. the use of πρῶτον by Plato in *Timeas*, 69b).

Thus, in respect of this tractate, I translate θεοὶ not as 'gods' but as 'deities' in the hope of providing a more balanced view of this particular ancient pagan text.

*Physis.* As in my translation of Pœmandres tractate I have given a transliteration to suggest, as I wrote there, "something more than what 'nature' or 'character' - of a thing or person - denotes. That is, to know what is real and apprehend the physis of those real things - νοῆσαι τὴν τοῦ τῶν φύσιν; to discern the physis, the true nature, of beings. That is, to have an understanding of ontology; for physis is a revealing, a manifestation, of not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being".

Occasionally I have capitalized physis, when the context merits it, such as when the physis of what we term Nature is meant or implied; or when - as here at the beginning - it is an attribute of theos.

τῶν ὄντων. What is real/what exists (Reality/Existence) - qv. the beginning of the Pœmandres tractate, and my commentary thereon.

νοῦς. *Perceiveration*, not 'mind', qv. Pœmandres 2.

*substance.* ὕλη, the *materia* of 'things' and living beings - contrasted with οὐσία, essence. qv. Pœmandres 10.

*sapientia.* σοφία. qv. Pœmandres 29.

*vigour*. ἐνέργεια. In the sense of vitality and vigorous activity. See my note on ἡ εἰμαρμένη, Pœmandres 15.

*incumbency*. Often personified as Ἀνάγκης, the primordial goddess of incumbency; that is, of wyrd: of that which is beyond, and the origin of, what we often describe as our Fate as a mortal being. To render ἀνάγκη here somewhat blandly as 'necessity' is to miss both the subtle esotericism of an ἱερός λόγος and what Empedocles wrote:

ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν,  
αἶδιον, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὄρκοις·  
εὐτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόνωι φίλα γυῖα μίηνη,  
νεΐκει θ' ὅς κε ἐπίορκον ἀμαρτήσας ἐπομόσση,  
δαίμονες οἴτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο,  
τρὶς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,  
φυομένους παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἶδεα θνητῶν  
ἀργαλέας βίοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.  
αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,  
πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὐδας ἀπέπτυσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγὰς  
ἡελίου φάεθοντος, ὃ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·  
ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.  
τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἶμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,  
Νεΐκει μαινομένωι πίσυρος.

There exists an insight by Ananke, an ancient resolution  
Of the gods, immutable and sealed by vows,  
Regarding when one of the daimons - those whose allotted portion of life is long -  
Has their own hands stained from murder  
Or who, once having sworn an oath, because of some feud breaks that oath.  
For they shall for ten thousand tripled seasons wander away from the beautified,  
Begotten during that period in all manner of mortal form  
And exchanging during that voyage one vexation for another:

The fierce Ætherials chase them to the Sea,  
The Sea spits them out onto dusty ground,

Gaia hurls them to the burning light of the Sun  
Who flings them back to those swirling Ætherials.  
Moved from one to the other, all detest them.

I am one of those, a vagabond in exile from the gods  
Who has to rely on strongful Disagreement.

*Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, Diels-Kranz, B115*

Notes:

νεῖκος (disagreement) is - according to what we can adduce of the philosophy of Empedocles from the fragments of his writings that we possess - a fundamental principle, and one understood in relation to another fundamental principle, Φιλότης, expressive as they both are of the logos (λόγος) by which we can possibly apprehend the workings of the cosmic order (κόσμος). However, the common translations - of 'strife' and 'love' respectively - do not in my view express what Empedocles seems to be trying to convey, which is 'disagreement' and 'fellowship' (a communal or kindred working-together in pursuit of a common interest or goal). For while disagreement sometimes disrupts fellowship, it is often necessary as the genesis of productive change.

Thus, just as Odysseus had to rely on the support of Athena, who disagreed with how Poseidon treated Odysseus, so does the 'vagabond in exile from the deities/the gods' have to rely on disagreements among the immortals to end their own exile.

*Abyss.* ἄβυσσος.

*A delicate apprehending pneuma.* πνεῦμα λεπτὸν νοερόν. In respect of νοερός, the sense here is not 'intelligent'/'intelligence' - as in "quickness or superiority of understanding, sagacity", etcetera - but rather of self-awareness; that is, of possessing a faculty to perceive, comprehend, and to rationally understand the external world. Which is why I have opted for 'apprehending'.

*influence.* δύναμις. Not here 'force' or 'power' per se but rather the influence arising from, inherent in, the numen by virtue of the numinosity of theos. The kind of influence which can nurture a 'delicate apprehending pneuma'.

*Kaos.* χάος.

*numinous phaos.* φῶς ἅγιον. Regarding the transliteration of φῶς - using the Homeric φάος (phaos) - see my commentary on Pœmandres 4; and regarding ἅγιος as 'numinous', rather than the conventional 'holy' or 'sacred', refer to the commentary on Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς above, and especially the note on the duality of the numinous in pagan weltanschauungen in my commentary on Pœmandres 5.

*beneath (that) sandy ground.* ὑφ' ἄμμω. Regarding ἄμμος, qv. Xenophon, *Apomnemonemata* 3.3.6 - πότερον ἐπάγειν τοὺς πολεμίους ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον κελεύσεις - for the reference, in context, seems to be to sandy ground or to sea marshes or, and perhaps more metaphorically, to waterlogged (boggy, unsuitable) land in general, and not necessarily (as some have theorized) to the sandy places and sand dunes in North Africa (such as in Egypt and Libya) as mentioned in Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 3.50.2, τὴν δὲ χροῶν ἄμμω παραπλησίαν ἔχουσι.

It is possible that ἄμμος, in regard to the ἱερός λόγος recounted in this tractate, had some esoteric or metaphysical meaning, now lost.

*flowing* (as in fluidic). The sense of ὑγρός here and in Pœmandres 4.

*essence.* οὐσίας. qv. Pœmandres 14.

*parsements.* For στοιχεῖον. qv. Pœmandres 8.

*Coagulated.* πήγνυμι.

<particularize>. As in 'distinguish between'. The MSS have καταδιερῶσι. Various emendations have been proposed, including καταδιωρῶσι, while Wildberg has suggested that "and all of the deities..." - καὶ θεοὶ πάντες καταδιωρῶσι - was originally marginalia.

2.

*With all beings unformed and not yet presenced.* ἀδιορίστων δὲ ὄντων ἀπάντων καὶ ἀκατασκευάστων. An interesting phrase, with the English term 'presenced' perhaps expressing at least something of its philosophical implications derived as that term is from the noun 'presencing' (dating from c.1637) and meaning as it does "the action or process

of making some-thing manifest and/or present and/or established." For, as the tractate goes to explain, what becomes formed and manifest are 'the seven-fold heavens' and deities, manifest as stars, within them.

In respect of ἀκατασκευάστων, while some commentators have pointed to Genesis 1:2 - ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος, 'and the Earth was unperceived and formless' - as a parallel, σκευαστῶν occurs in Aristotle's Metaphysics (5.1013b) in reference to the classification of differences in causation, such as whether or not something is 'manufactured', as in produced by an artisan (such as a statue, ἀνδριάς) or by some other means, and, regardless, πάντα ὄθεν ἢ ἀρχὴ τῆς μεταβολῆς ἢ στάσεως. Interestingly, in his commentary on the Metaphysics, Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Apposuit autem cum insit, ad differentiam privationis et contrarii: nam statua quidem fit ex aere, quod inest statuae iam factae; fit etiam ex infigurato, quod quidem non inest statuae iam factae. Unde aes est causa statuae, non autem infiguratum, cum sit principium per accidens tantum" (Commentaria, *In libros Physicorum*, 2, Lectio 5).

Thus, there is initially a 'privation of form', unformed being, which is then formed - as a statue from unshaped bronze - by theos as artisan-creator, and thus a possible metaphysical parallel in Pœmandres, such as in 31: πατήρ τῶν ὄλων... οὗ ἡ βουλή τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων...ὁ λόγῳ συστησάμενος τὰ ὄντα [father of all beings...whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts...you who by logos form all being]. It is also interesting to compare all this with Plato's description in the Timaeus, 69b-c, in which his expression καὶ τῶν μὲν θείων αὐτὸς γίγνεται δημιουργός is noteworthy.

*lightsome/burdensome*. Used in preference to the less descriptive, ubiquitous, 'light' and 'heavy'. The whole passage is somewhat obscure, but if ἀποδιωρίσθη τὰ ἐλαφρὰ εἰς ὕψος was a metaphorical 'separating out' of what is 'light' from what is not light - rather than what is 'light' being somehow sent upwards, 'to the heights', or 'separated off upwards' - and, in particular, if ἀνακρεμασθέντων πνεύματι ὀχεῖσθαι was understood as referring to what - having been defined by, wrought in form through Fire, as bronze and iron are formed and shaped through fire - becomes elevated and conveyed by Pneuma, then philosophically it makes sense, especially given the Greek concept of the psyche (the immortal essence, or 'spirit') of sentient beings being conveyed through life and beyond (and presenced) by (or as) Pnuema, or by our mortal body (as mentioned by Plato).

*seven spheres*. qv. Pœmandres 9, 17, etcetera.

*the outer revolving in the æther.* The text is rather obscure, and one assumes 'the outer' refers to the outermost, the peripheral, sphere. Furthermore, I have here translated ἀήρ not as 'air' but as æther since ordinary, terrestrial, air is most certainly not what is meant and the ambiguous term æther (understood classically or otherwise) is suggestive of what may be meant. For whether ἀήρ here - as æther - refers to the fifth element as mentioned by Plato in *Epinomis* (981c) - πέντε οὖν ὄντων τῶν σωμάτων, πῦρ χρὴ φάναι καὶ ὕδωρ εἶναι καὶ τρίτον ἀέρα, τέταρτον δὲ γῆν, πέμπτον δὲ αἰθέρα - or whether it refers to a more mystical or esoteric, or hypothesized, substance that formed part of ἱεροὶ λόγοι, is an interesting question.

3.

*So that there came-into-being beasts four-footed.* cf. Poemandres 11.

*<Seeding within them> the semination of rebirth.* τὸ σπέρμα τῆς παλιγγενεσίας ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐσπερολόγου. Although the text is obscure and has been variously emended by Reitzenstein, Nock, et al, the presumption is that this rebirth - or, alternatively, and more probably, this 'regeneration through offspring' - refers either to the deities themselves or (more probably) to the previously described living things which the deities brought-into-being.

My view is that what seems to be suggested by the text is that the deities seeded within living beings (human, animal, and otherwise) the ability to regenerate through offspring.

*Thus can the offspring of mortals apprehend the works of theos.* There is an interesting parallel here with some Quranic ayat, such as:

"The creations in Heaven and Earth, the very change of Night to Day, are Signs [from Allah] for those gifted with understanding, those who whether sitting, standing or reclining on their sides, give praise to Allah and who frequently recall those creations in Heaven and Earth." 3:189-191 Interpretation of Meaning

*mortals should husband all that is below the heavens.* I take the sense of δεσποτεία here - given what precedes and what follows - to suggest husbandry (of Earth) rather than to mean power in the sense of mastery (as in over a slave).

*appreciate honour.* Given the context - mortals, theos, deities, physis - I take the meaning of ἀγαθός here to refer to what is personal, not to some abstract concept of 'good'. Hence the personal virtue of honour; to behaving, to living, in a noble, a valourous, way, as opposed to being dishonourable or cowardly; a contrast mentioned in the Iliad, Book 17, 631-2: τῶν μὲν γὰρ πάντων βέλε' ἄπτεται ὅς τις ἀφήη ἢ κακὸς ἢ ἀγαθός [whether hurled by someone honourable or dishonourable, all of the missiles still strike their target].

The personal sense of ἀγαθός here also has the virtue of making what follows, at the end of section 3 - γνῶναι ἀγαθῶν καὶ φαύλων καὶ πᾶσαν ἀγαθῶν δαιδαλουργίαν εὐρεῖν - somewhat more understandable. Hence, a discovery or a learning of "all the arts of honour" in contrast to discovering "every artful workmanship of good things".

*propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning.* γν. Pœmandres 18.

*a living witness of physis.* The sense of ἐνεργοῦσαν here is poetically metaphysical, not literal. Hence a "living witness of physis" rather than an 'active' or 'working' one. An alternative would be 'presenced', suggested by Aristotle's Metaphysics: ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ τῆς κατὰ κίνησιν λεγομένης δυνάμεως εἴρηται περὶ ἐνεργείας διορίσωμεν τί τέ ἐστιν ἢ ἐνέργεια καὶ ποῖόν τι... ἔστι δὴ ἐνέργεια τὸ ὑπάρχειν τὸ πρᾶγμα μὴ οὕτως ὥσπερ λέγομεν δυνάμει. (1048a)

*with every psyche, embodied in flesh.* The text following this is (to the end of the tractate) is often so obscure (or corrupted) that any interpretation is tentative. Wildberg's suggestion that διὰ δρομήματος θεῶν ἐγκυκλίων τερασπορίας...καὶ φύσεως ἐνεργείας is marginalia, while interesting, does little to alleviate the obscurity of this part of the text.

*mirificence.* This rather neglected English word - from the post-classical Latin word mirificentia: the action or the fact of doing what is or appears to be wondrous, portentous - in my view expresses the meaning implicit in διὰ δρομήματος θεῶν ἐγκυκλίων τερασπορίας εἰς κατοπτείαν οὐρανοῦ somewhat better than such turns of phrase as "the wonder-working course of..," or "by portent-sowings of the course of..."

*presenced.* γν. the previous note on ἐνεργοῦσαν.

*understand divine influence as wyrdful change.* γνῶσιν θείας δυνάμεως μοίρης ὀχλουμένης. This exceptionally obscure Greek phrase has been interpreted in a variety of ways, with my interpretation just one among many. 'Wyrd' rather than 'fate', given how the term 'fate' has acquired contemporary meanings not relevant here.

*all the arts of honour.* Less poetically, more literally, "the skills of all the honourable arts".

4.

*As is - by circumferent deities coursing - wyrdful.* This is open to three different interpretations, as perhaps was intended. First, that it is the deities themselves who determine the wyrd of mortals. Second, that a person's wyrd can be discovered - learned, possibly predicted - by astrological means; that is, by understanding the movement of the planets and the stars associated with the deities since the "deities are represented in the arrangements of the stars". Third, given the septenary nature of the deities - for "the heavens are perceivable in seven spheres" - one's wyrd can be discovered by an esoteric and septenary anados as described in the Pœmandres tractate.

*artialized.* From verb artize - γν. 'artisements' below - and meaning here produced or constructed by an artisan or skilled craftsman.

*which the passing of the seasons will fade.* Not χρόνος as some abstract 'time' measured by some human manufactured mechanism such as a clock (a relatively recent concept, in terms of aeonic ἱεροί λόγοι), but rather measured by the passing of the seasons, as determined - for example - by the appearance and the disappearance in the night sky of certain constellations and stars:

θεοὺς μὲν αἰτῶ τῶνδ' ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων  
φρουρᾶς ἐτείας μῆκος, ἦν κοιμώμενος  
στεγαις Ἀτρείδων ἄγκαθεν, κυνὸς δίκην,  
ἄστρον κάτοιδα νυκτέρων ὀμήγυριν,  
καὶ τοὺς φέροντας χειῖμα καὶ θέρος βροτοῖς  
λαμπροὺς δυνάστας, ἐμπρέποντας αἰθέρι  
ἀστέρας, ὅταν φθίνωσιν, ἀντολὰς τε τῶν.

Again I have asked the gods to deliver me from this toil,  
This vigil a year in length, where I repose  
On Atreidae's roof on my arms, as is the custom with dogs  
Looking toward the nightly assembly of constellations  
And they who bring to mortals the storm-season and the summer:  
Those radiant sovereigns, distinguished in the heavens  
As stars when they come forth or pass away.

(Agamemnon, 1-7)

*artisements*. The products of the skilled work of the artisan and the artist; their artisanship; cf. the 16th century English verb *artize*: to exercise a skill, to pursue a skilled occupation such as that of an artisan.

*the circumferent coursing of Physis*. Given the context, I have - as at the beginning of the text - capitalized *physis* here.

*mixon*. Alternate (old) spelling of *mixtion*, meaning the condition or state of being mixed, melded, compounded, combined.

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This is a pre-publication draft  
and is therefore subject to revision

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