Corpus Hermeticum
I, III, IV, VIII, XI

Translation and Commentary

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Preface

This work collects together my translations of and commentaries on five tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum which were published separately between 2013 and 2017. The Introduction and the appendices provide an overview of my methodology. The essays that form the three appendices were written at various times during the past five years.

The Greek text used is that of A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, Corpus Hermeticum, Third Edition, 1972, although occasionally I have followed the reading of the MSS rather than Nock's emendations with such variations noted in my commentary. Angled brackets < > indicate an emendation or a conjectural reading of the text.

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Introduction

In the case of the Corpus Hermeticum, the task of translating ancient Greek into English is complicated by the terminology used in the text, and which text is concerned with matters which the English word metaphysical fairly well describes. Words such as λόγος, νοῦς, πνεῦμα, δημιουργόν, φῶς, ψυχή, στοιχεῖον, [καὶ τὰ λοιπά], all require careful consideration if the text is to be understood in relation to the cultural milieu existing at the time of its composition; a milieu where a Hellenistic paganism, of various types and hues, thrived alongside the still relatively new religion of Christianity. All too often, such Greek words are translated by an English word which has, over centuries, acquired a meaning which is not or which may not be relevant to that milieu, resulting in a 'retrospective reinterpretation' of the text. One thinks here of λόγος translated as 'word' (or Word) which thus suffuses, or can suffuse, the text with the meanings that nearly two thousand years of Christian exegesis have ascribed to that term. I have, in Appendix I, endeavoured to explain what I mean by such retrospective reinterpretation by giving some examples from other texts.

In an effort to avoid such retrospective reinterpretation here, and the preconceptions thus imposed upon the text, I have sometimes used transliterations, sometimes used a relatively obscure English word, and sometimes used a new term. My intent in using such terms, such words, and such transliterations, is two fold. (1) To perhaps inspire some to undertake their own research into both the Greek text and the metaphysical matters mentioned in the text, sans preconceptions. (2) To hopefully enable the reader without a knowledge of Greek (and of the minutiae of over a century of scholarly analysis of the Greek text) to appreciate the text anew and understand why it is and has - in the original Greek - been regarded as an important document in respect of a particular, ancient, weltanschauung that, over the centuries, proved most influential and which can still be of interest to those interested in certain metaphysical speculations.

For, in respect of the texts, I incline toward the view that they generally represent the personal weltanschauung of their authors germane to their time. That is, that rather than being representative of some axiomatical pre-existing philosophy or of some religious school of thought, they reproduce the insight and the understanding of individuals regarding particular metaphysical matters; and an insight and an understanding no doubt somewhat redolent of, and influenced by, and sometimes perhaps paraphrasing, some such philosophies and/or some such schools of thought.

Regarding my translation, some may well consider the words of Diogenes Laertius - Lives of Eminent Philosophers 3.1 (64) - in relation to Plato, quite apposite:
χρήται δὲ ὁ Πλάτων ἐνίοτε αὐτῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ κακοῦ: ἔστι δ᾽ ὅτε καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μικροῦ. πολλάκις δὲ καὶ διαφέρουσιν ὀνόμασιν ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σημαινομένου χρήται.

For I have sometimes translated the same Greek word in two different ways in order to try and elucidate the meaning of the text [exempli gratia: ἀπεριόριστον, as undefinable and unmeasurable] just as I have idiosyncratically translated certain Greek words [exempli gratia: ἅγιος, as numinous], differences and idiosyncrasies I have endeavoured to explain in my commentary and notes.
Pœmandres

A Translation Of And A Commentary On The First Tractate Of The Corpus Hermeticum

The Greek text of the tractate often referred to as the Pœmandres/Pymander part of the Corpus Hermeticum was first published by Turnebus in Paris in 1554 and of the origin of the knowledge expounded in the text, the author declares at v.2 that

εἰμὶ ὁ Ποιμάνδρης ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοὺς οἶδα ὃ βούλει καὶ σύνειμί σοι πανταχοῦ

Which implies - qv. my translation, and notes and commentary on the text - that what Pœmandres is about to reveal is an authentic perceiveration, and this supernatural being [or archetype] knows what is desired/wanted because, like the guardian daemons of classical and Hellenic culture, Pœmandres is close by.

What is revealed is a summary of that weltanschauung that has been termed hermetic philosophy; a summary widely regarded as an important hermetic text and as dating from the second or the third century CE; and a summary which contains many interesting notions and allusions, such as logos, physis/Physis, the septenary system, the gospel of John, the feminine character of Physis/Nature, the doxology Agios o Theos, and θεός as being both male and female in one person - that is, either ἀνδρόγυνος or (more controversially) bisexual.

Translation

[1] Once, while concentrating on and pondering what is real, my intuitions freely flowed, and, my alertness dulled as from an excess of wearisome bodily toil or too much eating, it seemed as if a huge being - too large to measure - chanced by calling out my name and asking what it was I wanted to see and hear about and learn and have knowledge of.

I am Pœmandres, the perceiveration of authority, knowing your desires and eachwhere with you.

[3] I answered that I seek to learn what is real, to apprehend the physis of beings, and to have knowledge of theos. That is what I want to hear.

So he said to me, remember all those things you wanted to learn, for I shall instruct you.

[4] So saying, his form altered whereupon I at once sensed everything; an indefinity of inner sight, with everything suffused in phaos - bright and clear - so that from this seeing, a desire. But all too soon there came down upon it a heavy darkness - stygian, strange - and slithering <as a serpent> until that darkness changed in physis: flowing, of an untellable disorder, with smoke as from a fire and an indescribable sound followed by some aphonous noise as if phaos was calling out.

[5] And then, from the phaos, a numinous logos came upon that physis with pure Fire going forth to the height of that physis; easily and effective and efficient. Since Air is agile, it followed the pneuma, up and above Earth and Water and as far as Fire, to be as if it were hanging from that, there.

Earth and Water remained, coagulating together such that <Earth> could not be seen apart from Water until they were stirred by the sound of the pneumal logos that came down upon them.

[6] Pœmandres asked, had I apprehended the sense of that inner seeing? And I said I shall have knowledge of it.

I am, he said, that phaos; perceiveration, your theos, and prior to the flowing physis brought forth from darkness. [And] the phaomal logos, from perceiveration, is the child of theos.

So I said for him to continue.

Then know that within you - who hears and sees - is logos kyrios, although perceiveration is theos the father. They are not separated, one from the other, because their union is Life.

Thank you, I said.

Then discover phaos and become familiar with it.

[7] So saying, he stared at me for so long a duration that I shivered because of
the way he looked. But, as he tilted his head back, I, observing, discovered the phaos of unmeasurable forces and an undefinable cosmic order coming-into-being. While the fire, embraced by a strong force, was subdued and kept in stasis.

Such I observed and discovered because of those words of Pœmandres. But, since I was vexed, he spoke to me again. From your seeing, an awareness of the quidditas of semblance; of the primal before the origin without an end.

This was what Pœmandres said to me, then.

[8] So I asked from what place, then, the parsements of physis?

To which he answered, from the deliberations of theos, who, having comprehended the logos and having seen the beauty of the cosmic order, re-presented it, and so became a cosmic order from their own parsements and by the birth of Psyche.

[9] Theos, the perceiveration, male-and-female, being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceiveration, an artisan, who - theos of Fire and pnuema - fashioned seven viziers to surround the perceptible cosmic order in spheres and whose administration is described as fate.

[10] Directly, from the downward parsements, the logos of theos bounded to the fine artisements of Physis and joined with the perceiveration of that artisan, for it was of the same essence. Thus the descending parsements of Physis were left, devoid of logos, to be only substance.

[11] The perceiveration of that artisan, in combination with logos, surrounded the spheres, spinning them around, a twizzling of artisements of some indefinite origin and some undeterminable end, finishing where they began. Turning around and around as perceiveration decreed, the spheres produced, from those descending parsements, beings devoid of logos, for they were not given logos, while Air produced what flew, and Water what swam. Divided, one from the other, were Earth and Water, as perceiveration had decreed, with Earth delivering from within herself beings four-footed and crawling, and animals savage and benign.

[12] Perceiveration, as Life and phaos, father of all, brought forth in his own likeness a most beautiful mortal who, being his child, he loved. And theos, who loved his own image, bequeathed to him all his works of Art.

[13] Thus, having discovered what that artisan with that father's assistance had wrought, he too determined on such artisements, which the father agreed to. Ingressing to the artisan's realm, with full authority, he appreciated his brother's artisements, and they - loving him - each shared with him their own function.
Having fully learned their essence, and having partaken of their physis, he was determined to burst out past the limit of those spheres to discover the one who imposed their strength upon the Fire.

[14] With full authority over the ordered cosmos of humans and of beings devoid of logos, he burst through the strength of the spheres to thus reveal to those of downward physis the beautiful image of theos.

When she beheld such unceasing beauty - he who possessed all the vigour of the viziers and was the image of theos - she lovingly smiled, for it was as if in that Water she had seen the semblance of that mortal's beautiful image and, on Earth, his shadow. And as he himself beheld in that Water her image, so similar to his own, he desired her and wanted to be with her. Then, his want and his vigour realized, and he within that image devoid of logos, Physis grasped he whom she loved to entwine herself around him so that, as lovers, they were intimately joined together.

[15] Which is why, distinct among all other beings on Earth, mortals are jumelle; deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal. Yet, although deathless and possessing full authority, the human is still subject to wyrd. Hence, although over the harmonious structure, when within become the slave. Male-and-female since of a male-and-female father, and wakeful since of a wakeful one. <...>

[16] <...> my perceization, for I also love the logos. Then Pœmandres said, this is a mysterium esoteric even to this day. For Physis, having intimately joined with the human, produced a most wondrous wonder possessed of the physis of the harmonious seven I mentioned before, of Fire and pneuma. Physis did not tarry, giving birth to seven male-and-female humans with the physis of those viziers, and ætherean.

Pœmandres, I said, a great eagerness has now arrived in me so that I yearn to hear more. Do not go away.

Then, Pœmandres replied, be silent for this primary explanation is not yet complete.

I shall, I said, therefore, be silent.

[17] To continue, those seven came into being in this way. Earth was muliebral, Water was lustful, and Fire maturing. From Æther, the pneuma, and with Physis bringing forth human-shaped bodies. Of Life and phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceization; from Life - psyche; from phaos - perceization; and with everything in the observable cosmic order cyclic until its completion.

[18] Now listen to the rest of the explanation you asked to hear. When the cycle
was fulfilled, the connexions between all things were, by the deliberations of theos, unfastened. Living beings - all male-and-female then - were, including humans, rent asunder thus bringing into being portions that were masculine with the others muliebral. Directly, then, theos spoke a numinous logos: propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning, all you creations and artisements, and let the perceiver have the knowledge of being deathless and of Eros as responsible for death.

[19] Having so spoken, foreknowing - through wyrd and that harmonious structure - produced the coagulations and founded the generations with all beings spawning according to their kind. And they of self-knowledge attained a particular benefit while they who, misled by Eros, love the body, roamed around in the dark, to thus, perceptively, be afflicted by death.

[20] But why, I asked, do the unknowing err so much that they are robbed of immortality.

You seem, he said, not to have understood what you heard, for did I not tell you to discover things?

I said I do recall and am discovering, for which I am obliged.

Then tell me, if you have discovered, why death is expected for those in death.

Because originally the body began with that stygian darkness, from whence the flowing physis which formed the body within the perceptible cosmic order which nourishes death.

[21] Your apprehension is correct. Yet why, according to the logos of theos, does the one of self-discovery progress within themselves?

To which I replied, phaos and Life formed the father of all beings, from whence that human came into being.

You express yourself well. For phaos and Life are the theos and the father from whence the human came into being. Therefore if you learn to be of Life and phaos - and that you perchance are of them - then you progress to return to Life. Thus spoke Pœmandres.

Can you - who are my perceiveration - therefore tell me how I may progress to Life? For does not theos say that the human of perceiveration should have self-knowledge?

[22] And do not all humans posses perceiveration?

Again you express yourself well. I, perceiveration, attend to those of respectful deeds, the honourable, the refined, the compassionate, those aware of the
numinous; to whom my being is a help so that they soon acquire knowledge of the whole and are affectionately gracious toward the father, fondly celebrating in song his position.

Before they hand over their body to its death they loathe the influencing impressions, for they know their vigour. That is, I - perceiveration - do not allow what the vigour of the body embraces to be achieved. For, as guardian, I close the entrance to the bad and the dishonourably vigorful, preventing their procrastinations.

[23] I keep myself distant from the unreasonable, the rotten, the malicious, the jealous, the greedy, the bloodthirsty, the hubriatic, instead, giving them up to the avenging daemon, who assigns to them the sharpness of fire, who visibly assails them, and who equips them for more lawlessness so that they happen upon even more vengeance. For they cannot control their excessive yearnings, are always in the darkness - which tests them - and thus increase that fire even more.

[24] You, perceiveration, have instructed me well about all those things I saught. But could you tell me how the Anados will occur?

To which Poemanderes replied, first, the dissolution of the physical body allows that body to be transformed with the semblance it had disappearing and its now non-functioning ethos handed over to the daimon, with the body's perceptions returning to their origin, then becoming separated with their purpose, transplanted, and with desire and eagerness journeying toward the physis devoid of logos.

[25] Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait.

[26] Thus, stripped of the activities of that structure, they enter into the ogdoadic physis, and, with those there, celebrate the father in song for they, together, rejoice at this arrival who, now akin to them, hears those forces beyond the ogdoadic physis celebrating theos in melodious song. Then, in order, they move toward the father to hand themselves over to those forces, and, becoming those forces, they become united with theos. For to so become of theos is the noble goal of those who seek to acquire knowledge.

Why, therefore, hesitate? Should it not be that, having received all these things, you should become a guide to those who are suitable so that, because of you, descendants of mortals may - through theos - escape?
Having so spoken to me, Pœmandres joined with those forces, while I, having given thanks to and expressed my gratitude toward the father of all beings, went forth strengthened and informed regarding the physis of everything and with an insight of great importance.

So it was that I began to tell mortals about how beautiful knowledge and an awareness of the numinous were. You earth-bound mortals, you who have embraced intoxicating liquor, sleepfulness, and are unknowing of theos: soberize, stop your drunkenness, for you are beguiled by irrational sleepfulness.

Hearing this, they, with the same purpose, gathered round. And I said, you who are earth-bound, why do you embrace death when you have the means to partake of immortality? Change your ways, you who have accompanied deception and who have kinship with the unknowing ones. Leave the dark phaos, partake of immortality, move away from your destruction.

Then some of them, having ridiculed, went away, embracing as they did the way of death; although some others, desirous of being informed, threw themselves down at my feet. I asked them to stand, and thus became a guide to those of my kind, informing them of the logoi - of the way and the means of rescue - and engendered in them the logoi of sapientia, with the celestial elixir to nurture them.

And with the arrival of evening with the rays of Helios beginning to completely wane, I bid they express their gratitude to theos, after which - with that expression of gratitude completed - they each retired to their own bed.

Commemorating within myself the noble service of Pœmandres - replete with what I had desired - I was most pleased, for the sleep of the body engendered temperance of psyche, the closing of the eyes a genuine insight, with my silence pregnant with the noble, and the expression of the logos breeding nobility.

Such is what transpired for me, received from perceiveration - that is, Pœmandres; for it was by being theos-inspired that I came upon this revealing. Therefore, from my psyche and with all my strength, I offer benedictions to theos, the father.

Agios o Theos, father of all beings.
Agios o Theos, whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts.
Agios o Theos, whose disposition is to be recognized and who is recognized by his own.
Agios es, you who by logos form all being.
Agios es, you who engender all physis as eikon.
Agios es, you whom the Physis did not morph.
Agios es, you who are mightier than all artifice.
Agios es, you who surpass all excellence.
Agios es, you who transcend all praise.

You - ineffable, inexpressible, to whom silence gives voice - receive these respectful wordful offerings from a psyche and a heart that reach out to you.

[32] I ask of you to grant that I am not foiled in acquiring knowledge germane to our essence; to invigorate me, so that - by that favour - I may bring illumination to the unknowing who, kindred of my kind, are your children.

Such I testify and believe; to advance to Life and phaos. For you, father, a benediction. Your mortal's purpose is to share in your numinosity, for which you have provided every means.

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Notes and Commentary on the Text

The numbers refer to the sections of the Greek text, 1-32.

1.

*what is real*. Regarding τῶν ὄντων cf. Plato, Republic, Book 7 (532c) - πρὸς δὲ τὰ ἐν ὕδασι φαντάσματα θεία καὶ σκιὰ τῶν ὄντων ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ εἰδώλων σκιὰς δι᾽ ἔτέρου τοιούτου φωτὸς ὡς πρὸς ἥλιον κρίνειν ἀποσκιαζομένας - where the φάντασμα (the appearance) of some-thing natural (god-given), such as the σκιὰ (image) that is reflected by water, is stated to be real, and contrasted with what is not considered to be real (what is an unsubstantial image) such as that cast by a fire rather than by the Sun.

*intuition*. For διανοίας. As with νοῦς (see 2. below) a term which deserves some scrutiny. Conventionally, it is translated as 'thought', or 'thinking', as if in reference to some sort of idealized faculty we human beings are said to possess and which faculty deals with ideations and their collocations and is considered as necessary to, or the foundation of, understanding and reason.

More accurately, in a classical context, διανοίας is (i) 'intelligence' (or intuition) in the sense of understanding some-thing or someone (i.e. in being able to perceive some-thing correctly or to correctly understand - to know - a person), or (ii) 'intention'.

I have opted for 'intuition' as suggesting, and as manifesting, insight, often from contemplation, as the etymology, from the Latin intueri, suggests. For the English word 'thought' now conveys modern meanings which, in my view, are
not relevant here. And an 'intuition' that is related to, but somewhat different from, the perceiveration that is νοῦς.

Alertness. αἴσθησις. Alertness here in the sense that the normal, alert, awareness of the physical senses is dulled by interior intuition, insight, or revelation. An appropriate alternative translation would thus be awareness, as in awareness of one's surroundings.

Huge. ὑπερμεγέθη - qv Plutarch Romulus, 16.5 ἐπὶ στρατοπέδου δρῦν ἔτεμεν ὑπερμεγέθη - chopped down a huge tree there in that encampment.

Huge, and too large to measure by ordinary means. I do not see any need to exaggerate what is implied, as some other translations do.

Have knowledge of. In the tractate, γνῶναι is related to νοῦς and διανοίας as an expression of what is perceived, or one is aware of. Here, of what one discerns in the sense of distinguishing some-thing from something else and thus 'knowing' of and about that thing.

2.

Pœmandres. Ποιμάνδρης. The older interpretation of 'shepherd of men' is unacceptable because speculative; the speculation being that it derives from ποιμήν, which has a variety of meanings other than shepherd, for example, chief, and owner.

A more recent etymology involves some ancient Egyptian term associated with the god Re. However, this etymology, first proposed by Francis Griffith in the 1920's [qv. W. Scott and A. S. Ferguson: Hermetica: the ancient Greek and Latin writings which contain religious or philosophical teachings ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924-1936] was based on a linguistic and stylistic analysis of Coptic sources dating well over a millennia after the god Re was worshipped in ancient Egypt.

Also, the book From Poimandres to Jacob Bohme: Hermetism, Gnosis and the Christian Tradition, edited by Roelof van den Broek and published in 2000 (Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica) which mentions this etymology by Griffiths and which is often cited as confirming this etymology, does not provide further context in the form of extant Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions or references to papyrus fragments from long before the Coptic period, but instead makes various conjectures, as for example in respect of an alternative Coptic form of the genitive n-re, and relies on other linguistic/stylistic analysis of much later texts.

Until a link can be established to such primary Egyptian sources, or to reliable sources much earlier than such Coptic texts, I remain unconvinced in respect of the ancient Egyptian origins of the name Ποιμάνδρης, and therefore am
inclined to leave it as a personal name, transliterated Pœmandres.

perceiveration. νοῦς. The conventional interpretation here is 'mind', as if in contrast to 'the body' and/or as if some fixed philosophical and abstract principle is meant or implied.

This conventional interpretation is in my view incorrect, being another example of not only retrospective reinterpretation but of using a word which has acquired, over the past thousand years or more, certain meanings which detract from an understanding of the original text. Retrospective reinterpretation because the assumption is that what is being described is an axiomatic, reasoned, philosophy centred on ideations such as Thought, Mind, and Logos, rather than what it is: an attempt to describe, in fallible words, a personal intuition about our existence, our human nature, and which intuition is said to emanate from a supernatural being named Pœmandres.

In addition, one should ask what does a translation such as 'I am Poimandres, mind of sovereignty' [vide Copenhaver] actually mean? That there is a disembodied 'mind' which calls itself Pœmandres? That this disembodied 'mind' is also some gargantuan supernatural shapeshifting being possessed of the faculty of human speech? That some-thing called 'sovereignty' has a mind?

I incline toward the view that the sense of the word νοῦς here, as often in classical literature, is perceiverance; that is, a particular type of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed 'the body'.

Perceiverance thus describes the ability to sense, to perceive, when something may be amiss; and hence also of the Greek word implying resolve, purpose, because one had decided on a particular course of action, or because one's awareness of a situation impels or directs one to a particular course of action. Hence why, in the Oedipus Tyrannus, Sophocles has Creon voice his understanding of the incipient hubris of Oedipus, of his pride without a purpose, of his apparent inability to understand, to correctly perceive, the situation:

εἴ τοι νομίζεις κτῆμα τὴν αὐθαδίαν
εἶναι τι τοῦ νοῦ χωρίς, οὐκ ὀρθῶς φρονεῖς.

If you believe that what is valuable is pride, by itself,
Without a purpose, then your judgement is not right.

vv. 549-550
Translating νοῦς as perceiverance/perceveration thus places it into the correct context, given αὐθεντίας - authority. For "I am Pœmandres, the perceiveration of authority" implies "What [knowledge] I reveal (or am about to reveal) is authentic," so that an alternative translation, in keeping with the hermeticism of the text, would be "I am Pœmandres, the authentic perceiveration." [The English word authentic means 'of authority, authoritative' and is derived, via Latin, from the Greek αὐθεντία]

eachwhere. An unusual but expressive (c.15th century) English word, suited to such an esoteric text. The meaning here is that, like a guardian δαίμων of classical and Hellenic culture, Pœmandres is always close by: eachwhere with you.

3.

Apprehend. νοέω. To apprehend also in the sense of 'discover'. Again, I have tried to make a subtle distinction here, as there is in the text between the related νοῦς, γνῶναι, and διανοίας.

physis. A transliteration, to suggest 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.

γνῶναι τὸν θεόν. To have - to acquire - knowledge of θεός. Does θεός here mean God, a god, a deity, or the god? God, the supreme creator Being, the only real god, the father, as in Christianity? A deity, as in Hellenic and classical paganism? The god, as in an un-named deity - a god - who is above all other deities? Or possibly all of these? And if all, in equal measure, or otherwise?

The discourse of Pœmandres, as recounted in the tractate, suggests two things. First, that all are meant or suggested - for example, Τὸ φῶς ἐκεῖνο, ἐγὼ νοῦς ὁ σὸς θεός could be said of Pœmandres as a god, as a deity, as the god, and also possibly of God, although why God, the Father - as described in the Old and New Testaments - would call Himself Pœmandres, appear in such a vision, and declare what He declares about θεός being both male and female in one person, is interesting. Second, that the knowledge that is revealed is of a source, of a being, that encompasses, and explains, all three, and that it is this knowing of such a source, beyond those three conventional ones, that is the key to 'what is real' and to apprehending 'the physis of beings'.

Hence, it is better to transliterate θεός - or leave it as θεός - than to use god; and a mistake to use God, as some older translations do.
remember all those things you want to learn. 'Ἐχε νῷ: 'hold the awareness' [be aware] of what you said you wanted to learn - that is, 'remember' them; which is better, and more expressive, than the somewhat colloquial and modern 'keep in mind'.

4.

So saying, his form [ἰδέᾳ] altered. For τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἠλλάγη τῇ ἰδέᾳ. Or - more expressively - 'he shapeshifted'. A common theme in Greek mythology and literature, as in the ancient Hymn to Demeter:

ocular shapechanging than it did.

Having so spoken, the goddess changed in height and cast off that aged appearance

[An] indefiniteness of inner sight [inner seeing]. ὁρῶ θέαν ἀόριστον. The sense of ὁρῶ here is metaphorical, of an interior knowing or apprehension not occasioned by the faculty of sight; the inner knowing, for example, that the blind Tiresias has in respect of Oedipus in the Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles - his apprehension of what Oedipus has done and what he will do. Such an 'inner seeing' includes the Tiresian kind a prophetic knowing as well as the 'interior visions' of a mystic.

In respect of ἀόριστον, I have opted for indefinity, an unusual [read obscure] English word derived c.1600 from indefinite.

phaos. A transliteration of φῶς - using the the Homeric φῶς. Since φῶς metaphorically (qv. Iliad, Odyssey, Hesiod, etcetera) implies the being, the life, 'the spark', of mortals, and, generally, either (i) the illumination, the light, that arises because of the Sun and distinguishes the day from the night, or (ii) any brightness that provides illumination and thus enables things to be seen, I am inclined to avoid the vague English word 'light' which other translations use, and which English word now implies many things which the Greek does not or may not; as for instance in the matter of over a thousand years of New Testament exegesis, especially in reference to the gospel of John. A transliteration requires the reader to pause and consider what phaos may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply; and hopefully thus conveys something about the original text.

Also, φῶς δὲ πάντα γεγενημένα suggests '[with] everything suffused in phaos' and not 'everything became light' as if to imply that suddenly everything was transformed into 'light'.

clear and bright. εὔδιόν τε καὶ ἱλαρόν - if one accepts the emendation εὔδιόν [clear] then ἱλαρόν might suggest the metaphorical sense of 'bright' (rather than the descriptive 'cheery') which fits well with the contrasting and following
φοβερόν τε καὶ στυγνόν.


stygian. For στυγνόν, for stygian is a word which in English imputes the sense of the original Greek, as both its common usage, and its literary usage (by Milton, Wordsworth, Ralph Waldo Emerson, et al) testify. Some-thing dark, gloomy, disliked, abhorred. One might, for example, write that "that river looks as stygian", and as unforgiving, as the water of Styx - ἀμείλικτον Στυγὸς ὕδωρ.

serpent. ὀφεὶ is one of the emendations of Nock, for the meaning of the text here is difficult to discern. Given what follows - re the smoke and fire - it is tempting to agree with Reitzenstein that what may be meant is a not an ordinary serpent but a dragon, δράκοντι, qv. the Iliad (II, 308) and the seven-headed dragon of Revelation 12, 3-17.

flowing (as in fluidic). The sense of υγρός here, since what follows - ἀφάτως τεταραγμένη καὶ καπνὸν ἀποδοῦσαν - does not suggest either 'watery' or 'moist'. Cf. Aristophanes, Clouds, 314 - ταῦτ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐποίουν υγρὰν Νεφελᾶν στρεπταὶ γλᾶν δαίον ὁρμάν - where clouds are described as flowing and in their flowing-moving obscure the brightness (of the day).

aphonous ... phaos calling out. I follow the MSS which have φωτὸς, which Nock emended to πυρὸς. While the emendation, given the foregoing mention of fire, makes some sense, it does render what follows, with the mention of φωτὸς, rather disjointed. However, if - as I suggested above - φῶς is not translated as 'light', but, as with physis and λόγος [qv. 5. below], is transliterated, then φωτὸς here is fine, for it is as if "phaos was calling out" in an aphonous - an un-human, animal-like, and thus wordless - way from beneath the covering of darkness that has descended down, and descended with an indescribable noise. And aphonous here because covered - smothered, obscured, muffled - by the indescribably noisy darkness. Which leads directly to the mention of φῶς and λόγος in the next part of the text; that is, to the ascension of φῶς and λόγος.

If one reads πυρὸς, then the interpretation would be that it is the fire which is calling out in an un-human, animal-like, and thus wordless way.

5.

Logos. λόγος. A transliteration, which as with my other transliterations, requires the reader to pause and reflect upon what the term may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply. The common translation as 'Word' does not express or even suggest all the meanings (possible or suggested) of the Greek, especially as Word - as in Word of God - now imputes so much (in so many different often doctrinal ways) after two thousand years of Christianity and thus tends to lead
to a retrospective re-interpretation of the text.

Numinous. ἅγιος. Numinous is better - more accurate - than 'holy' or 'sacred', since these latter English words have been much overused in connexion with Christianity and are redolent with meanings supplied from over a thousand years of exegesis; meanings which may or may not be relevant here.

Correctly understood, numinous is the unity beyond our perception of its two apparent aspects; aspects expressed by the Greek usage of ἅγιος which could be understood in a good (light) way as 'sacred', revered, of astonishing beauty; and in a bad (dark) way as redolent of the gods/wyrd/the fates/morai in these sense of the retributive or (more often) their balancing power/powers and thus giving rise to mortal 'awe' since such a restoration of the natural balance often involved or required the death (and sometimes the 'sacrifice') of mortals. It is the numinous - in its apparent duality, and as a manifestation of a restoration of the natural, divine, balance - which is evident in much of Greek tragedy, from the Agamemnon of Aeschylus (and the Orestia in general) to the Antigone and the Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles.

The two apparent aspects of the numinous are wonderfully expressed by Rilke:


Who, were I to sigh aloud, of those angelic beings might hear me? And even if one of them deigned to take me to his heart I would dissolve Into his very existence. For beauty is nothing if not the genesis of that numen Which we can only just survive And which we so admire because it can so calmly disdain to betake us. Every angel is numinous

wenn ich schrie. 'Were I to sigh aloud' is far more poetically expressive, and more in tune with the metaphysical tone of the poem and the stress on schrie, than the simple, bland, 'if I cried out'. A sighing aloud - not a shout or a scream - of the sometimes involuntary kind sometimes experienced by those engaged in contemplative prayer or in deep, personal, metaphysical musings.

der Engel Ordnungen. The poetic emphasis is on Engel, and the usual translation here of 'orders' - or something equally abstract and harsh (such as hierarchies) - does not in my view express the poetic beauty (and the almost supernatural sense of strangeness) of the original; hence my suggestion 'angelic beings' - of such a species of beings, so
different from we mortals, who by virtue of their numinosity have the
ability to both awe us and overpower us.

came upon that physis. Came upon that which had the physis of darkness and
then changed to become fluidic.

Fire. A capitalization, since 'fire' here is suggestive of something possibly
elemental.

Air. A capitalization, as with Fire; ditto with the following Water and Earth.

A possible alternative here might be to use the Homeric meaning of ἀὴρ - mist -
since 'air' is just too general, does not describe what is happening, and thus is
confusing.

pnuema. For πνεῦμα. A transliteration, given that the English
alternatives - such as 'spirit' or 'breath' - not only do not always describe what
the Greek implies but also suggest things not always or not necessarily in
keeping with the Hellenic nature of the text.

This particular transliteration has a long history in English, dating back to 1559
CE. In 1918, DeWitt Burton published a monograph - listing, with quotations,
the various senses of πνεῦμα - entitled 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)

I incline toward the view that πνεῦμα here - like λόγος - does not necessarily
imply something theological (in the Christian sense or otherwise) but rather
suggests an alternative, more personal, weltanschauung that, being a
weltanschauung, is undoctrinal and subtle, and which weltanschauung is
redolent of Hellenic culture. Subtle and undoctrinal in the way that early
alchemical texts are subtle and undoctrinal and try to express, or hint at
(however obscurely to us, now), a weltanschauung, and one which is more
paganus than Christian.

coaagulating. For συμμεμιγμένα, which suggests something more elemental -
more actively joined - than just 'mixed or mingled' together.

pneumal logos. πνευματικὸν λόγον. The term pneumal logos is interesting and
intended to be suggestive and thus open to and requiring interpretation. In
contrast, the usual translation is verbo spirituali (spiritual word), as if what is
meant or implied is some-thing theological and clearly distinct from the
corporeal, as Thomas Aquinas wrote in Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate: Ex
quo patet quod nomen verbi magis proprie dicitur de verbo spirituali quam de
corporali. Sed omne illud quod magis proprie inventur in spiritualibus quam in
corporalibus, propriissime Deo competit. Ergo verbum propriissime in Deo.
dicitur. (De veritate, q. 4a. 1s. c2).

6.

apprehended the sense of that inner seeing. Given what follows, the English word 'sense' is perhaps appropriate here, rather than the inflexible word 'meaning'.

phaomal logos. φωτεινὸς λόγος. As with pneumal logos, this is suggestive, and open to interpretation.

child of theos. υἱὸς θεοῦ. The scriptural sense - 'son of god', for example Mark 15.39, Ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἀνθρώπως υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν - is usually assumed; a sense which follows the general usage of υἱὸς (son) as in Homer et al. But the later (c.2nd/3rd century CE) usage 'child' is possible here, a usage known from some papyri (qv. Papiri Greci e Latini, edited by Girolamo Vitelli). This also has the advantage of being gender neutral, for which see the note under ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν in section 19.

logos kyrios. λόγος κυρίου (cf. pneumal logos and phaomal logos). Invariably translated as 'word of the lord', echoing the formula found in LXX (qv. for example Jeremiah 1.4 ἐγένετο λόγος κυρίου πρός με) although, as attested by many papyri, kyrios was also used in the Hellenic world as an epithet both of a deity and of a powerful potentate [hence 'logos kyrios' rather than 'kyrios logos'] implying respect and an acknowledgement of their authority and power.

7.

duration. For reasons I outlined in the The Art of Translation, and A Question About Time section of Appendix I, I prefer to translate χρόνος as duration (or something akin) and not as 'time'. Briefly explained, the English word 'time' now denotes what the term χρόνος did not.

tilted his head back. Perhaps suggestive of looking up toward the heavens, qv. the c. 2nd century CE writer Achilles Tatius (writing around the time the Corpus Hermeticum was written) who, in Leucippe and Clitophon, Book V, 3.3, wrote - ἀνανεύσας εἰς οὐρανὸν ὦ Ζεῦ, τί τοῦτο ἐφην 'φαίνεις ἡμῖν τέρας unmeasurable. ἀπεριόριστον - beyond being countable, impossible to be counted; from ἀριθμητός - countable.

cosmic order. κόσμος. The word 'cosmos' by itself is probably insufficient here, for the Greek term κόσμος carries with it the suggestion that the cosmos is an ordered structure, an order evident in the observed regularity of heavenly bodies such as the moon, the constellations, and the planets.

undefinable. ἀπεριόριστον: A slightly different sense here to previously, and an
interesting contrast with εὐπεριόριστον - well-defined - as used by Strabo when describing the process of measuring and defining, in geographical terms, a region of the Earth:

τὸ γὰρ σημειώδες καὶ τὸ εὐπεριόριστον ἐκεῖθεν λαβεῖν λαβεῖν ἔστιν, οὐ χρείαν ἔχει ὁ γεωγράφος: εὐπεριόριστον δὲ, ὅταν ἡ ποταμοῖς ἡ ὄρεσιν ἡ θαλάσση δυνατόν ἔστιν (Geography, 2.1.30)

coming-into-being. γεγενημένον. The meaning here is somewhat obscure. Is what is described a discovery of how the already existing and known cosmic order came into being, or the apprehension of a - or some sort of - cosmic order coming-into-being? Or does γεγενημένον refer to phaos?

8.

quidditas of semblance. ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος. The transliteration 'archetype' here is, unfortunately, unsuitable, given what the term archetype now suggests and implies (vide Jungian psychology, for example) beyond what the Greek of the text means. Appropriate words or terms such as 'primal-pattern' or 'protoform' are awkward, clumsy. Hence quidditas (11th/12th century Latin), from whence came 'quiddity', a term originally from medieval scholasticism which was then used to mean the natural (primal) nature or form of some-thing, and thus hints at the original sense of ἀρχέτυπον. As used here, quidditas means exactly what ἀρχέτυπον does in the text, sans Jungian psychology; sans modern 'popular psychology'; sans expositions of hermetic/gnostic philosophy (or what is assumed to be a hermetic/gnostic philosophy) and sans expositions of Plato's philosophy.

The whole passage - τὸ ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος, τὸ προάρχον τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς ἀπεράντου - is concerned with various shades of ἀρχή, and is rather obscure. ἀρχή as the origin - 'the beginning' - of beings and thus of their εἶδος (the ἀρχέτυπον), of their semblance, their type; and ἀρχή - the primal before (προάρχον) that beginning, of beings - as that origin (that beginning) which has no end, no known limits, ἀπεράντου.

parsements. For στοιχεῖον, and thus avoiding the word 'elements' whose meanings, being now many and varied, somewhat detract from the meaning of the text. By a parsement - an unusual variant of partiment (from the Latin partimentum) - is meant the fundamental (the basic, elemental, primal) components or principles of 'things' as understood or as posited in Hellenic times; and whether or not these are undescribed or described in terms of a particular philosophy or weltanschauung (for example, as Air, Fire, and so on).

deliberations of theos. βουλῆς θεοῦ. 'Deliberations' is the sense here; as in theos - whomsoever or whatever theos is - having pondered upon, or considered, a particular matter or many matters. cf. Herodotus [Histories, 9.10] - ὃ μέν σφι ταύτα συνεβούλευε: οἳ δὲ φρενὶ λαβόντες τὸν λόγον αὐτίκα - where a similar
following expression (λαβόντες τὸν λόγον) occurs.

Translations such as 'will/decree of god' are, in my view, far too presumptive.

ἥτις λαβοῦσα τὸν λόγον. This is suggestive of theos having fully comprehended - completely understood - logos [qv. the passage from Herodotus, where the result of the deliberations was understood, approved of: 'taken to heart'], rather than of God 'taking in the Word' or 'receiving the Word'. A 'taking in' from whence to where? A 'receiving' from where?

re-presented. In the sense of a divine mimesis - μίμησις - which is the Greek word used here, and which mimesis is an important theme in ancient pagan culture, from Art to religion. It is tempting therefore to consider the suggestion that this mimesis by theos is akin to a masterful, a sublime, work of Art.

Psyche. For ψυχή, and leaving untranslated so as not to impose a particular meaning on the text. Whether what is meant is anima mundi - or some-thing else, such as the 'soul' of a human being - is therefore open to debate, although I have used a capital P to intimate that it is, in the text, an important, and primal, principle, and might imply here the original sense of 'spark' (or breath) of life; of that 'thing' [or being] which [or who] animates beings making them 'alive'.

9.

male-and-female. ἀρρενόθηλος. The theos - or deity/divinity/God - is both male and female, which can be interpreted as implying a bisexual nature, or androgyny, or hermaphroditism, or a being with the unique ability to both give birth and inseminate, or a being beyond all such mortal (causal) categories and assumptions.

whose logos brought forth another perceivation. ἀπεκύησε λόγῳ έτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν. An interesting phrase, possibly open to interpretation, for it might suggest 'whose utterance [who by speaking] brought forth...'

Consider, for example, Psalms 33.6:

τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου οἱ οὐρανοί ἐστερεώθησαν καὶ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ πᾶσα η δύναμις αὐτῶν

with the Greek of LXX, literally translated, meaning "By the logos of the master [κύριος] the heavens were established and, by the pnuema from his mouth, all their influence" [δύναμις], with the Hebrew stating it is יִהְוָה [Yhvh - Jehovah]
who has established שָׁמַיִם [shamayim, the heavens] and His רוח [ruach, pneuma] their power.

Hence, Poemandres might well be saying that is was by speaking, by the act of uttering or declaiming a logos, that this theos - whomsoever or whatever theos is - brought forth a[another] perceiveration; that is, another way or means of apprehending - of knowing, understanding, and appreciating - the cosmic order.

artisan. δημιουργόν. It is tempting to transliterate - as demiourgos - so as not to impose a meaning on the text. Does the word here imply - as possibly with Fire, pneuma, etcetera - an assumed elemental force of principle? Or a demiurge who is a (or the) theos of Fire and pneuma? Or does it imply some creator, the Theos of Fire and Pnuema? Or is some sort of artisan meant? And is this an artisan who, possibly by memesis, can create/manufacture a sublime work of Art that at the very least enables us to perceive the cosmic order - the world - in a new way and who, being a theos, can also possibly create, perhaps as a work of Art, a new cosmic order?

However, I incline toward the view, given what follows - ἐδημιούργησε διοικητάς τινας ἑπτά [see below, fashioned seven viziers] - that what is meant here is artisan, rather than demiurge.

fashioned seven viziers. ἐδημιούργησε διοικητάς τινας ἑπτά.

The word ἐδημιούργησε occurs in Diogenes Laertius [Lives of Eminent Philosophers 3.1 (71) - ὅτι καὶ τὸ ὑπόδειγμα ἑν ἀφ᾽ οὗ αὐτὸν ἐδημιούργησε] in the section concerned with Plato, where the meaning is what someone (such as a worker or artisan) has wrought, fashioned, or produced.

Viziers captures the meaning of διοικητάς (at the time the text was written) in a way that terms such as controllers, procurators, governors, do not, given the modern senses such terms now have and especially given the context, ἡ διοίκησις αὐτῶν εἱμαρμένη καλεῖται: that their administration - how these viziers discharge their duties; how they operate given their powers - "is described as fate." That is, is understood, by we mortals, as fate or destiny.

Vizier is a term used in Persia (in its various older forms) and ancient Egypt (a transcription of a hieroglyph), and also later on in the Middle East and North Africa following the rise of Islam, to denote a person who governed or who ruled over - in the name of a higher authority - a particular region or territory or who had a particular sphere of influence; a role similar to the Viceroy of the British Empire.

The seven viziers are the seven classical planetary bodies, named Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Sun, Jupiter, and Saturn, and well-described in ancient texts, from ancient Persia onwards. Copenhaver [Hermetica, The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.105]
refers to some of the scholarly literature regarding these 'seven'.

*spheres*. The context - the cosmic order, and especially the seven planetary viziers who surround or encompass - suggest the meaning of spheres (or orbs) rather than 'circles'. Cf. Sophocles, Antigone, 415-6 where κύκλος could suggest sphere, or orb, or circle, but where circle seems apposite:

"χρόνον τάδ’ ἦν τοσοῦτον, ἐστ’ ἐν αἰθέρι μέσῳ κατέστη λαμπρὸς ἥλιου κύκλος καὶ καὺμ’ ἔθαλπε"

And long this continued until Helios with his radiant circle had established himself in middle-sky, burning us

10.

*downward parsements ... logos of theos*. Given that the MSS have στοιχείων τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος the meaning here is conjectural.

'Downward parsements' implies that the fundamental (elemental, primal) components by their nature had a tendency to descend, rather as rain descends down by nature and not because it is 'heavy' [cf. Xenophon, *On Hunting*, 5.3: ἀφανίζει δὲ καὶ ἡ πολλὴ δρόσος καταφέρουσα αὐτά] Hence 'descending parsements' would also be an appropriate translation here.

Regarding θεοῦ λόγος, I have again opted for a transliteration since the common translation here of 'word of God' imposes a particular, Christian, interpretation on the text, (i) given that 'word of god' is most probably what Cyril of Alexandria meant by the phrase, since τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος interestingly occurs in *Cyrilli Epistula Tertia ad Nestorium*:

*μονογενὴς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος ὁ ἐξ αὐτῆς γεννηθεὶς τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς ὁ ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς ἀληθινὸς τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐκ τοῦ φωτός ὁ δι’ ὧν τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο τά τε ἐν τῶι οὐρανῶι καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ*

only-offspring of the logos of theos, born from the essence [οὐσία] of the father, genuine god from genuine god, the phaos from the phaos, by whom all things in heaven and on Earth came into being

and (ii) given that this paraphrases the Nicene creed of 325 CE, with the notable exception of μονογενὴς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος instead of τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, the latter conventionally translated as 'only begotten Son of God'.

Thus, were the translation of 'word of god' to be accepted, with the implied meaning from the *Epistula Tertia ad Nestorium*, then Pœmandres is, apparently, here stating that 'the Word of God' - Jesus of Nazareth, true god from true god, Light from Light, and the only begotten son of God by whom all things in
heaven and on Earth came into being - somehow bounded up to be reunited with the work of the artisan-creator (presumably, in this context, God) who is of the same essence [ὁμοούσιος].

While this is a possible interpretation of the text given that Pœmandres uses the same word, in reference to logos, as Cyril of Alexandria - ὁ λόγος (which correctly understood means the very being - the essential nature/phyisis, or essence - of someone or some-thing) - it does seem somewhat restrictive, considering (i) the many possible meanings, and shades of meaning, of both λόγος and θεός (before and after the advent of Christianity and especially in the context of pagan, Hellenic, weltanschauungen) and (ii) how theos is described by Pœmandres (for example, as being both male and female).

fine artisements of Physis. Fine - καθαρός; clean and free of defects. Artisement - the product of the skilled work of the artisan and the artist; their artisanship (cf. the 16th century English verb artize) and which artisements include beings of various kinds (including living and/or 'archetypal' ones).

It thus becomes clear, especially given what follows, why transliterating φύσις is better than translating it always as 'nature', as if φύσις here implied what we now, after hundreds years of scientific observation and theories such as that of Darwin, understand as 'the natural world', as a 'nature' that we are or can be or should be masters of and can and do and should control, and which we can (or believe we can) understand.

Physis is capitalized here, as in section 14, to suggest the objectification that the text here implies; and objectified as possibly a being - whomsoever or whatever such a being is - or possibly as some apprehension/emanation of theos (whomsoever or whatever theos is), or some fundamental principle, or some form such as what we now understand as an archetype. This Physis, therefore, might or might not be Nature (as Nature was understood in Hellenic times) although, given what follows about Earth delivering (from her womb) living beings [ ἡ γῆ ἐξήνεγκεν ἃ εἶχε ζῷα... ] it might be that it is not Nature but something else, for example, what may have been understood as the genesis of what we now denote by Nature.

It is interesting that here it is "the descending parsements of physis" (not Physis) who were "left, devoid of logos" while in section 14 it is Physis that is, by implication, described as 'devoid of logos' - ὢκησε τὴν ἄλογον μορφήν. This is often understood in the pejorative sense, as if this Physis, and the living beings devoid of logos - ἡ γῆ ἐξήνεγκεν ἄλογα - in section 11, are somehow [to quote one translation] 'unreasoning' beings (or forms) - lacking in reason - and thus somehow [to quote another translation] 'irrational' compared to (and by extension somewhat inferior to) the 'son of theos', which mistaken and unnecessary value-judgements arise from interpreting and translating λόγος as 'Word' or as meaning/implying 'reason'. However, logos is just logos, and devoid of (without) logos - ἁλογὸς - could be, depending on how logos is interpreted,
akin to ἀθάνατος said in respect, for example, of theos [Θεὸν δ᾽ εἶναι ζῶον ἀθάνατον] or implying 'cannot be reduced to something else' and thus heterogeneous [αἱ δὲ ταύτῃ ἀσύμμετροι άλογοι καλείσθωσαν], or lacking the faculty of human speech (as in animals, who are not all 'brutish') or (more esoterically) suggestive of sans denotatum, of not denoting things or beings by assigning names or terms to them and thus not distinguishing them or marking them as separate from the whole, the unity, of which one type of wholeness is Physis understood as the goddess of Nature, as the creative force that is the genesis of, and which maintains the balance of, the life which inhabits the Earth.

Substance. ὕλη. Since the Greek term does not exactly mean 'matter' in the modern sense (qv. the science of Physics) it is better to find an alternative. Hence 'substance' - the materia of 'things' and living beings - contrasted with οὐσία, essence.

11.

the perceiveration of that artisan. As previously, and like physis, both νοῦς and λόγος are here objectified.

spinning them around. διω网游 ροϊζω.

12.

brought forth...a mortal. ἀπεκύησεν ἄνθρωπον. The word ἀπεκύησεν in relation to πατήρ perhaps refers back to where theos, the perceiveration, is described as being both male and female [ἄρρενόθηλυς] although whether the meaning here is the literal 'gave birth' or the descriptive 'brought forth' is interesting, especially a different word, ἔξηνεγκεν [which the English word delivered - in the sense of giving birth, of a woman having disburdened herself of a fœtus' - usefully describes] is used in reference to the (female) Earth. This different usage, and the Epistle of James, written not long before the Pœmandres tractate where 'brought forth' is apposite [v.1.15 ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον] incline me toward 'brought forth' here.

In respect of ἄνθρωπος (often emended to ᾿Ανθρωπος) the sense here, as often, is the gender neutral 'human being' - a mortal - and not 'a man'.

image. μορφή. Image in both senses of the English term - as outward physical appearance, and as the impression (or concept) that others may have of, or see in, a person.

Image plays an important part in what follows; the image that the son of theos has of himself and sees reflected back to him and which image he loves. The image Physis has of him and sees a reflection of, and the image which he has of
her and which makes him desire her.

*bequeathed to him all his works of Art.* παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουργήματα. This is a very interesting phrase; theos as artisan, as artist, whose works - whose creations, whose artisements, whose divine re-presentations (μίμησις) - apparently include both the cosmic order; the artisan mentioned previously, and we mortals. Less suggestive of the meaning is 'bequeathed to him all his (various) artisements'.

13.

*that father.* Reading πατρί, with the MSS, and not the emendation πυρί.

*Ingressing to the artisan's realm.* γενόμενος ἐν τῇ δημιουργικῇ σφαίρᾳ. The realm of the artisan: where the artisan works, and produces artisements and divine works of art, and where someone - here, the mortal, son of theos - can learn and master that skill and produce his own works. This realm is that of the seven spheres, the seven viziers.

*function.* τάξεως. Cf. Plato, *Laws*, 809d - ἡμερῶν τάξεως εἰς μηνῶν περιόδους καὶ μηνῶν εἰς ἔκαστον τὸν ἔκαστον ἔως ὥραι καὶ θυσίαι καὶ έορται τὰ προσήκοντ᾽ ἀπολαμβάνουσι; ἑαυταίς ἐκασταὶ τῷ κατὰ φύσιν ἄγεσθαι - where the sense is of the periodic, the orderly, functioning of things; of days into weeks, weeks into months, and of months into a year; and which functionality enables us to know when to celebrate and undertake the seasonal festivals and feasts.

*limit.* περιφέρεια. Not here the literal Euclidean meaning of circumference [for example, Euclid, *Elements*, Book 13, Proposition 10 - ἐπεὶ ἴση ἐστὶν ἡ ΑΒΓΗ περιφέρεια τῇ ΑΕΔΗ περιφερείᾳ] but rather of the limits, the boundary, set or marked by the seven spheres; a limit that the mortal, son of theos, is "determined to burst out past".

*imposed their strength upon the Fire.* Cf. section 7 - περιίσχεσθαι τὸ πῦρ δυνάμει μεγίστη (the fire, embraced by a strong force).

14.

*burst through the strength of the spheres.* I follow the reading of the MSS, which have ἀναρρήξας τὸ κράτος τῶν κύκλων, amended by Scott and Nock to ἀναρρήξας τὸ κύτος [burst through the container].

*harmonious structure.* Here, ἁρμονία implies the 'structure' of the κόσμος, the cosmic order [qv. the note on κόσμος in section 7] and which structure is harmonious [qv. ἁρμονίας ἐναρμόνιος in section 15].
vigour. ἐνέργεια. The words 'force' and 'energy' bring too many irrelevant modern connotations to the text, and 'vigour' well expresses the meaning of ἐνέργεια here, with the suggestion, as often elsewhere, of 'vigorous activity'.

*When she beheld.* This, as what follows suggests, is Physis, personified. In respect of beholding such beauty, cf. section 8 - *having seen the beauty of the cosmic order.*

*on Earth, his shadow.* τὸ σκίασμα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Cf. Diogenes Laertius [Lives of Eminent Philosophers 7.146, Zeno] not especially for the similarity - τὸ τῆς γῆς σκίασμα - but more for the interesting section, preceding this mention of the shadow of the moon on Earth during an eclipse, of how the cosmic order came into being [142] and for the equally interesting following discussion [147] which concerns the attributes and images of theos - the god - who is described as 'the father of all', who has both male and female aspects, and which aspects of the divinity are given their classical pagan names with their areas of authority specified. The interest lies in how the classical gods, and the creation of the cosmic order, and thus Hellenic paganism, were understood and remembered not long after the Hermetica was written, and thus how they echo in part some of the metaphysical themes in, and the cosmogony of, the Pœmandres tractate.

*Physis grasped* [...] intimately joined together. ἡ δὲ φύσις λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐρώμενον περιεπλάκη ὅλη καὶ ἐμίγησαν ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν. The sense of μίγνυμι here is that of a physical union, a sexual joining together - not of some 'philosophical mingling' of 'forms'. Similarly, περιπλέκω is not some ordinary 'embrace' but a sexual twinning (of limbs). Cf. Hesiod, Theogony, 375 - Κρίῳ δ’ Εὐρυβίν τέκεν ἐν φιλότητι μιγεῖσαι Ἀστραίον.

*jumelle*. For διπλοῦς. The much underused and descriptive English word jumelle - from the Latin gemellus - describes some-thing made in, or composed of, two parts, and is therefore most suitable here, more so than common words such as 'double' or 'twofold'.

deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal. θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον. Here, in respect of my choice of English words, I must admit to being influenced by Chapman's lovely poetic translation of the Hymn to Venus from the Homeric Hymns:  

That with a deathless goddess lay a deathful man

In respect of οὐσιώδης, I prefer, given the context, 'inner' - suggestive of 'real' - rather than the conventional 'essential'; although 'vital' is an alternative translation here, suggested by what Eusebius wrote (c.326 CE) about φῶς [phaos] pre-existing even before the cosmic order, with φῶς used by Eusebius to
mean Light in the Christian sense:

τὸ τε φῶς τὸ προκόσμιον καὶ τὴν πρὸ αἰώνων νοερὰν καὶ σοφίαν τὸν τε ζῶντα

[Historia Ecclesiastica, Book 1, chapter 2]

The Light of the proto-cosmos, the comprehension and vital wisdom existing before the Aëons

wyrd. For ἡ εἱμαρμένη. A much better choice, here, than either 'fate' or 'destiny' given how overused both those words now are and how their interpretation is also now so varied. An overview of how the concept may have been understood in the late Hellenic period (around the time the Hermetica was probably written) is given in the 2nd century CE discourse De Fato, attributed to Plutarch, which begins by stating that εἱμαρμένη has been described in two ways, as ἐνέργεια (vigorous activity) and as οὐσία (essence) -

πρῶτον τοίνυν ἴσθι, ὅτι εἱμαρμένη διχῶς καὶ λέγεται καὶ νοεῖται: ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐστιν ἐνέργεια ἡ δ’ οὐσία

of a wakeful one <...> There is some text missing, indicated by <...>, for after ἀϋπνος ἀπὸ ἀϋπνου the MSS have κρατεῖται [mastered/ruled by - cf. 4 Maccabees 2.9 ᾖ ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου κρατεῖται διὰ τὸν λογισμὸν]. Although some suggestions have been made as to this missing text (such as "ruled by love and sleep" [ἔρωτος καὶ ἱπνου] - they are purely conjectural.

16.

<...> my perceiveration. Again, the suggestions for the missing text are purely conjectural.

a mysterium esoteric. For κεκρυμμένον μυστήριον. The term mysterium - a truth or insight or knowledge about something, which is considered religious and/or metaphysical ('hermetic') and which is unknown/unrevealed to or as yet undiscovered by others, and hence 'mysterious' to them - expresses the meaning of the Greek here (as the word mystery by itself does not). Likewise in respect of esoteric - kept concealed or which is concealed/hidden to most or which is revealed to an individual by someone who already 'knows' what the mysterium in question is.

Hence why I write a mysterium here rather than the mysterium, and why "a mysterium, esoteric even to this day", is better than the rather bland "the mystery kept hidden until this very day".

possessed the physis of the harmonious seven. The seven viziers. A more literal translation would be 'possessed the physis of the [harmonious] structure of the seven'. Here, physis could mean 'character' (of a person) or something more archetypal/elemental of which such character or personal characteristics are an
seven male-and-female humans. These seven humans, born from Physis, are thus akin to both theos and the child of theos who also have a male (a masculous) and a female (a muliebral) aspect. That is, although mortal - having been brought forth by and from divinities - these humans are, in their very being, both male and female and thus, in their creation, dissimilar to ordinary mortals, for reasons which Pœmandres goes on to explain.

In addition, these seven mortals have the same or a similar physis as the 'harmonious seven'.

ætherean. For μεταρσίους. Ætherean is the metaphorical sense of μεταρσίους here, not 'exalted' or 'sublime' (which imply some sort of human admiration or some sort of religious attitude/apprehension). For the sense is similar to what Dio Chrysostom wrote, in his tract on leadership, about the sons of Boreas, who - semi-divine - have the attributes of their father and who are depicted in and belonging to their natural realm:

ὁποίους τοὺς Βορεάδας ἐνεθυμήθησάν τε καὶ ἔγραψαν οἱ γραφεῖς ἐλαφρούς τε καὶ μεταρσίους ταῖς τοῦ πατρὸς αὔραις συνθέοντας [Orationes, 4.1]

Ætherean is used in the poetic sense - that is, 'supernal', meaning of the harmonious - the heavenly - cosmic order and also refined: of the essence, οὐσία, and thus not just ὕλη, substance (qv. section 10).

Primary explanation. πρῶτον λόγον [cf. Plato, Republic, Book 3 [395b] εἰ ἄρα τὸν πρῶτον λόγον διασώσομεν]. An explanation of our origins, as mortals, and thus of the 'first principle' that forms the basis of the 'hermetic weltanschauung'.

17.

those seven came into being in this way. It is interesting to compare 'these seven' with the 'nine' and the seven spheres (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, Moon) of the Somnium Scipionis described by Cicero:

Novem tibi orbibus vel potius globis conexa sunt omnia, quorum unus est caelestis, extimus, qui reliquis omnes complectitur; summus ipse deus arcens et continens ceteros; in quo sunt infixi illi, qui volvuntur, stellarum cursus sempiterni. Cui subjecti sunt septem, qui versantur retro contrario motu atque caelum. Ex quibus summum globum possidet illa, quam in terris Saturniam nominant. Deinde est hominum generi prosperus et salutaris ille fulgor, qui dicitur Iovis; tum rutilus horribilisque terris, quem Martium dicitis; deinde subter median fere
regionem Sol obtinet, dux et princeps et moderator luminum reliquorum, mens mundi et temperatio, tanta magnitudine, ut cuncta sua luce lustret et compleat. Hunc ut comites consequuntur Veneris alter, alter Mercurii cursus, in infimoque orbe Luna radiis solis accensa convertitum. Infra autem iam nihil est nisi mortale et caducum praeter animos munere deorum hominum generi datos; supra Lunam sunt aeternae omnia. Nam ea, quae est media et nona, Tellus, neque movetur et infima est, et in eam feruntur omnia nutu suo pondera. [*De Re Publica*, Book VI, 17]

Nine orbs - more correctly, spheres - connect the whole cosmic order, of which one - beyond the others but enfolding them - is where the uppermost deity dwells, enclosing and containing all. There - embedded - are the constant stars with their sempiternal movement, while below are seven spheres whose cyclicity is different, and one of which is the sphere given the name on Earth of Saturn [...]

**Muliebral.** For θηλυκῆ, The term muliebral derives from the classical Latin word *muliebris*, and is used here to refer to those positive traits, abilities, and qualities, that are conventionally and historically associated with women. Muliebral is more expressive - and more redolent of the meaning of the Greek - than 'feminine', especially given how the word 'feminine' is so often misused (sometimes in a pejorative way).

It should be noted that the older reading of θηλυκῆ γὰρ ὁ ἀὴρ makes Air - not Earth - the muliebral one.

**Lustful.** For ὀχευτικόν. The sense is similar to ἐπιθυμία as used, for example, in Romans 14.13 - τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιεῖσθε εἰς ἐπιθυμίας [make no intention regarding the flesh, to gratify its carnal desires]

**From Æther, the pneuma.** ἐκ δὲ αἰθέρος τὸ πνεῦμα ἔλαβε. It is best to transliterate αἰθήρ - as Æther - given that it, like Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and pnuema, is an elemental principle, or a type of (or a particular) being, or some-thing archetypal.

**cyclic until its completion.** μέχρι περιόδου τέλους. I follow the reading of the Turnebus MS, taking περιόδος to refer to a posited cyclic - periodic - cosmic order, of Aeons, which periodicity continues until its purpose is achieved/fulfilled/completed.

**18.**

**the connexions between all things.** Compare this unbinding of the cosmic bonds with the 'connexions' that make up the nine spheres in the Somnium Scipionis [qv. the quotation from Cicero, above].
bringing into being portions that were masculous with the others muliebral. ἐγένετο τὰ μὲν ἀρρενικὰ ἐν μέρει τὰ δὲ θηλυκὰ ὁμοίως. The meaning of ἀρρενικὰ and θηλυκὰ are not 'male' and 'female' but rather masculous (masculine) and muliebral (of or considered appropriate to women).

propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning. The same Greek words - αὐξᾶνεσθε and πληθύνεσθε - occur in LXX, Genesis 1.22: ἡμλόγησεν αὐτά ὁ θεὸς λέγων αὐξᾶνεσθε καὶ πληθύνεσθε ["Theos praised them, saying: propagate and spawn"; Tyndale - "God blessed them saying, grow and multiply"; KJV - "God blessed them saying, Be fruitful and multiply"].

creations and artisements. κτίσματα καὶ δημιουργήματα. Although κτίσμα is generally translated here as 'creature' (as also for example in most translations of Revelation 5.13) I incline toward the view, given the context, that the more general sense of a 'creation' (or 'created thing') is meant - cf. Strabo, Geography, Book 16. 1 [ἥς ἐστι κτίσμα ἡ Βαβυλών] where what is described is a construct, a creation - a work constructed by or on behalf of someone. Here, what is described are the creations of theos.

In respect of 'artisements', see section 10.

the perceiver. ὁ ἔννους.

Eros as responsible for death. τὸν ἀίτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα. The consensus is, and has been, that ἔρωτα here signifies 'carnal desire' - or something similar - so that it is assumed that what is meant is some sort of ascetic (or Gnostic or puritanical) statement about how sexual desire should be avoided or at the very least controlled. However, this seems rather at variance with the foregoing - regarding propagating and spawning - which inclines me to suggest that what is meant here is 'eros', not necessarily personified as the classical deity (ἤδ᾽ Ἔρος ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ᾽ ἄνθρωπων δάμναται ἐν στήθεσι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν), although the comparison is interesting, but rather as an elemental or archetypal principle, akin to νοῦς and λόγος. Consider, for example, the following from Daphnis and Chloe, written by Longus around the same time as the Corpus Hermeticum: πάντως γὰρ ὡδείς ἔρωτα ἑφυγεν ἢ φεύξεται µέχρις ἂν κάλλος ᾖ καὶ ὀφθαλµοὶ βλέπωσι [Book 1, Proem, 4 - "no one can avoid or has ever been able to avoid Eros, while there is beauty and eyes which perceive"]]. In modern terms, few - poetically, metaphorically, none - have avoided or could avoid, at some time in their life, the unconscious power of the anima/animus.

Eros - as some-thing similar to an archetypal principle, applicable to or of (existing in/part of) "all beings/creations/things" - might also go some way toward explaining the καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα that follows in the text (for example in the Turnebus MS) for which various emendations have been proposed, including omitting it altogether.
foreknowing, through wyrd.....coagulations. The foreknowing of theos, which enabled theos through wyrd and the cosmic structure to 'found the generations'. The coagulations, the copulation, of beings (created things).

self-knowledge. ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν. A pedantic aside: here, as often elsewhere, I have gone against convention (grammatical and otherwise) by, where possible, choosing neutral personal pronouns, thus avoiding sentences such as "And he who has self-knowledge..." This sometimes results in using third person plural pronouns - such as 'their' and 'they' - as if they were personal pronouns, or using constructs such as "the one of self-knowledge" or "whoever has self-knowledge". In addition, it should be noted that the grammatical categorization of a word (male, female, gender neutral) is only a grammatical categorization and does not always reflect the nature of the being that that word denotes or refers to.

a particular benefit. τὸ περιούσιον ἀγαθόν. Literally, 'the particular benefit' [an alternative, possibly better, translation would be 'the esoteric benefit']. What the text refers to is not some abstract 'good' but rather what is good for, what benefits, the person. Thus, self-knowledge can lead to a particular, a specific, benefit.

perceptively. αἰσθητῶς - cf. Strabo, Geography, Book 3, chapter 5.1, a description of a high tide; of the sea, due to the moon, begin to perceptively/visibly both rise and go far onto the shore - ἄρχεσθαι διοιδεῖν τὴν θάλατταν καὶ ἐπιβαίνειν τῆς γῆς αἰσθητῶς μέχρι μεσουρανήσεως.

20.

to discover things. That is, discover/apprehend for yourself, to reveal (dis-cover) the nature of things, and thus fully understand them; qv. section 3 ('apprehend the physis of beings') and section 6 ('then discover phaos and become familiar with it') and section 7 ('such I observed and discovered because of those words of Pœmandres').

why death is expected for those who are in death. διὰ τί ἄξιοί εἰσι τοῦ θανάτου οἱ ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ ὄντες. Somewhat obscure, given the phrase 'in death' and given that what follows - "because originally..." - does not really offer an explanation of it.

I take the meaning of ἀξιόω here to be 'expect' rather than 'worthy' given (i) what the English phrase 'they are worthy of death' (or 'they deserve death') implies, an implication - a moralizing attitude - that is not justified by either the immediate context or the rest of the text, and (ii) usages such as (a) νῦν παρ᾽ ύμῶν τὸ αὐτὸ ἀξιόμενον κοιμᾶται ['we now expect to receive the same from you'; Thucydides, Peloponnesian War; Book 1, chapter 43] and (b) ὥστε οὐκ
οἴκτου οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἄξιοί εἰσιν, ἀλλὰ τιμωρίας ['they are expected to be punished not pitied', Hyperides, Orations Against Philippides, 2.12]

Nourishes. ἀρδεύεται here is obviously metaphorical, as it literally means "is irrigated/watered" as in Diodorus Siculus when he describes India - τὰ πολλὰ δὲ τῆς χώρας ἀρδεύεται καὶ διὰ τοῦτο διττοὺς ἔχει τοὺς κατ’ ἐτος καρποὺς ['much of the land is irrigated which is why there are two yields a year'; Bibliotheca Historica, Book 2, 35.3]

21.

progress within themselves. εἰς αὐτὸν χωρεῖ. Literally, 'progress to (or proceed/advance toward) him', with the usual assumption being that it is theos that is meant (hence, 'proceed toward theos'), with the alternative translation, of 'progress to themselves', ignored. However, given the immediate context - of a self-discovery - and given examples such as Mark 7.15 (εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτὸν, entering into him) and given that (insofar as I understand it) the tractate concerns (i) self-knowing, (ii) a 'mysterium' that is esoteric, and (iii) a desire to know and to understand 'the phyxis of beings', rather than a religious 'progressing toward god' à la Thomas à Kempis, then I am inclined to favour the somewhat radical translation of 'within themselves'.

the father of all beings. ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων. The word 'all' by itself does not really capture the sense of ὅλων here, which is 'all beings'. The phrase ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων occurs in many other writings, some of which are Christian. For instance in the Τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰουστίνου πρὸς Τρύφωνα Ἰουδαῖον Διάλογος [The Dialogue of Justinus with Trypho, a Jew] where it is said in the context of Christ being crucified, dying, and then being raised again by 'the father of all' for the benefit of all human beings - τὸν ἑαυτοῦ Χριστὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐκ παντὸς γένους ἄνθρωπων ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων τὰς πάντως κατάρας ἀναδέξασθαι ἐβουλήθη (xcv, 2).

However, interestingly and relevant here, the phrase also occurs in the polemic by Irenaeus against the 'heresy of gnosticism' - the Adversus Haereses [ἔλεγχος καὶ άνατροπή της ψευδωνύμου γνώσεω] - written not long before the Ρημάνδρες tractate:

μεταδοῦναι σοι θέλω τῆς ἐμῆς χάριτος ἐπειδὴ ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων τὸν ἄγγελόν σου διαπαντὸς βλέπει πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ὁ δὲ τόπος τοῦ μεγέθους ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστι δι’ ἡμᾶς ἐγκαταστῆσαι (Book I, Chapter 13, 3)

I desire to pass on to you my Charis because the father of all beings has observed that your angel is constantly before him

These are the words Irenaeus ascribes to a person called Marcus, 'the heretic'; words used by this person skilled in the trickery of sorcery (μαγικῆς κυβείας
ἐμπειρότατον) to, apparently, entice men and wealthy women to be his followers. Irenaeus then goes on, in a passage also quoted by Eusebius in his Historia Ecclesiastica (4.11.5), to describe some of the rites - the 'disgusting initiation into the mysteries' - of these people, and which rites include a 'mystical marriage' (πνευματικὸν γάμον) as well as a doxology to 'the father and the mother', εἰς ὄνομα ἄγνωστου πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων εἰς ἀλήθειαν μητέρα τῶν πάντων, and which doxology, with its contrast between ὅλων (ascribed to the father) and πάντων (ascribed to the mother) may go some way toward explaining the meaning of ὅλων as used here, in the Pœmandres tractate, given that μητέρα πάντων - as Γαία, Earth Mother - is the subject of, among other things, one of the Homeric hymns, Εἲς Γῆν Μητέρα Πάντων, where She is described as πρέσβιστος, the elder among beings, and the mother of the gods, θεῶν μήτηρ.

Thus, πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων as the father of all beings, and μητέρα τῶν πάντων as the mother of being, of all Life, both mortal and immortal.

22.

respectful deeds. ὁσίοις. A difficult word to translate, given that most of the English alternatives - such as religious, pious, holy, devout, blessed, sinless, saintly, humble - have acquired, over centuries, particular religious meanings, often associated with Christianity or types of asceticism; meanings which, in my view, are not or may not be relevant here, and whose use would distort one's understanding of the text.

The correct meaning is someone who, aware of or sensitive to the difference between the numinous and un-numinous [regarding 'numinous', see the note on ἅγιος in section 5], seeks to avoid, in their behaviour, what might cause them to hubriatically 'overstep the limits' and thus unbalance them, so taking them away from that natural balance and that respect for the numinous, which they personally, by their (or a particular) way of living (personal, religious, spiritual, mystical, or otherwise) seek or desire to cultivate, or which (and importantly) is a natural part of their admirable (and often admired) character. For example:

ἐκεῖνός γε μὴν ὑμνῶν οὔποτ᾽ ἔληγεν ὡς τοὺς θεοὺς οἴοιτο οὔδὲν ἤττον ὁσίοις ἔργοις οὐδὲν ἐλπίζειν ἡμῶν ἄνθρώπων ἄνθρωποι ἐλπίζειν ἄριστος ἤδεις καὶ ὁπότε εὐτυχοὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ὑπερεφρόνει ἀλλὰ θεοῖς χάριν ἤδεις καὶ θαρρῶν πλείουσα ἐθεοῦ ἡ ὁμοίων ἠχιστο εἰθίστο δὲ φοβούμενος μὲν ἠλαρός φαίνεσθαι εὐτυχῶν δὲ πράσος εἶναι [Xenophon, Agesilaus, 11.2]

this person, whom I praise, never ceased to believe that the gods delight in respectful deeds just as much as in consecrated temples, and, when blessed with success, he was never prideful but rather gave thanks to the gods. He also made more offerings to them when
he was confident than supplications when he felt hesitant, and, in appearance, it was his habit to be cheerful when doubtful and mild-mannered when successful.

For these reasons, I have translated not as one English word, but as the phrase 'respectful deeds'. See also the note on εὐσεβέω below.

honourable. ἀγαθός. The sense is not of being 'good' in some moralistic, sanctimonious, superior, way, but rather of being of noble character, as for example described in the Corpus Aristotelicum:

τῆς δὲ φρονήσεως ἐστὶ τὸ βουλεύσασθαι, τὸ κρίναι τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ αἱρετά καὶ φευκτά, τὸ χρῆσθαι πάσι καλῶς τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἀγαθοῖς, τὸ ὀμιλῆσαι ὀρθῶς [De Virtutibus et Vitiis Libellus 1250a]

It is part of wisdom to accept advice, to distinguish the honourable, the dishonourable, and all that is, in life, acceptable or to be avoided; to fairly use all resources; to be genuine in company

refined. καθαροῖς. Literally it means 'physically clean', often in the sense of being in a state of ritual purification: qv. the inscription on one of the ancient tablets (totenpasse) found in Thurii - ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά χθονίων βασίλεια (in arrivance, purified from the purified, mistress of the chthonic).

Since the English word 'pure' is unsuitable given its connotations - religious, sanctimonious, political, and otherwise - I have opted for the not altogether satisfactory 'refined'.


aware of the numinous. εὐσεβοῦσι. As with ὁσίοις, εὐσεβέω is a difficult word to translate, given that most of the English alternatives - such as reverent, pious - have acquired, over centuries, particular religious meanings, often associated with Christianity or types of asceticism. The correct sense is 'aware of the numinous', and thus imbued with that sense of duty, that sense of humility - or rather, an awareness of their human limitations - which makes them appreciate and respect the numinous in whatever form, way, or manner they appreciate, feel, intuit, apprehend, or understand, the numinous, be it in terms of the gods, the god, Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ᾽ Ἐρινύες, God, or whatever. It is this awareness which inclines a person toward 'respectful deeds' [qv. ὁσίοις, above].
soon acquire knowledge of the whole. εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι. Knowledge of 'the whole picture'; of what has been and is being discussed: perceiveration; the cosmic structure; the nature of humans; the seven viziers; and so on. The sense is not "gnosis of all things", which - in its hubris - is incompatible with the immediately proceeding mention of εὐσεβέω and ὁσίοις.

affectionately gracious toward. There are two ways of interpreting τὸν πατέρα ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς and what follows. (i) As if it is some kind of Christian eulogy by the faithful, with mention of "lovingly propitiating the father" and the "singing of hymns" to him; and (ii) in a rather more religiously neutral way with phrases such as ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς and words such as ὑμνεῖσιν suggesting the more Hellenic "affectionately gracious" and "celebrating in song". I have chosen the latter, as it is, in my view, more in harmony with the rest of the text.

the influencing impressions. αἰσθήσεις. What is meant here is not simply 'the [bodily] senses' nor what is perceptible to or perceived by the senses, but rather those particular impressions, conveyed by the senses, which influence a person in a way which is disliked because they do or they can affect a person in a manner detrimental to their immortality. That is, not all 'feelings' nor all 'sensations' are meant but only those which impresses upon [cf. Cicero, Academica, 2.6, impressum effectumque] a person in a certain way and thus affect that person also in a certain way, as 'impressionable feelings' do:

αὐτὸς δὲ διὰ ποιημάτων φιλοσοφεῖ, καθάπερ Ἡσίοδός τε καὶ Ξενοφάνης καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς κριτήριον δὲ τὸν λόγον εἶπε: τάς τε αἰσθήσεις μὴ ἀκριβεῖς ὑπάρχειν φησὶ γοῦν [Diogenes Laertius, Parmenides, 9.3]

he himself, through the form of verse, presented his knowledge, as did Hesiod, Xenophanes and Empedocles, stating that it was a way of judging what was reasonable since impressionable feelings were not an accurate enough starting point

This is the type of 'impression' - the type of influence - meant by some alchemical texts, for example, in the Compound of Alchymy, by Ripley, contained in the Theatrum Chemicum Britanicum ['the Body of the Spryte taketh impression' (ix. xi)] and also, some centuries later, by Hume in his Treatise on Human Nature ['those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name impressions' (I. i. 12)]. Cf. also Aristotle, Poetics 1451a - τοῦ δὲ μήκους ὅρος ὁ μὲν πρὸς τοὺς ἀγώνας καὶ τὴν αἰσθήσεων οὐ τῆς τέχνης ἐστίν - where what is meant is the 'impression' made upon an audience, which thus influences them.

the bad. The usual translation of κακός here, as often elsewhere, is 'evil'. However, I regard such a translation as unhelpful, given that the English word 'evil' is (1) now often interpreted and understood in a moralistic, preconceived,
way according to some theological dogma/criteria and/or according to some political/social doctrine, and (2) that it does not denote what the classical and the Hellenic term κακός does.

Classically understood κακός is what is bad in the sense of some-thing rotten or unhealthy, or – the opposite of κάλος – what is displeasing to see. κακός is also what is unlucky, a misfortune, and/or injurious, as for example in The Agamemnon

τὸ μὲν γυναῖκα πρῶτον ἄρσενος δίχα
ήθαι δόμοις ἐρημου ἔκπαγλον κακὸν  (vv. 862-3)

Primarily, for a lady to be separate from her mate - To remain unprotected by family - is a harsh misfortune

When applied to a person, the sense is of a 'rotten' person; someone with bad, harmful, physis; a bad - dishonourable, weak, cowardly - personal character; someone whose nature, for examples, inclines them toward doing harm and doing what is generally considered to be wrong.

This sense is still appropriate to Hellenic usage. For example, in respect of Romans 12.17 with its contrast of κακός and κάλος:

μηδενὶ κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόντες προνοούμενοι καλὰ ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀνθρώπων

Do not render what is bad with what is bad; rather, show concern for what all humans see is good

Similarly with the synonym σαπρός, as for example in Luke 6.43-5:

Οὐ γὰρ ἐστιν δένδρον καλὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν σαπρόν, οὐδὲ πάλιν δένδρον σαπρὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν, ἐκαστὸν γὰρ δένδρον ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου καρποῦ γινώσκεται· ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἀνθρώπος ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ τῆς καρδίας προφέρει τὸ ἀγαθὸν, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ προφέρει τὸ πονηρὸν· ἐκ γὰρ περισσεύματος καρδίας λαλεῖ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ

For no healthy tree brings forth rotten fruit just as a rotten tree cannot bring forth healthy fruit. For each tree is judged by its fruit. A good person from the store of good in their heart brings forth what is good, and a bad person from their bad store brings forth what is bad; for it is because of an overflowing heart that the mouth speaks.

23. 
hubriatic. ἀσεβέσι; someone lacking in or who is arrogantly disdainful of
σέβομαι, of what is regarded as honourable, revered, respected. Someone who is thus 'hubriatic'. It is the opposite of εὐσεβέω, that is, the opposite of someone who is aware of and respectful of the numinous.

the avenging daemon. τῷ τιμωρῷ δαίμον.

Τιμωρῷ is an epithet of the god Mars, mentioned by Cassius Dio Cocceianus in his Historiae Romanae when he recounts how Caligula, celebrating the murder of someone, sent three daggers to the temple of Mars the Avenger, in Rome, as offerings to the god - ξιφίδια τρία τῷ Ἄρει τῷ Τιμωρῷ ἐς [Book 59, chapter 22 v.7].

Correctly understood, a δαίμων (daemon) is neither a 'demon' nor one of the pantheon of major Greek gods - θεοί - but rather a lesser type of divinity who might be assigned by those gods to bring good fortune or misfortune to human beings and/or to watch over certain human beings and especially particular numinous (sacred) places.

which tests them. καὶ τοῦτον βασανίζει. The sense here is rather obscure, with some proposed emendations (for example, οὕτως, and τοῦτο for τοῦτον). I take the sense here of βασανίζω to be 'tested', as in being 'put to the test'; a sense in accord with what precedes and with what follows.

24.

Anados. ἀνοδός. A transliteration, as the word has specific meanings in ancient Greek 'mystery cults' and in Hellenic 'mysticism', one of which meanings is the ascent, or progress, or journey, of the initiate/individual toward their goal, however that goal/ascent/journey is described and/or understood, and/or represented (symbolically, mythologically, or otherwise). Quite often, the journey - the 'way up' - is described as the one between the living and the dead (the next life) or as one from the chthonic (the underworld) to our mortal world; which journey sometimes involves a symbolic/mythological death and then a rebirth.

the dissolution of the physical body allows that body to be transformed. ἐν τῇ ἀναλύσει τοῦ σώματος τοῦ υλικοῦ παραδίδωσιν αὐτὸ τὸ σῶμα εἰς ἀλλοίωσιν. Literally, 'in the dissolution of the material body it hands over that body to alteration'.

ethos. ἦθος. Here, ethos in the personal sense; the 'spirit' - the personality - of an individual: their traits, character, disposition, nature, temperament.

25.

in the first realm. The sphere of the Moon, the first of the seven
planetary/alchemical/astrological spheres, realms, or emanations - the ἑβδομάς; hebdomad, septenary system - that, in respect of the journey (ἄνοδος) of the mortal toward immortality, form the basis of, are emanations of, the harmonious cosmic structure (qv. sections 9 and 14). On this journey, the mortal passes through each realm - sphere - in turn.

which grows and which fades. Cf. Sextus Empiricus - ταύτην δὲ ήτοι αύξητικήν ἥ μειωτικήν [Adversus Mathematicos, IX, 393]

arrogance of command. Reading ὑπερηφανίαν not προφανίαν.

26.

ogdoadic physis. ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν. An interesting and important term, often overlooked and often misinterpreted. What is meant is not a realm - ζώνῃ - or sphere, similar to but 'beyond' the seven realms, but rather 'of what' the mortal has become, is reborn as, at the end of the journey: partaking in and being of 'the ogdoadic physis', and thus sharing the being/existence of those who have, or who have attained, that particular type of being/existence/physis. The existence, that is, of an immortal beyond the seven emanations.

with the others there, celebrates the father in song. ὑμεῖι σὺν τοῖς οὖσι τὸν πατέρα. Again - qv. section 22 - not 'hymns' in the Christian sense but rather celebrating in song/verse/chant; celebrating the father of this mortal, the parent of all mortals, and ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων, the 'grandfather' of all beings (qv. section 21).

force. δύναμις. Cf. section 7. Those forces, those particular powers - or, more precisely, that type (or those types) of being(s) or existence - that are not only beyond the septenary system but beyond the ogdoadic physis of those mortals who have, because of their journey (ἄνοδος) through the septenary system, achieved immortality.

It is therefore easy to understand why some considered there were, or represented their understanding/insight by, 'nine' (seven plus two) fundamental cosmic emanations, or by nine realms or spheres [qv. the quote from Cicero in section 17] - the seven of the hebdomad, plus the one of the 'ogdoadic physis' mentioned here, plus the one (also mentioned here) of what is beyond even this 'ogdoadic physis'. However, as this text describes, there are seven realms or spheres - a seven-fold path to immortality, accessible to living mortals - and then two types of existence (not spheres) beyond these, accessible only after the mortals has journeyed along that path and then, having 'offered up' certain things along the way (their mortal ethos), 'handed over their body to its death'. Ontologically, therefore, the seven might somewhat simplistically be described as partaking of what is 'causal' (of what is mortal) and the two types of existence beyond the seven as partaking of - as being - 'acausal' (of what is immortal). Thus, Pœmandres goes on to say, the former mortal - now immortal -
moves on (from this first type of 'acausal existence') to become these forces (beyond the ogdoadic physis) to thus finally 'unite with theos': αὐτοὶ εἰς δυνάμεις ἑαυ τοὺς παραδιδόασι καὶ δυνάμεις γενόμενοι ἐν θεῷ γίνονται.

26.

**become united with theos.** ἐν θεῷ γίνονται. Literally, '[they] become in theos', or '[they] enter into theos', although given what follows - θεωθῆναι - what is meant is 'become of/be united with theos', and thus 'become-of' what is no longer mortal but rather both immortal and 'of theos'.

**become of theos.** θεωθῆναι. This does not mean 'made divine/god', or 'achieve divinity' or 'become god/a god', or deification, but rather, having become immortal, to be (re)united with theos and thus, by such a 'becoming', re-present (become-of) in that new (acausal) existence the numinosity of theos, and which return and re-presentation is the real aim of our mortal lives and the function of λόγος, and of the λόγοι (such as pneumal logos and the phaomal logos). That is, as explained in some of the rather neglected works of Maximus of Constantinople [qv. Migne Patrologiae Graeca, 90 and 91], Θεώσις in the sense of reunited with theos - ultimately because of ἀγάπη - without actually being or becoming 'a divinity' or 'God':

τῆς ἐπὶ τῷ θεωθῆναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον μυστικῆς ἐνεργείας λήψεται πέρας κατὰ πάντα τρόπον χωρὶς μόνης δηλονότι τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν κατ οὐσίαν ταυτότητος. Quæstiones ad Thalassium de Scriptura Sacra, XXII [Patrologiae Graeca, 90, c.0318]

the end of the opus mysterium of human beings becoming of Theos can be in all ways except one, namely that of having the identity of His Essence

**the noble goal.** τὸ ἀγαθὸν τέλος. This might well be taken as an axiom of the 'hermetic' weltanschauung presented in this tractate. In respect of ἀγαθός as honourable/noble, see the note in section 22.

**those who seek to acquire knowledge.** Given the use here of the word γνῶσις, the sense could be interpreted, and has by others been interpreted, to mean 'those who seek to acquire/attain gnosis'.

**other mortals can - through theos - escape.** I take the sense of σώζω here be to 'escape', for the English word 'saved' now imposes, after nearly two thousand years of scriptural exegesis and preaching, various religious preconceptions on the text. Also, the usual translation of 'saved by god' is somewhat at variance with the hermetic/gnostic weltanschauung which suggests a progression - ἄνοδος - through the realms/spheres in order to attain immortality.
For the 'escape' is from the mortal to the immortal, and therefore to be 'saved', because of theos, so that (qv. section 21) they can "progress to return to Life"

27.

joined with those forces. The meaning here is somewhat obscure, although it possibly signifies that Pœmandres leaves the mortal realm and rejoins - returns to - his existence, beyond the hebdomad, where those forces/powers exist.

an insight of great importance. μεγίστην θέαν. An important 'insight into' the workings of the cosmos, immortality, and the nature of mortals, rather than 'a vision' or a 'revelation'.

awareness of the numinous. See the note on 'aware of the numinous'/εὐσεβέω in section 22.

earth-bound mortals. ἄνδρες γηγενεῖς. The literal meaning is 'earth-born mortals', which is rather obscure here, although what is meant is probably not the somewhat pejorative 'primordial/primitive' type [qv. ἐστι ἐν τῇ ἀκροπόλι τῇ ἁρμονίᾳ ἐρεθισθέω τῷ γηγενέος λεγομένῳ εἰς τούς ἥρας, Herodotus, 8.55; and ἄλλοι δὲ γηγενεῖς καὶ χαλκάσπιδας, Strabo, 10.3] nor even the 'earthly/rural' type [qv. μὴ μισήσῃς ἐπίπονον ἐργασίαν καὶ γεωργίαν ὑπὸ Ὀψίστου ἐκτισμένην, LXX, Sirach 7.15] but rather the contrast, mentioned in section 15, between those 'deathful of body' and the 'deathlessness of the inner mortal'; with a similar contrast occurring in Plato [οὐδὲν γὰρ γηγενές Ὀλυμπίων ἐντιμότερον ἀλλ᾽ ὁ περὶ ψυχῆς ἄλλως δοξάζων ἀγνοεῖ ὡς θαυμαστοῦ τούτου κτήματος ἀμελεῖ, Laws 727e]. Hence my suggestion of 'earth-bound', which is apposite considering what follows - οἱ μέθῃ καὶ ὕπνῳ ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδε δωκότες.

sleepfulness. To translate ὑπνος here as simply 'sleep' is not particularly helpful to the reader, as what seems to be implied is not normal everyday 'sleep' - a necessity for all humans - since such normal healthy sleep is a strange companion for 'intoxicating liquor'. Regarding ὑπνος, Jebb in his commentary on Antigone in respect of ὑπνος ὁ παντογήρως (v.606) mentioned that "sleep, the renewer of vigour, could not be described as 'bringing old age to all'. Nor can the epithet be explained as 'enfeebling all', in the sense of 'subduing them'; nor, again, as 'attending on all, even to old age'," which led him to write that παντογήρως was probably corrupt and to suggest, as some others had done, an emendation.

The fact that sleep personified, as Hypnos/Somnus, is the brother of Death [qv. ἐνθ᾽ Ὕπνῳ ξύμβλητο κασιγνήτῳ Θανάτοιο, Iliad, 14.231] is also in favour of normal, healthy, sleep not being meant, as does what follows - θελγόμενοι ὑπνω ὀλόγῳ. Thus a possible alternative would be to interpret ὑπνω here somewhat metaphorically, either as a 'state of mind' (such as 'sleepwalking through life') or as something akin to soporation (an underused English word, from the Latin) with the meaning here of 'an inclination or a tendency to sleep excessively or
unnecessarily; to be inactive, drowsy, sleepful; disconnected from reality'. Hence my tentative interpretation - 'sleepfulness'.

_unknowing of theos_. ἀγνωσία τοῦ θεοῦ. Unknowing is a more suitable English word - given its meaning, usage (past and present) and given the context - than 'ignorance'

_stop your drunkenness_. παύσασθε δὲ κραιπαλώντες. Literally, 'cease to be intoxicated'. It is interesting to compare this preaching to what Plutarch wrote about Demosthenes:

όδυρομένου δὲ τοῦ Δημοσθένους πρὸς αὐτὸν ὅτι πάντων
φιλοποιώτατος ὅν τῶν λεγόντων καὶ μικρόν δέων καταναλωκέναι
τῇ τοῦ σώματος ἀκμήν εἰς τούτο χάριν οὐκ ἔχει πρὸς τὸν δήμου,
ἀλλὰ κραιπαλώντες ἄνθρωποι ναῦται καὶ ἀμαθεῖς ἀκούονται καὶ
κατέχουσι τὸ βῆμα, παρορᾶται δ᾽ αὐτός [Demosthenes, 7.1]

To him, Demosthenes complained that although he was an industrious orator and had expended much bodily vigour in pursuing that duty, he was not favoured by the people who ignored him but listened to those who were intoxicated, the ignorant, and sailors, when they and their like held the floor.

28.

_change your ways_. μετανοήσατε. Not 'repent', which imposes a particular religious interpretation upon the text.

_have kinship with the unknowing ones_. συγκοινωνήσαντες τῇ ἀγνοίᾳ. Kinship in the sense of being 'kindred spirits', or 'fellow travellers'.

_dark phaos_. σκοτεινοῦ φωτός. An interesting phrase, lost in translation when φως is translated as 'light'. See the note on phaos in section 4.

29.

_threw themselves down at my feet_. ἑαυτοὺς πρὸ ποδῶν μου ῥίψαντε. A literal translation, although, given what follows, it seems unlikely that this is a metaphorical expression of their eagerness to learn. Indeed, this whole section seems rather at variance with the rest of the text - especially considering the following καθοδηγὸς ἐγενόμην τοῦ γένους - although perhaps 'the guide', having only just been informed of certain esoteric matters by Poemandres, is here in this section somewhat obliquely revealing that he himself has yet (qv. section 25) to offer up "that eagerness which deceives; the arrogance of command; profane insolence."

_became a guide to those of my kind_. That is, not 'a guide to my race/mankind'
but a guide to those who, seeking immortality, desire to undertake the journey through the seven spheres and thus are akin to - of the same type as - the guide.

**informing them of the logoi**. τοὺς λόγους διδάσκων. The logoi [plural of logos] are - qv. the note on θεωθῆναι in section 26 - the various apparent forms (or emanations) of the logos, and include the pneumal logos, the phaomal logos, and the logos kyrios, previously mentioned in the text. They are often considered to be how the logos is sometimes manifest to us, as mortals who are yet to begin or are yet to progress far along the septenary path toward immortality. Furthermore, those who are on the journey - following the way to theos - are also logoi.

**logoi of sapientia**. σοφίας λόγους. Something more than just 'words of [the] wisdom' is meant, especially as the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical (or esoteric) context, in this case of 'the opus mysterium'. The use here, in my translation, of the terms *logoi* and *sapientia* is intended - as with transliterations such as phaos - to cause the reader to pause and perhaps engender in them a certain curiosity as to what the terms may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply, and to thus (and hopefully) convey something about the original text.

**celestial elixir**. ἀμβροσίου ὕδατος. Literally, 'ambrosial water'; the food/drink that, in mythology, confers and maintains the immortality of the gods and chosen mortals.

30.

**temperance of [the] psyche**. τῆς ψυχῆς νῆψις. Again transliterating ψυχής, since the English word 'soul' imposes particular - religious/philosophical, and/or modern - meanings on the text, whereas it may well be used here in its classical/Hellenic sense of 'spark' (or breath) of life; that is, as referring to that 'thing' (principle, or cause) which animates mortal beings making them 'alive', and which principle or cause was also personified as Psyche.

**genuine insight**. ἀληθινὴ ὅρασις. Cf. μεγίστην θέαν in section 27.

**expression of the logos**. It not clear how or in what form this manifestation of the logos occurs, although the context - of silence - might suggest that 'utterance' or 'speech' is not meant.

**the logos of authority**. τῆς αὐθεντίας λόγου. A similar expression occurs in section 3 also in reference to Pœmandres - τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς, the perceiveration of authority.

**this revealing**. I take the sense of ἀληθείας here to be not some abstract (undefined, probably contentious and thus possibly undefinable) 'truth' but rather as a revealing of what is 'genuine' as distinct from what is mere
'appearance'. Here, literally, 'the revealing' - of the nature of mortals, of the way to immortality, of logos and of theos.

31.

Agios o theos, father of all beings. ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων. For πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων, see the note in section 22.

I have given, as an intimation, a transliteration of the first part, as these are doxologies, similar to the Kyrie eleison [Κύριε ἐλέησον], and much (if not all) of their numinous/sacred/mystical/esoteric quality and meaning are lost when they are translated into plain - or into archaic, KJV type - English. Although they are best read/recited in the original Greek, the Latin preserves much of the numinosity of these and other such doxologies. The Latin of the nine doxologies given here is:

Sanctus deus pater universorum.
Sanctus deus, cuius consilium ad finem deducitur a propriis potentiis.
Sanctus deus, qui cognosci vult et cognoscitur a suis.
Sanctus es, qui verbo constituisti entia omnia.
Sanctus es, cuius universa natura imago nata est.
Sanctus es, quem natura non formavit.
Sanctus es, qui omni potentia es fortior.
Sanctus es, qui omni excellentia es maior.
Sanctus es, qui omnes superas laudes.

The Greek text is:

ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων.
ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς, οὗ ἡ βουλὴ τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων.
ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς, ὃς γνωσθῆναι βούλεται καὶ γινώσκεται τοῖς ἰδίοις.
ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ λόγῳ συστησάμενος τὰ ὄντα.
ἅγιος εἶ, οὐ πάσα φύσις εἰκὼν ἔφυ.
ἅγιος εἶ, ὅνῃ φύσις οὐκ ἐμόρφωσεν.
ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ πάσης δυνάμεως ἰσχυρότερος.
ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ πάσης ύπεροχῆς μείζων.
ἅγιος εἰ, ὁ κρείττων τῶν ἐπαίνων.

ἄγιος ὁ approximates to 'Numinous is' [theos] - qv. the note on ἅγιος in section 5 - and ἅγιος εἶ to 'Numinous are' [you].

As to why there are nine doxologies, it may be (and probably is) just a coincidence, or it may reflect the 7+2 structure of the 7 causal aspects (the hebdomad) and the 2 'acausal' modes of being beyond them (qv. the note on δύναμις in section 26).

his own arts. I take the sense of δυνάμεων here to be not 'powers', forces (or
something similar) but 'arts'; that is, those abilities, qualities, skills, and strengths - of the 'artisan-creator' - which are inherent in theos and express the very nature of theos. Abilities, qualities, skills, and strengths, which an artisan - with assistance and help and instruction from theos, the chief artisan - uses, for example, to 'fashion seven viziers' and the 'fine artisements of physis'. See sections 9-13 and the notes thereon.

whose disposition is to be recognized. γνωσθῆναι here with γινώσκεται is not exactly the straightforward '[who] wills/desires to be known' but rather the more subtle '[whose] disposition is to be recognized', and (i) disposition/inclination as an expression of the nature, the very being, of theos, (ii) to be recognized in the sense of to be perceived for who and what theos is, in essence, in very being. Those who so recognize theos - who thus understand and 'appreciate' theos and are cognizant of the type of Being theos is - are those who partake in some way, or who re-present or emanate, or who 'imitate' [qv. Thomas à Kempis, The Imitation of Christ] the nature of that Being; and which Being is therefore 'recognized/understood by those who are of his [type of] being,' although the Greek literally means "is recognized by his own".

Agios es. For ἅγιος εἶ. Combining the Latin with the Greek, for readability and expressiveness.

form all being. In both senses of the term 'form' - constitute, and form being into beings and which beings are or can be re-united with Being (theos) by logos.

you who engender all physis as eikon. The meaning and significance of this are often overlooked and often lost in translation. I have transliterated εἰκὼν as here it does not only mean what the English words 'image' or 'likeness' suggest or imply, but rather it is similar to what Maximus of Constantinople in his Mystagogia [Patrologiae Graeca, 91, c.0658] explains. Which is of we humans, and the cosmos, and Nature, and psyche, as eikons, although according to Maximus it is the Christian church itself (as manifest and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles and their successors and in scripture) which, being the eikon of God, enables we humans to recognize this, recognize God, be in communion with God, return to God, and thus find and fulfil the meaning of our being, our existence.

According to the hermetic weltanschauung, as outlined by Pœmandres here, all physis - the being, nature, character, of beings - their essence beyond the form/appearance their being is or assumes or is perceived as - re-presents (manifests, is an eikon of) theos. That is, the physis of beings can be considered not only as an emanation of theos but as re-presenting his Being, his essence. To recognize this, to recognize theos, to be in communion with theos, to return to theos, and thus become immortal, there is the way up (anados) through the seven spheres:
Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait. [Section 25]

you whom the Physis did not morph. Given the construction - ὃν ἡ φύσις - I have capitalized Physis here (see sections 14 and 17). By 'morph' is meant what the Greek term (ἐμόρφωσεν) implies, which is 'shape or transform' into some-thing-else, to give some-thing the 'semblance' of theos. That is, theos was, is, and remains, theos; there is no-thing resembling theos.

you who are mightier than all artifice. The artifice - the works, expedients, skill, manifestations, artisements, products, machinations, ingenuity, the 'domination', and the force - of others.

It is interesting to compare this might, the strength and power of theos, with what Epictetus writes about human strength in his Discourses:

οὔτε τύραννος κωλύσει με θέλοντα οὔτε δεσπότης οὔτε οἱ πολλοὶ τὸν ἕνα οὔθ᾽ ὁ ἰσχυρότερος τὸν ἀσθενέστερον: τοῦτο γὰρ ἀκώλυτον δέδοται ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἑκάστῳ [4.5]

neither a tyrannos nor some Lord shall negate my intent; nor some crowd although I be just one; nor someone stronger although I be weaker; since such unhindrance is a gift, to everyone, from theos

wordful. The expressive term 'wordful' is more suitable here than 'speech', and also contrasts well with 'ineffable' and 'inexpressible'.

32.

the knowledge. For τῆς γνώσεως, although 'acquiring the knowledge' and 'the gnosis' are alternatives, so that with the latter it reads "I ask of you to grant that I am not foiled in the gnosis germane to our essence", with the phrase 'our essence' referring to the essence - οὐσία - of both mortals and theos.

favour. χάρις. A gift, favour, or kindness, here from theos [χάρις θεοῦ] and which type of gift is also mentioned in the New Testament (for example, Luke, 2.40). See also the quotation from Irenaeus in the note on the father of all beings in section 21.

the unknowing. In respect of 'unknowing' see the note in section 27.
who are your children. In respect of υἱὸς as the gender neutral 'child', rather than 'son', see the note on υἱὸς θεοῦ in section 6, and also the note on gender neutrality under ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν in section 19.

share in [your] numinosity. For συναγιάζειν.

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Ιερός 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 - Ιερός 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 ιερός λόγος/ιεροί 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 paganus 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 Ιερός Λόγος most probably reasonably represents, like the Pymander tractate, a pagan metaphysical weltanschauung germene 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 Ιερός Λόγος hermetic tractate, had - like the Biblical Genesis story - antecedents. Such as

οἳ 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 ἀστρόεντος

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 υἱὸς ἠμι καὶ Ὠρανῶ ἀστερόεντος (5)

and also in a, purportedly Orphic, religious text (the Derveni papyrus) dating from c. 330 BCE {6} which contains the Hesiodian phrase οἳ 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 τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ 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 Ιερός 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 Ποεμάνδρες 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 Ποεμάνδρες tractate are to my translation of and commentary on that text 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 Ποεμάνδρες, 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.

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 Ποεμάνδρες 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)


{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 ΓῊΑΤΗΡΚΑΙΩΡΑΝΩΑΣΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΟΣ. That is, 'of Gaia and the starry heavens'.


{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 τούτων κομίσας τῆς ἀρχῆς λέγει δ' αὐτὴν μήτε ὕδωρ μήτε ἄλλο τι τῶν καλουμένων εἶναι στοιχείων ἀλλ' ἑτέραν τινὰ φύσιν ἀπειρον ἔξ ἡ ἀπαντας γίνεσθαι τους οὐρανους καὶ τούς 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.'


{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.*
Translation

[1] The numen of all beings is theos: numinal, and of numinal physis. The origin of what exists is theos, who is Perceiveration 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 Pneuma. 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 artisements, There will be renewance through incumbency, renewance through the divine And by the circumferent coursing of Physis.

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

***
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 exclaimat: ῾Ω δόξα, δόξα, μυρίοις δὴ βροτῶν οὐδὲν γεγώσι βίοτον ὡγκωσας 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 masculous) 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 Ἠργα καὶ Ἡμέραι [Works and Days], vv 213-218, wrote:

σὺ δ᾽ ἄκουε δίκης, μηδ᾽ ὕβριν ὀφελεῖς:
ὕβρις γάρ τε κακὴ δειλῇ βροτῷ: οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλὸς
215 ῥηιδίως φερέμεν δύναται, βαρύθει δὲ θ᾽ ὑπ᾽ αὐτῆς
ἔγκυρας ἄτησιν: ὀδὸς δ᾽ ἐτέρησι παρελθεῖν
κρείσσων ἐς τὰ δίκαια: Δίκη δ᾽ ὑπὲρ Ὕβριος ἵσχε
ἐς τέλος ἐξελθοῦσα: παθὼν δὲ 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 Ἐργα 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, Ἀτη) 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 ως πεπρωμένης οὐκ ἔστι θνητοῖς συμφορᾶς ἀπαλλαγή 
(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. θεὸς. 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 θεοί not as 'gods' but as 'deities' in 
the hope of providing a more balanced view of this particular ancient paganus 
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 των φύσων; 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
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.

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


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:

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 tripped 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:**

 νείκος (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. ὕφ' ἅµµῳ.* Regarding ἄµµῳ, qv. Xenophon,
**Apomnemoneumata** 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 χρόαν ἄμμῳ 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 ύγρός here and in *Pœmandres* 4.


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

**Coagulated.** πήγνυμι.

<particularize>. As in 'distinguish between'. The MSS have καταδιερώσι.

Various emendations have been proposed, including καταδιορώσι, while Wildberg has suggested that "and all of the deities..." - καὶ θεοὶ πάντες καταδιορώσι - was originally marginalia.

2.

**With all beings unformed and not yet presenced.** ἀδιορίστων δὲ ὄντων ἁπάντων 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 ὅθεν ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς μεταβολῆς ή 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...
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: πατὴρ τῶν ὀλων... οὗ ἡ βουλὴ 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 γίνεται 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 ἱεροί λόγοι, is an interesting question.

3.

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

<Seeding within them> the semination of rebirth. τὸ σπέρμα τῆς παλιγγενεσίας ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐσπερµολόγου. 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᾽ ἀπετεῖα ὡς τὶς ἄφη ἤ κακὸς ἤ ἄγαθος [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 εὑρεῖν - 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. qv. 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 λειτουργίας δυνάμεως εἴρηται περὶ ἐνεργείας διορίσωμεν τί τέ ἐστι ἡ ἐνέργεια καὶ ποὶόν τι... έστι δὴ ἐνέργεια τὸ ὑπάρχειν τὸ πρᾶγμα μὴ οὕτως ὡσπερ 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.** qv. the previous note on ἐνεργούσαν.

**understand divine influence as wyrdful change.** γνώσων 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 - qv. '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 disappearence in the night sky of certain constellations and stars:

θεοὺς μὲν αἰτῶ τῶν δὲ ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων
φρουρᾶς ἐτείας μῆκος, ἢν κοιμώμενος
στέγαις Ατρειδῶν ἀγκαθεν, κυνὸς δίκην,
ἄστρων κάτοιδα νυκτέρων ὁμήγυριν,
καὶ τῶς φέροντας χεῖμα καὶ θέρος βροτοῖς
λαμπροὺς δυνάστας, ἐμπρέποντας αἰθέρι
ἀστέρας, ὅταν φθίνωσιν, ἀντολάς 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.

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

The title given to the fourth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς, requires some consideration if it is to be translated without using English words that have, in the centuries since the text was written, acquired meanings which are not or which may not be relevant to or representative of the metaphysics, and the cosmogony, of such an ancient text; with an injudicious choice of words more often than not resulting in the modern reader projecting certain interpretations upon the text, as might be the case in translating, without some comment, κρατῆρ as 'basin', cup, or 'mixing bowl', μονάς as 'monad', and Τάτ as Thoth.

In respect of κρατῆρ, a more appropriate - and certainly more subtle - translation, given the esoteric nature and antiquity of the text, would be chaldron (an alternative spelling of 'cauldron'), since basin, cup, and 'mixing bowl' are not only too prosaic but also do not conjure the appropriate archetypal imagery: of the primal artisan-creator coagulating and mixing primal substances - qv. tractate III, Ἱερός Λόγος - to produce, to bring-into-being by means of Logos, the cosmic order and thence mortal beings.

In respect of μονάς, the transliteration monas would be more appropriate - and certainly more subtle - than 'monad' given that the term monad is now so often associated with such weltanschauungen as those termed Pythagorean/neo-Pythagorean and Gnostic, an association which may or may not be relevant here. Furthermore, monas has a long and interesting esoteric usage, including (somewhat recently) by John Dee in his Testamentum Johannis Dee Philosophi summi ad Johannem Gwynn, transmissum 1568 - a text included (on page 334)
in Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum, Containing Severall Poeticall Pieces of our Famous English philosophers, who have written the Hermetique Mysteries in their owne Ancient Language*, published in London in 1652 - who wrote "our Monas trewe thus use by natures Law, both binde and lewse", and who also entitled one of his works *Monas Hieroglyphica* (Antwerp, 1564), in which work he described (in Theorem XVIII) a septenary system somewhat similar to that of the Poemandres tractate:

In respect of Τάτ, while there is no disputing that Thoth is meant, what may or may not be implied by the name Thoth is whether or not there is a primarily Egyptian genesis for the metaphysics and the cosmogony of this particular tractate. For what does 'Egyptian' mean in the context of the Corpus Hermeticum, written when Egypt was a post-Ptolemaic Roman province where Hellenism still thrived? That is, is the text propounding a metaphysics and a cosmogony primarily redolent of indigenous, pre-Alexandrian, times, with Hermes Trismegistus simply a Hellenic name for the ancient Dynastic deity Thoth, and thus with the Greek Hermes possibly being a son of that ancient Egyptian deity? Or is the text redolent of a classical metaphysics and a cosmogony; or of a Hellenic metaphysics and cosmogony; or of some syncretism of Egyptian (pre-Alexandrian) weltanschauungen with Hellenic mysticism? Or has the author (or authors) of Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς simply used the name of an ancient deity - Thoth - in order to appeal to an audience of Hellenized Egyptians, or Greeks/Romans dwelling in Egypt, or because it seemed to add some esoteric gravitas to the text? Or, as the title might be taken to imply - of Hermes to Thoth - is it a text intended to inform Egyptians (Hellenized or expatriate Greeks/Romans, or otherwise) about Greek/Hellenic metaphysics and cosmogony, with Thoth thus regarded, symbolically, esoterically, or otherwise, as the son of the Greek divinity Hermes?

In this matter, I incline toward the view - based on some forty years of study of the Corpus Hermeticum and similar mystical and esoteric texts, classical, Hellenic, medieval, Arabic and otherwise - that what is imparted in this tractate, as with the Poemandres and Ιερός Λόγος, is primarily a mystical, and - for centuries - aural, Greek tradition, albeit one possibly influenced, over time and in some degree, by the metaphysical speculations of later philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. That is, that in Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς, we have an intimation of the metaphysics and the cosmogony taught to initiates of that (or those) ancient and aural and paganus Greek mystical tradition(s) mentioned by writers such as Herodotus. And an intimation that is not - a few borrowed illustrative terms notwithstanding - in any significant and metaphysical manner deriving from or influenced by Biblical stories or by early Christian theology or by indigenous Egyptian culture. In the matter of a paganus Greek mystical tradition, the opening of the fourth tractate is, metaphysically, very interesting:

Επειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός οὐ χερσίν ἄλλα
Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos, you should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being, as One only, who by thelesis formed all that is.

For it is incorrect and misleading to write about those three tractates - and some other tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum - as being in any way indigenously Egyptian. Rather, their genesis - the tradition they represented - was the Greek culture of post-Alexandrian Egypt, a cultural influence so evident in the numerous papyri found in places such as Oxyrhynchus, containing as such papyri do verses from Homer, Sappho, Menander, Sophocles, and other Greek authors.

Commentary, Translation, and Text

The references in the commentary here to the Poemandres and Ιερός Λόγος are to my translations of and commentary on those texts for, as I mentioned in my Ιερός Λόγος, 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 Poemandres, a certain technical - or rather, esoteric - vocabulary.

As with my Ιερός Λόγος, I have here, purely for readability, arranged the translation into (non-poetic) verses rather than long paragraphs. All translations in the commentary are mine.
Translation

[1] Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos
You should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being,
As One only, who by thelesis formed all that is.

That Being has no body that can be touched or seen or measured or which is separable
Or which is similar to any other body; not of Fire or Water or of Pneuma
Even though all such things are from that Being.
Since that Being is honourable, the desire was to entrust solely to that Being
Such a cosmic order on Earth:

[2] A cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings,
For just as the ever-living cosmic order had an advantage over them
So did they have an advantage over other living beings in their cosmos
Because of Logos and Perceiverance.
Thus did mortals perceive the works of theos, admire them,
Gaining knowledge of their creator.

[3] Thus, Thoth, to all mortals logos was assigned, but not perceiverance
Even though there was no ill-will, for such ill-will arrives not from there
But below, associated with mortals whose Psyche does not convey Perceiverance.

On account of what, father, did theos not assign perceiverance to all?
Son, the desire was to position it half-way between those psyches, as a reward.

[4] Where, then, was it placed?

In that large repleteful chaldron which was dispatched down
With an envoy assigned to declaim to the hearts of mortals:
If you have strength enough, immerse yourself in the chaldron
Should you accept you can ascend -
Having discovered how you came-into-being -
To the one who dispatched down that chaldron.

The many who understood that declaration and were immersive with perceiveration
Gained a certain knowledge, becoming more complete mortals
Through having received the perceiveration
While the many who misunderstood that declaration,
Having logos without the addition of perceiveration,
Are unperceptive regarding how and why they came-into-being.

[5] For they have the alertness similar to that of unthinking animals
And, having an angry and restive disposition,
Have no respect for what is really valuable
But instead follow bodily pleasures and their own desires
Confident as they are that mortals were born for such things.

And yet, Thoth, those who parten to that gift from theos become,
When set against their deeds, immortal instead of mortal
For they with their perceiverance apprehend the Earthly, the Heavenly,
And what is beyond the Heavens.
Having gone so far, they perceive what is honourable, and, having so perceived,
They regard what preceded this as a delay, as a problem
And, with little regard for whatever is embodied and disembodied,
They strive toward the Monas.

[6] This, Thoth, is the episteme of perceiveration,
Of <considering the divine> and of understanding divinity,
For the chaldron is numinous.

Father, I also desire to be so immersed.

My son, primarily, unless you have a prejudice about the body
You cannot have affection for yourself, and when you have affection for yourself
You can acquire perceiverness and, having perceiverness,
You can participate in episteme.

Can you, father, explain that?

It is not possible, my son, to be of both the deathful and the divine.
For there are two kinds of existents, the bodily and the non-bodily,
Perceived as deathful and divine; a choice of one or of the other
Should there be a desire to do so. It cannot be both
With the decline of one uncovering the reality of the other.

[7] By choosing the higher not only is there a good ending - the apotheosis of the mortal -
For the one who chooses but also a numinous awareness of theos,
While, if the lower, although it has been the ruination of mortals
It is no termeration against theos
But rather something garish that passes by amid us yet is unaffective
Even if an impediment to others
Just as those others are garishly worldly
Having been influenced by bodily pleasures.

[8] Because of this, then - Thoth - what is from theos can be and has been ours
So let what accompanies us be that now instead of later.
For it is we who select dishonour rather than honour
With theos blameless in this.
Do you, my son, apprehend how many celestial bodies we have to traverse -
How many groups of Daimons and sequential constellations -
So that we hasten to the Monas.

For the honourable is unpassable, without limit, and unending
Even though to us its origin appears to be the knowledge.

[9] But even though such knowledge is not the origin of it
It yields to us the origin of our knowing.
Thus should we apprehend such an origin and hasten upon our journey
For it is not easy to abandon what we have become accustomed to
And go back to what is elden and in the past.

What is apparent can please us while what is concealed can cause doubt
With what is bad often overt while the honourable is often concealed
Having as it has neither pattern nor guise.
Which is why it is akin to itself but different from everything else
For it is not possible for what is disembodied to be overtly embodied.
[10] This is the distinction between what is akin and what is different
With what is different having a privation of what is akin.

Since the Monas is the origin and foundation of everything
It is within everything as origin and foundation
For if there is no origin there is nothing
And the origin is not from anything but itself
Since it is the origin of everything else,
Just as the Monas, since it is the origin, enfold every arithmos
Without itself being enfolded by any,
Begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any:

[11] Everything that is begotten is unfinished, partible,
Liable to decline, resurgence
Which do not befall what is complete
For what is resurgent is resurgence from Monas
But what is brought low is so by its own malady
Because unable to hold Monas.

This, then, Thoth, is the eikon of the theos
Insofar as it can be drawn:
If you - clearly, carefully - and with the eyes of your heart apprehend it
Then I assure you, my son, that you shall find the path to what is above:
In truth, the eikon will guide you
Since the seeing of it is uniquely your own,
For those who attain such a beholding are attentively held, pulled up,
Just as it is said lodestone does with iron.

Commentary

1.

artisan. δημιουργόν. See Poemandres 9. The theme of an artisan-creator, and
their artisements, is common to the third tractate (Ιερός Λόγος) as well. That
the tractate begins by using the term artisan, rather than theos, is perhaps
significant.

that Being. The conventional and grammatical interpretation is "you should
understand him as..." although how such a human-type gender could be
adduced from or manifest by how the 'body' of the artisan-creator is described
in subsequent verses is an interesting and relevant metaphysical question.

Can, or should, a 'body' that cannot be touched, that cannot be seen, that
cannot be measured, that is not separable - οὐδὲ διαστατόν - and thus which is
not conventionally 'human', be described as male? It is to suggest such
metaphysical questions (and the limitations of ordinary language in describing
and answering such metaphysical questions) that I have here departed from
convention and used 'that Being' instead of 'him'. The term 'Being' also has the
advantage that it avoids the gender bias implicit in translating θεός as 'god'
given that 'god/God' implies a male entity.

There is also an interesting and perhaps relevant mention, in the second
tractate of the Corpus, of the one, the being, who - like an artisan - constructs
things: ὁ οὖν θεὸς ἄγαθόν, καὶ τὸ ἄγαθὸν ὁ θεός. ἡ δὲ ἐτέρα προσηγορία ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ πατρός, πάλιν διὰ τὸ ποιητικὸν πάντων. πατρός γὰρ τὸ ποιεῖν.
(Thus theos is the noble and the noble is theos, although another title is that of
father because the artifex of all being. For it is of a father to construct.)

However, in terms of gender and Hellenic mythos and metaphysics, it is
sometimes overlooked that Γαία, Earth Mother, in one of the Homeric hymns,
Εἲς Γῆν Μητέρα Πάντων, is described as πρέσβιστος: the elder among beings,
and the mother of the gods, θεῶν μήτηρ. Thus, while it might be of "a father to
construct" it is "of a mother to bring forth life", to give birth to beings, including
the gods themselves.

**Presential.** πάρειμι. Presential - from the classical Latin praesentia - means
"having or implying actual presence", as manifesting (as being presenced) in a
locality or with an individual, and is thus more apposite here than the rather
bland word 'present'. Cf. the use of 'presenced' in Ιερός Λόγος 2, et sequentia.

**One only.** ἑνὸς μόνου. A formulaic mystic phrase, implying uniqueness. Cf.
ordinary usage in Plato, Crito 47, ἢ ἑνὸς μόνου ἐκείνου [...] ἑνὸς μόνου.

**Thelesis.** θέλησις. Given what follows - τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ
ἀπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν - a transliteration to
suggest something other than a human type 'will' or 'desire'; such as
'disposition'. That is, Being (whatsoever of whomsoever Being is, in terms of
gender and otherwise) is predisposed to craft - to presence - being as beings: as
immortals (deities), as mortals (humans) and otherwise, qv. Ιερός Λόγος,
Poemandres 8 ff, and Poemandres 31: οὗ ἡ βουλὴ τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων
δυνάμεων (whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts).

**Formed.** As an artisan forms their artisements, and thus manifests their skill,
their artistry, in what they produce. That is, the artisan-creator has formed,
crafted, being (all existence) as beings.

(not) separable. οὐδὲ διαστατόν. What is not meant is 'dimension', given what
the term 'dimension' now imputes scientifically and otherwise.

**Pneuma.** πνεῦμα. A transliteration for reasons explained in my commentary on
the text of Poemandres 5:

given that the English alternatives - such as 'spirit' or 'breath' - not
only do not always describe what the Greek implies but also suggest things not always or not necessarily in keeping with the Hellenic nature of the text. This particular transliteration has a long history in English, dating back to 1559 CE. In 1918, DeWitt Burton published a monograph - listing, with quotations, the various senses of πνεῦμα - entitled *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).

I incline toward the view that πνεῦμα here - like λόγος - does not necessarily imply something theological (in the Christian sense or otherwise) but rather suggests an alternative, more personal, weltanschauung that, being a weltanschauung, is undoctrinal and subtle, and which weltanschauung is redolent of Hellenic culture. Subtle and undoctrinal in the way that early alchemical texts are subtle and undoctrinal and try to express, or hint at (however obscurely to us, now), a weltanschauung, and one which is more paganus than Christian.

*Even though all such things are from that Being.* ἀλλὰ πάντα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ. Literally, 'even though all are from that'. One therefore might understand it to imply 'even though all beings/things are from that Being.'

Honourable. ἀγαθός. qv. Poemandres 22, where I referenced a quotation from the *Corpus Aristotelicum*:

> τῆς δὲ φρονήσεως ἐστι τὸ βουλεύσασθαι, τὸ κρίναι τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ αἱρετὰ καὶ φευκτά, τὸ χρῆσθαι πᾶσι καλῶς τοῖς υπάρχουσιν ἀγαθοῖς, τὸ ὄμιλησαι όρθως [De Virtutibus et Vitiis Libellus 1250a]

It is part of wisdom to accept advice, to distinguish the honourable, the dishonourable, and all that is, in life, acceptable or to be avoided; to fairly use all resources; to be genuine in company.

Honourable - noble - rather than some abstract or dogmatically defined 'good'. That is, the Hellenic distinction is between good (honourable) personal character and bad (dishonourable) personal character rather than - as for example in Christianity - referencing some abstract, or God-given or dogmatically (Church) defined 'good'.

entrust solely to. I follow the MSS, which have μόνῳ, with οὐ μόνῳ being a fairly recently emendation which completely changes the meaning.

orderly arrangement. κοσμέω. In esoteric terms, a presencing, on Earth, of the cosmic order itself, qv. Poemandres 8: "having comprehended the logos and having seen the beauty of the cosmic order, re-presented it..."
Regarding 'presencing', qv. my translation of and commentary on section two of the third tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, Ιερός Λόγος:

ἀδιορίστων δὲ ὄντων ἁπάντων καὶ ἀκατασκευάστων.

With all beings unformed and not yet presenced.

2.

a cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings. κόσμον δὲ θείου σώματος κατέπεμψε τὸν ἄνθρωπον. That is, human beings re-present, presence, the 'divine body' and are, of themselves, a reflection of the cosmic order itself. This, and the preceding line, express a fundamental part of ancient and Renaissance hermeticism: human beings as a microcosm of the cosmic order and the divine.

Hence why the twenty-sixth chapter of the book De Vita Coelitus Comparanda by Marsilii Ficini (published in 1489 CE) has as its heading:

Quomodo per inferioura superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, et per mundanas materias mundana potissimum dona.

How, when what is lower is touched by what is higher, the higher is cosmically presenced therein and thus gifted because cosmically aligned.

Also, in respect of ἄνθρωπος I have used here - as in my Poemandres - the gender neutral 'human being' instead of the more usual 'man', and also - as there - occasionally used the term 'mortal' when the context suggests it.

Regarding 'the cosmic order' (κόσμος) itself qv. Poemandres 7; 14, and Ιερός Λόγος 4:

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

a deathful life and yet a deathless life. This (including the borrowing of the terms deathful and deathless, in juxtaposition, from Chapman) is explained in section 14 of the Poemandres tractate:

θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον.

deadtful of body yet deathless the inner mortal.
Logos and Perceiverance. In my commentary on the Poemandres tractate I have explained my reasons for transliterating (and sometimes capitalizing) λόγος as logos (qv. the commentary on section 5) - rather than as 'Word' or 'Speech' - and for translating νοῦς as perceiverance/perceiveration rather than as the conventional 'mind' (see for example the commentary on sections 2 and 10). Refer also to comments there regarding terms such as pneuma logos (πνευματικὸν λόγον), phaoma logos (φωτεινὸς λόγος) and θεοῦ λόγος. Here Logos suggests 'reasoning', with perceiverance having its usual sense of 'awareness', of comprehending what is perceived, as for example, in being able to rationally or intuitively assess a situation, a person, or persons. As with (and for example) Logos, Psyche, and Physis, perceiverance - capitalized as Perceiverance - can also be personified and thus regarded as a fundamental quality germane to the life of deathful mortals.

3.

whose Psyche does not convey Perceiverance. It is possible to see in this an esoteric allusion to psyche personified, especially given what follows: τοῦτον ἐν μέσῳ ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὥσπερ ἄθλον ἱδρύσθαι. In ancient mythology - such as the ancient myth of Psyche and Eros, retold by Apuleius in his Metamorphoses, which was written around the same time as this Hermetic tractate, and which story also involves Hermes - Psyche initially lacked perceiverance but through striving to succeed in the trials given to her by Aphrodite she acquires it. Hence why here I have personified both psyche and perceiverance. I have also transliterated ψυχή so as, as I noted in my Poemandres, to not impose a particular meaning on the text. For whether what is meant is anima mundi, or the ancient paganus sense of the 'spark' - the source, or breath - of life, or what we now denote by the terms 'soul' and 'spirit', is open to debate, especially as the terms soul and spirit possess much later and modern connotations that may not be relevant to such an ancient text. Connotations such as suggesting the incorporeal, or immaterial being, as distinct from body or matter; or the Christian concept of the soul.

As an illustration of matters of interpretation, two subtly different senses of ψυχή are evident in the Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles:

τῶνδε γὰρ πλέον φέρω
τὸ πένθος ἢ καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς πέρι.

For my concern for their suffering
Is more than even that for my own psyche.

vv.93-4
ἀλλὰ μοι δυσμόρῳ γὰ φθινὰς
tρύχει ψυχάν, τάδ᾽ εἰ κακοῖς κακὰ
προσάψει τοῖς πάλαι τὰ πρὸς σφῶν.

But ill-fated would be my breath of life - which the decay in this soil
Already wears down - if to those troubles of old
There was joined this trouble between you and him.

vv.665-667

In respect of ψυχή, the Hermetic text here implies that ill-will is associated with
those whose nature is such that they lack the ability to rationally or intuitively
assess and comprehend a situation or other people.

father. ὦ πάτερ is a traditional way of showing respect for an elder, in this case
of Thoth for Hermes.

position it half-way between those psyches, as a reward. Thus, while Logos is a
gift to all mortals from theos, Perceiverance is not and has to be earned, striven
for, as an athlete has to strive to earn a prize. [The English word athlete is
related to the Greek word used here - ἀθλον - via the Greek ἀθλητής and thence
the classical Latin athleta.]

chaldrone. κρατῆρ. See the Introduction.

envoy. While the conventional translation here of κῆρυξ is 'herald', I consider it
unsatisfactory given what that English term now often denotes: either the type
of herald familiar from the New Testament or the herald of medieval literature
and stories (qv. Morte Arthure, and The Knights Tale by Chaucer). Given the
Greco-Roman context (Hermes, Thoth) and classical antecedents (such as
Hermes as the protector of mortal envoys and messengers) then 'envoy' is more
accurate especially given that this is an envoy from the artisan-creator assigned
to impart information to mortals.

Ascend to the one [...] how you came-into-being. There are similarities here to
the Poemandres tractate in relation to the anados - the journey up through the
spheres (Poemandres 24) toward theos - and the desire "to apprehend the
physis of beings" (Poemandres 3).

and were immersive with perceiveration. καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοοῦ. That is,
were or became characterized by having become immersed with - suffused by -
perceiveration.

Here, as elsewhere the understanding of νοος as perceiverance/perceiveration
rather than as 'mind' makes the text understandable: for the mortals became suffused with a particular (and, for most, probably a new type of) perception, a new way of seeing the world, themselves, and other mortals, and thus acquire a particular type of knowing, whereas an expression such as "immersed themselves with mind" is obscure to the point of being either unintelligible or requiring a long discourse on the nature of "mind" based as such discourses invariably are on certain philosophical assumptions.

The sense of acquiring a new way of seeing the world, themselves, and other mortals is evident in the text that follows: οὗτοι μετέσχον τῆς γνώσεως (gained, acquired, partook of, a knowing).

more complete mortals. The sense of τέλειος here is not that of being 'perfect' but rather of being 'entire', more completed, 'more rounded', than others. Thus there is no sense of "perfect people" or "perfect humans" - with implied moral, and other, superiority - but rather of those who, having a different perception of things to most others, were akin to initiates of a mystical or an esoteric tradition: apart from others because of that particular knowledge that their new, initiated, perception, has brought, but still mortal. This sense is evident in the text that follows: τὸν νοῦν δεξάμενοι.

received the perceiveration. It is possible that this is an allusion to 'the perceiverance' - the gnosis - that initiates of a particular mystic or esoteric tradition acquire when certain esoteric, mystic, knowledge is imparted to them.

4.

declam to the hearts of mortals. A figurative usage of 'heart', referring here as often elsewhere in Greek and Hellenic culture to the feelings, the emotions (qv. Iliad, Book IX, 646 and The Odyssey, Book XVII, 489) as well as to the ethos, the nature, and the understanding, of the individual.

See also "with the eyes of the heart" in section 11.

5.

alertness. αἴσθησις. For which see Poemandres 1. The sense is that they are always alert, and - like animals - react instinctively because they lack the objective awareness that perceiverance (νοῦς) brings and which objective awareness (of themselves and others) makes mortals into complete human beings.

Confident. Given the context, πιστεύω here suggests 'confidence' rather than 'belief'; for this is the arrogant instinctive confidence of those who lack perceiverance and who have no firm belief in anything other than their own bodily pleasure and fulfilling their desires and who thus reject - or who cannot intuit - the numinous perspective of the divine, a perspective which would
reveal the possibility of immortality.

parten to that gift [...] when set against their deeds. The text suggests that the gift of immortality which theos gives is freely bestowed among those whose deeds reveal that they have understood what the chaldron is and does, with the fourteenth century English word parten [to have something in common with something or someone else] expressing the meaning here of the Greek μετέχω.

apprehend the Earthly, the Heavenly, and what is beyond the Heavens. An alternative - following the Latin version of the text - omnia complexi sua mente, et terrena et caelestia et si quid est supra caelum - would be "apprehend the terran, the celestial, and what is beyond the celestial."

(as a) problem. The context suggests that what is meant is that life before "having so perceived" was a problem, not that it was a 'misfortune' or a calamity. A problem - a challenge - to overcome, which challenge they accepted leading to them gaining the prize, for theos had positioned that prize "half-way between those psyches, as a reward."

The same sense in respect of συμφορά is apparent in Oedipus Tyrannus by Sophocles:

\[
\text{θεοῖσι μέν νυν οὐκ ἰσούμενόν σ᾽ ἐγὼ}
\text{οὐδ᾽ οἶδε παῖδες ἔξως έγὼ}
\text{κρίνοπτες ἐν τε δαιμόνων συμφοράις}
\]

Not as an equal of the gods do I,
And these children who sit by your altar, behold you -
But as the prime man in our problems of life
And in our dealings and agreements with daimons.

vv. 31-34

disembodied. ἀσώματος - etymologically, a privation of σωματικός - occurs in works by Aristotle and, perhaps more relevant here, in writers such as Iamblichus who in De Mysteriis, V, 16 writes in general terms about the body in relation to offering to the gods and daimons that which, or those things which, might free the body from ailments and bring health, and the necessity in such matters as offerings of not considering the body in either non-bodily or noetic terms:

\[
\text{τότε δὴ οὖν οὐ δήπου νοερώς καὶ ἀσωμάτως τὸ σῶμα}
\text{μεταχειρίζομεθα· οὐ γὰρ πέρυκε τῶν τοιούτων τρόπων τὸ σῶμα}
\text{μετέχειν· τῶν δὲ συγγενῶν ἑαυτῷ μεταλαγχάνων, σῶμασι σῶμα}
\text{θεραπεύσεται τε καὶ ἀποκαθαίρεται.}
\]
Thus the sense of καταφρονήσαντες πάντων τῶν σωματικῶν καὶ ἄσωμάτων ἐπὶ τὸ ἓν seems to be that what is important is a striving for the monas not a noetic concern for the difference between whatever is embodied and whatever is considered disembodied.

Monas. μονάς. A transliteration since it here does not necessarily, as I noted in the Introduction, signify "The One, The Only" (τὸ ἓν) of such weltanschauungen as those termed Pythagorean, neo-Pythagorean, or Gnostic; or 'the one God' of religious monotheisms such as Christianity.

6.

episteme. A transliteration of ἐπιστήμη, which could be - and has been - accented thus: épistémé. The meaning is 'a way', or a means or a method, by which something can be known, understood, and appreciated. In this case, perceiviation, which the artisan-creator has positioned "half-way between psyches, as a reward."

Episteme, therefore, should be considered a technical, esoteric, term associated with some of the weltanschauungen that are described in the Corpus Hermeticum. Thus, in the Poemandres tractate, the anados through the seven spheres is an episteme.

considering the divine. The MSS have ἐντορία and various emendations, recent and otherwise, have been proposed including ἐντορία and ἱστορία. Interestingly, the Renaissance Latin text published in 1554 has, for the line, 'scientia mentis est diuinorum contemplatio & intelligentia dei, divino existente cratere' with Parthey's 1854 edition reading 'mentis scientia, divinorum inspectio et dei comprehensio, quia divinus est crater.'

I am inclined toward ἱστορία, which conveys the sense here of considering, of obtaining information about - of contemplating - divinity, the numinous, and thus the relation of mortals to divinity. A sense which fits will with the following καὶ ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ κατανόησις.

For the chaldron is numinous. θείον ὄντος τοῦ κρατῆρος. For θείος here I have opted for the English word numinous (dating from 1647 and from the classical Latin term numen) to express the sense of inclusion - of/from the divinity and of itself being divine - that the word 'divine' by itself does not, particularly given the previous "considering the divine and of understanding divinity."

Primarily, unless you have a prejudice about the body. Ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτοντὸ σῶμα σου μισήσῃς. To always - regardless of textual context and milieu - translate μισέω/μῖσος as "hate" is or can be misleading, given how the English word hate implies (and is understood as meaning) an extreme personal emotion, an intense personal aversion to something, and also a certain malevolence. Consider, for example, the following from Thucydides:
His reaching an agreement with the Peloponnnesians while at the same time still being determined to be rid of his foe does not imply an implacable, intense, personal hatred in the first place, but rather a generalized dislike (in this case just a certain prejudice) of the kind that can be dispensed with if it is personally - or strategically - advantageous to do so. Thus to translate the relevant part as "it was then that Perdiccas first considered Brasidas his foe and felt a prejudice toward the Peloponnnesians" seems apt, especially given the qualification mentioned in the text: τῇ μὲν γνώμη δι᾽ Ἀθηναίους.

The preference for the metaphysical, for striving for immortality and for understanding the numinous, that this tractate describes is not, as some have assumed, an ascetic "hatred" of the physical body. Instead, it is just a positive bias in favour of such metaphysical, spiritual matters, and a prejudice against a fixation on bodily and material things.

This preference is also evident in Poemandres 19:

"they of self-knowledge attained a particular benefit while they who, misled by Eros, love the body, roamed around in the dark, to thus, perceptively, be afflicted by death."

For, as noted in my commentary on τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα in Poemandres 19:

The consensus is, and has been, that ἔρωτα here signifies 'carnal desire' - or something similar - so that it is assumed that what is meant is some sort of ascetic (or Gnostic or puritanical) statement about how sexual desire should be avoided or at the very least controlled. However, this seems rather at variance with the foregoing - regarding propagating and spawning - which inclines me to suggest that what is meant here is 'eros', not necessarily personified as the classical deity (ἡ δ’ Ἐρος ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοις θεοῖσιν πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ’ ἀνθρώπων δάμναται ἐν στήθεσιν νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν), although the comparison is interesting, but rather as an elemental or archetypal principle, akin to νοῦς and λόγος. Consider, for example, the following from Daphnis and Chloe, written by Longus around the same time as the Corpus Hermeticum: πάντως γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἔρωτα ἔφυγεν ἢ φεύξεται μέχρι ἂν κάλλος ἔχων καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ βλέπωσιν [Book 1, Proem, 4 - "no one can avoid or has ever been able to avoid Eros, while there is beauty and eyes which perceive"]. In modern terms, few - poetically, metaphorically, none - have avoided or could avoid, at some time in their life, the unconscious power of the
anima/animus.

There are two kinds of existents, bodily and non-bodily. δύο γὰρ ὄντων τῶν ὄντων. This duality, in respect of mortals, is evident in the Poemandres tractate:

διὰ τὸ τοῦτο παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς ζώα διπλοῦς ἐστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον

distinct among all other beings on Earth, mortals are jumelle; deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal

(Poemandres 15)

This contrast between the deathful body and the immortality that is possible (the potential for immortality that lies within mortals) is essentially the same as the one described here: the bodily and the divine, the embodied and the disembodied.

7.

apotheosis of the mortal. Not here a literal making of "the mortal into a god" or even an actual "deification of the mortal" (by whomsoever) but rather a bringing about in the mortal an apotheosis - ἀποθέωσις - in the sense of an ascension toward immortality, a spiritual journey from earthly life, a figurative resurrection of, or actual elevation in, the life of the mortal.

This latter sense is evident in the use of ἀποθέωσις by Cicero in his Epistularum Ad Atticum - videsne consulatum illum nostrum, quem Curio antea ἀποθέωσιν vocabat, si hic factus erit, fabam mimum futurum (Liber Primus, XVI, 13) - for this early use of the Greek word concerns the elevated rank of Consul, and thus the honour and privileges that such a privileged rank brings.

a numinous awareness of theos. In respect of εὐσεβέω as an "awareness of the numinous" qv. my Poemandres, 22.

termeration. From the Latin termero and thus appropriate here, given the context, in respect of πλημμελέω, suggesting as it can both a violation and a profanation, while avoiding the interpretation that words such as "transgression" (toward god), "trespassed (against god) and "offence" (against god) impute, especially given the usual translations of Christian texts written in Greek, such as translations of the following from the Septuagint: ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ περὶ ἑνὸς ἀπὸ πάντων ὧν ἐποίησεν καὶ ἐπλημμέλησεν αὐτῷ (Leviticus 5, 26).

something garish that passes by. The exact meaning of πομπή here is unclear,
with suggestions ranging from parade, pageant, to procession (religious or otherwise), which all seem out of context since they all can have an affect, a purpose, and can achieve things other than just being a hindrance to passers-by.

The context suggests something metaphorical and similar to what Cicero wrote:

\[
\text{quem tu mihi addidisti sane ad illum σύλλογον personam idoneam.}
\]
\[
\text{Videbis igitur, si poteris, ceteros, ut possimus πομπεῦσαι καὶ τοῖς}
\]
\[
\text{προσώποις (Epistularum Ad Atticum, Liber Tertius Decimus, 32:3)}
\]

That is, similar to a showy or affected countenance or facade or personae, or an act, or some pompous attempt to impress which however is not effective as in Oedipus Tyrannus:

\[
\text{εἰπὼν ἄπειμ᾽ ὧν οὕνεκ᾽ ἦλθον οὐ τὸ σὸν}
\]
\[
\text{δείσας πρόσωπον οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ᾽ ὅπου μ᾽ ὀλεῖς}
\]

I shall go but speak that for which I was fetched, with no dread
Because of your countenance. For you cannot harm me. (448)

**garishly worldly.** I take the sense of κόσμος here to refer to 'that cosmos' - the world of mortals - previously described as "the cosmos of the divine body": the microcosm which the artisan-creator crafted and in which we mortals have our being. See the commentary in section 2 on the phrase *a cosmos of the divine body.*

Hence the poetic metaphor here: garishly worldly. Of living a garish - facile - life in our microcosm even though the artisan-creator has provided a means for us to attain immortality and thus, as described in the Poemandres tractate, become a part of a higher, a divine, cosmic order.

8.

**select dishonour** For κακός as 'bad' and 'dishonourable' rather than 'evil' refer to my commentary on Poemandres 22 from which this is an extract:

"The usual translation of κακός here, as often elsewhere, is 'evil'. However, I regard such a translation as unhelpful, given that the English word 'evil' is (1) now often interpreted and understood in a moralistic, preconceived, way according to some theological dogma/criteria and/or according to some political/social doctrine, and (2) that it does not denote what the classical and the Hellenic term κακός does. Classically understood κακός is what is bad in the sense of some-thing rotten or unhealthy, or - the opposite of κάλος - what is displeasing to see. κακός is also what is unlucky, a misfortune, and/or
injurious [...] When applied to a person, the sense is of a 'rotten' person; someone with bad, harmful, physis; a bad - dishonourable, weak, cowardly - personal character."

theos blameless in this. In respect of ἀναίτιος, compare Agamemnon 1505:

ὡς μὲν ἀναίτιος εἶ
tοῦδε φόνου τίς ὁ μαρτυρήσων

Is there anyone who will bear witness
That you are blameless in this killing?

celestial body. By σῶμα (body) here is meant the celestial body, the 'harmonious structure', which is described in terms of seven spheres in the Poemandres tractate and which mortals must ascend through in sequence in order to attain immortality and thus be in the company of theos. This ascension through the spheres is there described as an anados - ἔτι δέ μοι εἰπὲ περὶ τῆς ἀνόδου τῆς γινομένης - with Poemandres (in section 25) describing the journey in detail, with each sphere represented by one of the seven classical planets:

καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ζώνῃ δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικὴν, καὶ τῇ δεύτερᾳ τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλου ἀνενέργητον [...]

Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning [...]

Plato, in Timaeus 32c, uses σῶμα to refer to the substance - the body - of the cosmos as being formed from fire, water, air and earth:

ὁν ἀριθμὸν τεττάρων τὸ τοῦ κόσμου σῶμα ἐγεννήθη δι’ ἀναλογίας ὀμολογήσαν

sequential constellations. In context, συνέχειαν καὶ δρόμους ἀστέρω suggests a type of movement, a path, through certain stars or constellations. That is, a particular or ordered sequence: the anados through the septenary system, with it being possible that the use here of ἀστήρ (star) - rather than κύκλος (sphere, orb) as in Poemandres - implied an aural esoteric tradition associating each sphere with a corresponding star or constellation, an ancient tradition found in Renaissance alchemical and magical texts.

the honourable is unpassable. Reading ἀδιάβατον, which implies that what is
honourable is always there, always around, always noticeable when it is presented by someone. In other words - given the following καὶ ἀπέραντον καὶ ἀτελές - there are always some mortals who will (qv. sections 5 and 8) select honour rather than dishonour: who will (as described in section 4) "receive the perceiveration," having won that prize gifted by theos.

9.

Even though to us its origin appears to be the knowledge. The expression ἡμῖν δὲ δοκοῦν ἀρχήν ἔχειν τὴν γνώσιν is interesting given that it refers to 'the knowledge', which some have construed to refer to the gnosis of certain pagan weltanschauungen. However, since what this particular knowledge is, is not specified, to translate as 'the Gnosis' would be to impose a particular and modern interpretation on the text given what the term gnosticism now denotes. All that can be adduced from the text is that this particular knowledge may refer to and be the knowledge imparted in the text itself: the knowledge that Hermes is here imparting to Thoth.

The word translated here as origin is ἀρχή and which Greek term has various philosophical connotations in Anaximander, Plato, et al. What it here denotes, as evident in the text that follows (sections 10 and 11), is origin, beginning, source.

not the origin of it. Referring to what is honourable and its origin/beginning.

hasten upon our journey. While the text - λαβώμεθα οὖν τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ ὁδεύσωμεν θάκει ἅπαντα - is somewhat obscure it seems reasonable to assume that what is meant or implied is the necessity of beginning - of hastening upon - the complete, the entire, journey toward the Monas with all that implies in terms of everything encountered along the way.

not easy. The sense of σκολιόν here - in the context of leaving what one has become accustomed to and is comfortable with - suggests 'tangled', indirect, 'not straightforward', 'tortuous', and thus 'not easy'.

delden. A rather obscure English word meaning 'belonging to earlier times', and used to avoid the negative connotations that words such as 'ancient' can imply.

What is apparent can please [...] neither pattern nor guise. τὰ μὲν γὰρ φαινόμενα τέρπει, τὰ δὲ ἀφανή δυσπιστεῖν ποιεῖ. φανερώτερα δὲ ἐστὶ τὰ κακά, τὸ δὲ ἀγαθόν ἀφανὲς τοῖς φανερῷς

This is an interesting passage, often interpreted in terms of moral abstractions, of 'good' and 'evil'. However, as previously mentioned, I incline toward the somewhat iconoclastic view that there is a more Greek, a more Hellenic, and an essentially pagan, interpretation of ἀγαθός consistent with the Greek mystery traditions, with Homer, with the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, and with
how theos was generally understood in ancient Greece and in Greco-Roman, Hellenistic, times. Which is of ἀγαθός - and of κακός - (i) when referring to mortals as referring to personal character, of character being most often revealed by deeds, by what has been observed because done visibly, or to outward appearance in terms of τὸ καλὸν, of what is considered beautiful or not beautiful; and (ii) when used of things - living or dead - as referring to the difference between 'rotten', bad', and what is not rotten, as in a rotten tree or a piece of food.

What is expressed here is of how outward appearances can please, how we can be suspicious - doubtful - about what is concealed, what has not yet been revealed; with what is bad often outwardly obvious (as in the case of a rotten tree or a rotten person) but with what is good, honourable, often being concealed because it has no particular pattern or guise until it has been revealed, for example by noble, honourable deeds. Thus the suggestion seems to be that there is or can be a revealing of what is good when mortals seek the theos-gifted prize of perceiveration, which seeking of that prize, and winning it, is of itself a good, a necessary, an honourable, thing to do, leading at it does to a hastening toward the Monas.

The passage also invites comparison with one in Plato's Republic and one in Aristotle's Metaphysics.

In Book XII, 1074b, Aristotle wrote:

τὰ δὲ περὶ τὸν νοῦν ἔχει τινὰς ἀπορίας: δοκεῖ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τῶν φαινομένων θειότατον, πῶς δ᾽ ἔχων τοιοῦτος ἂν εἴη, ἔχει τινὰς δυσκολίας

The expression δοκεῖ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τῶν φαινομένων θειότατον has led to disputations among some scholars with some considering the passage corrupt and in need of emendation, for their difficulty lies in Aristotle apparently stating that 'Mind' is, like other phenomena, perceptible to our senses. However, if one does not translate νοῦς as 'Mind' - with all the preconceptions, philosophical an otherwise, that have over centuries become attached to that term - and one also appreciates that φαίνω here as sometimes elsewhere is not a simple 'observing' - of seeing, of observing, phenomena - but rather a revealing, then there is little if any difficulty. For instance, does the following interpretation of part of that passage make sense with respect to phenomena? "Perceiveration, of all revealing, appears to be the most numinous."

Indeed so, because perceiveration is a perception involving a certain awareness, a revealing to us, of what is observed; that is, an apprehension, and Aristotle's reasoning (insofar as I understand it) is that this awareness - νοῆς - is the most numinous, 'the most divine', revealing because we mortals can apprehended, be or become aware of, and thus have knowledge of, theos. Which is basically what Hermes has in this tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum
imparted to Thoth.

In Book VII, 517β - 517ξ, of the Republic, Plato wrote:

τὰ δ’ οὖν ἐμοὶ φαινόμενα ὅτως φαίνεται, ἐν τῷ γνωστῷ τελευταίᾳ ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα καὶ μόγις ὁρᾶσθαι

Which brings us, again, to ἀγαθός invariably translated as it hitherto has been - in respect of the Corpus Hermeticum, and many of the writings of Aristotle and Plato - as an abstraction termed 'good', as well it might be in respect of Plato given that he posits an abstract (a true, ideal) beauty and an abstract (true, ideal) being, as in Phaedo 78b where he writes about αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν and about αὐτὸ ἐκαστὸν ὁ ἔστιν, and why in Symposium 210e - 211a he states regarding his ideal, his form, his ἰδέα/εἶδος, which he sometimes and confusingly uses interchangeably, that:

πρῶτον μὲν ἀεὶ ὅν καὶ οὔτε γιγνόμενον οὔτε ἀπολλύμενον, οὔτε αὐξανόμενον οὔτε φθίνον

Firstly, it always exists, and has no genesis. It does not die, does not grow, does not decay.

What, therefore, seems to have occurred, in respect of this and other tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum, is the assumption that ἀγαθός always refers back to Plato's ἰδέα/εἶδος (and to those influenced by him or are assumed to be his precursors) leading to moralistic interpretations such as that of Mead where ἀγαθός is divorced from the physis (φύσις), the character, the individuality, of mortals: "evils are the more apparent things, whereas the Good can never show Itself unto the eyes, for It hath neither form nor figure." Thus, that in respect of mortals, ἀγαθός, rather than having its genesis, its origin, its very being, in some individual mortals - and attainable by others because of the prize of perseverance offered by theos - is considered as something external which could be attained by, which has its being in, is embodied by, such abstractions (the 'politics') as Plato delineates in his theorized Republic and in such abstractions as were posited by the early Christian Church.

For it is not possible for what is disembodied to be overtly embodied. ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἀσώματον σώματι φανῆσαι. That is, it is not possible to discern who is honourable from their outward appearance, for what is honourable is manifest, revealed, through personal deeds.

10.

enfolds every arithmos [...] begeting every arithmos but not begotten by any. This passage, with its mention of ἀριθμός, is often assumed to refer to the Pythagorean doctrine regarding numbers since ἀριθμός is invariably translated as 'number' - thus implying what the English word implies, especially in
mathematical terms - even though Aristotle, in discussing ἀριθμός, wrote: ἄλλος δὲ τις τὸν πρῶτον ἀριθμὸν τὸν τῶν εἰδῶν ἕνα εἶναι, ἐνιοὶ δὲ καὶ τὸν μαθηματικὸν τὸν αὐτὸν τούτον εἶνα (Metaphysics, Book XIII, 1080b.20).

Given such a necessary distinction - and the discussion regarding ἀριθμός and Pythagoras in Book XIII, 1083b.10 et seq - as well as the fact that what ἀριθμός means here, in this tractate, and what it implies - such as the mathematical numbers 2 and 3 developing from the One - is not mentioned, I have transliterated ἀριθμός thus leaving open what it may or may not mean in relation to the particular weltanschauung being described. However, the context seems to suggest a metaphysical rather than an abstract mathematical notion, especially given what follows at the beginning of section 11: πᾶν δὲ τὸ γεννώμενον ἀτελὲς καὶ διαιρετόν.

begetting/begotten. It is interesting to compare the use here of γεννάω (beget/engender) with the use of γέννημα in Poemandres 8 (the birth of Psyche) and 30 (of Logos breeding nobility).

11.

resurgence [...] decline. The sense here, in context, is not as abstract, as impersonal, as a translation such as "increase and decrease" implies. Rather it suggests "resurgence and decline", as happens with living things.

what is complete. The reference is to the Monas.

eikon of theos. I have transliterated εἰκὼν as eikon since - for reasons mentioned in my commentary on Poemandres 31 - it implies more, in some ancient mystical tractates, than what the word 'image' now denotes.

eyes of your heart. A similar expression occurs in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians - πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας <ὑμῶν> (1.18) - although, as some scholars have noted (qv. Hoehner, Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary, Baker Academic, 2002. p.260f) the Greek syntax there is problematic.

the path to what is above. That is, the anados (ἄνοδος) mentioned in the Poemandres tractate, composed as the word ἄνοδος is from ἀνά (above) and ὁδός (path), the two Greek words used here.

the seeing of it is uniquely your own. What is being conveyed is that the eikon is of itself mystical - not an ordinary image or painting - and can impart to the person, who "with the eyes of their heart" views it, something unique, personal, numinous.

lodestone. μαγνήτις λίθος. Lodestone, and not a 'magnet' in the modern sense.
That no beings are lost, despite mortals mistakenly claiming that such transformations are death and a loss.

**A Translation Of And A Commentary On Eighth Tractate Of The Corpus Hermeticum**

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**Introduction**

The eighth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, concise as it is, provides an interesting summary of some of the tenets of the Hermetic weltanschauung. As, for example, in the mention of a first being (the primary theos) and of a second being (a theos) who is an eikon (εἰκών) of the first, and which first being - theos - is the artisan of all beings; and as, for example, in the mention of mortals having a natural empathy (συμπάθεια) with this eikon, this second being, who is identified as κόσμος, with κόσμος understood here, as in tractate XI, either as a personification, as a divinity, the theos - a deathless living being, ζῷον ἀθάνατον - who is the living cosmic order, or, as in the Poemandres tractate as simply referring in an impersonal manner to 'the cosmic order' itself.

While most other translators have opted here, as in other tractates, to translate κόσμος as cosmos (which English term suggests that the physical universe is meant) I incline toward the view that here - as in tractate XI - a divinity is meant, especially given how κόσμος is described: as "a second theos and a deathless living being," and as an eikon of the primary theos.

There are certain parallels with tractate XI and in which tractate it is stated that "Kosmos is the eikon of theos, Kosmos that of Aion, the Sun that of Aion, and mortals that of the Sun. It is said that changement is death since the body disintegrates with life departing to the unperceptible," (section 15) and, in section 14, that "Life is the enosis of perceiverance and psyche, while death is not the loss of what was joined but the end of enosis."

What therefore emerges from this, the eighth, tractate are two things: how we
mortals are part of, and connected to, Kosmos and thence - since Kosmos is an eikon - to the first, the primary, theos, and how diverse the Hermetic weltanschauung is in respect of some details while nevertheless retaining an underlying ethos.

The references in the commentary to other tractates are to my translations of and commentary on tractates I (Poemandres), III (An Esoteric Mythos), IV (Chaldron Or Monas) and XI (From Perceiverance To Hermes), available in one volume [1]. As with those tractates I have, through transliterations and choice of English words, endeavoured to present something of the metaphysical nature of the tractate, although this particular tractate, concise as it is, is in places rather esoterically obscure, an obscurity that a study of the aforementioned tractates may somewhat alleviate, although it is interesting to speculate whether or not, in the decades following the composition of this tractate, such esoteric matters were explained by means of an aural tradition, individual mystic to aspiring individual mystic.


Translation

[1] It is regarding psyche and the corporeal that, my son, we now must speak: of why psyche is deathless and how its vigour assembles and separates the corporeal. For there is no death of what-is, only an apprehension grounded in the denotatum 'deathless', either through unavailing toil or, by discarding the important part, that what is called deathless is deathful. That is, for the deathful there is a loss. But nothing of the Kosmos is ever lost, for if Kosmos is a second theos and a deathless living being then it is not possible for any portion of such a deathless living being to be lost since all beings of Kosmos are part of Kosmos, as most certainly are mortals, the noetic living being.

[2] In truth, the first is theos; the eternal, unborn. The second was engendered from, nurtured by, that being and rendered deathless and eikon of that being, as by an everlasting father, never-dying because deathless.

For never-dying is unlike everlasting. For that one was not a bringing-into-being by another although if there was a bringing-into-being it was his own bringing-into-being since he is always a bringing-into-being. For the everlasting - because
it is everlasting - is all that is, with the father everlasting because of himself while Kosmos became everlasting and deathless because of the father.

[3] And the father endowed such substance as he gathered, extending it all to create something spherical, conferring upon it a particular quality, deathless and of substance everlasting. Having seeded such qualities and replete with semblances, the father enclosed them in the sphere as if in a cavern. His deliberation was to equip with each quality what would follow; to encompass with deathlessness everything corporeal so that substance would not by thelesis be separated from that bringing-together to thereby dissolve into its own disorder.

For when, my son, substance was incorporeal it was disordered even though that was restricted to other smaller qualities, to the kind of increase and decrease that mortals name death.

[4] For such disorder occurs with earthly-living beings, with celestial beings having one order allotted to them by the father from the beginning and maintained from disintegration by the periodicity of each of them, while the periodicity of earthly living beings is of a separation of their bringing together and of the indissoluble corporeal; that is, of the deathless. Thus there is the loss of those influencing impressions and not the destruction of what is embodied.

[5] Now, as to the third living being, mortals, brought-into-being as eikon of Kosmos and who, because of the deliberations of the father and beyond the other living beings on Earth, have perceiveration and also empathy with the second theos and perception of the first.

For of the one there is apprehension as of the corporeal, while of the other there is an influencing impression as of the incorporeal and as of a noble perceiverance.

Then this life is not lost?

Speak softly, my son, and apprehend who theos is, who Kosmos is, what a deathless living being is, what a dissoluble living being is, and apprehend also that Kosmos is of theos and within theos and that mortals are of Kosmos and within Kosmos and thus that theos is the origin of, encompasses, and constitutes, everything.

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Commentary

Title.

*lost* ἀπόλλυμι. Lost, rather than 'destroyed' or 'perished'. They are not 'lost' because beings - entities/things - once brought-into-being - are still emanations of Being, of theos, even if their presencing, their form, is changed, transformed, morphed, as happens for example with those mortals who, via the anados mentioned in the Poemandres tractate, go beyond the seven spheres to, and then beyond, the ogdoadic physis.

1. corporeal. σῶμα. Here, the context - qv. for example the following τῶν γὰρ σύρανίων τὰ σώματα μίαν τάξιν ἔχει in section 4 and τοῦ δὲ ἐννοιαν λαμβάνει ὡς ἀσωμάτου καὶ νοοῦ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ in section 5 - suggests corporeal rather than a literal body. A subtle distinction, between "of the nature of matter" and a specific type of "physical body". Compare also the fourth tractate: ἄεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἐνός μόνου, τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα· τούτο γὰρ ἔστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἀπίτων, οὐδὲ ὀρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν, οὐδὲ ἀλλῶ τινὶ σώματι ὅμοιον.

vigour. ἐνέργεια. qv. Poemandres 14, tractate XI: 2, etcetera.


In Poemandres 10 it is mentioned how "the logos of theos bounded to the fine artisements of Physis and joined with the perceiveration of that artisan." Thus a theme shared by several tractates is how the various 'artisans' of theos - and theos - skillfully craft beings from Being, as in tractate IV, Chaldron or Monas:

Επειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγῳ ὡστε οὕτως ὑπολάμβανε ὡς τοῦ παρόντος καὶ ἄεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἐνός μόνου τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα

Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos, you should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being, as One only, who by thelesis formed all that is.

apprehension. νόημα. cf. Poemandres 3, "I seek to learn what is real, to apprehend the physis of beings."

denotatum. For προσηγορία. In this case, the denotatum - the naming - is the
word 'deathless'.

or by discarding the important part [...] what is called deathless is deathful. ἢ κατὰ στέρησιν τοῦ πρώτου γράμματος λεγόμενος θάνατος ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀθάνατος. Literally, "by discarding the first letter it is called θάνατος [deathful] instead of ἀθάνατος [deathless]."

Regarding τοῦ πρώτου γράμματος, what seems to be implied is that the mortal apprehension of 'deathless' does not include the most important - the correct - apprehension regarding death, which correct apprehension is explained by what follows.

*Kosmos*. κόσμος. As at Poemandres 7, κόσμος carries with it the suggestion that the cosmos is an ordered structure. However, here I construe κόσμος, as in tractate XI, as a divinity, the theos who is the living, deathless, cosmic order.

*the noetic living being*. τὸ λογικὸν ζῴον. The word λογικός imputes the sense of both the faculty of speech and the faculty of thought, something well-expressed by Sophocles: φθέγμα καὶ ἀνεμόεν φρόνημα καὶ ἀστυνόμους ὄργας ἐδιδάξατο καὶ ὑπαίθρεια καὶ ὕπαιθρους ὑπαίθρεια καὶ δύσομβρα φεύγειν βέλη παντοπόρος, (Antigone, 355f).

2.

*artisan of all beings*. In respect of artisan (δημιουργόν) cf. Poemandres 9, and tractate IV: 1. Regarding "of all beings", cf. Poemandres 31, ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων.

*eikon*. εἰκών, qv. Poemandres 21 and 31, and tractate XI:15. Thus the suggestion is that this eikon represents - presences, manifests - theos, the artisan.

never-dying...everlasting. In order to try and express the dissimilarity between ἀείζωος and ἀίδιος I have translated the former as never-dying (a sense suggested by ἀείζωον ὡς ἀθάνατος) and the latter as everlasting, a dissimilarity that is not immediately apparent from translations such as "the everliving is different from the eternal."

That one. Referring to 'the first' who engendered Kosmos as eikon.

not a bringing-into-being by another ... always a bringing-into-being. The text - with its repetition of ἐγένετο - is somewhat obscure, and various emendations have been proposed, none of which are entirely satisfactory. The sense seems to be of "that one" - the first - always having been, and is, and always will be, "a coming-into-being".
such substance ... particular quality. The text is quite obscure and several emendations have been suggested, with Nock indicating that some text may be missing after τῷ ἑαυτοῦ, although ὑπ' αὐτόν seems reasonable. Any translation - whatever emendation is accepted - is conjectural.

The sphere may refer to Kosmos, cf. Poemandres 9,

"Theos, the perceiversion, male-and-female, being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceiversion, an artisan, who - theos of Fire and pnuema - fashioned seven viziers to surround the perceptible cosmic order in spheres and whose administration is described as fate."

The suggestion might thus be that these seven spheres are themselves enclosed within a sphere, which might explain Poemandres 13-14, "Having fully learned their essence, and having partaken of their physis, he was determined to burst out past the limit of those spheres [and] with full authority over the ordered cosmos of humans and of beings devoid of logos, he burst through the strength of the spheres to thus reveal to those of downward physis the beautiful image of theos."


create. ποιέω, qv. tractate XI:5

semblances. Does ἰδέα here equate with the concept of 'form' as described by Plato? The consensus is that it does, even though such an assumption imposes a specific philosophical meaning on the text and even though the cosmogonic context - of the living Kosmos as eikon, of Kosmos made deathless by the father, and of theos, the father, conferring upon the sphere a particular quality - does not seem to support such an abstract, definite, concept. Thus, to avoid imposing a very particular meaning on the text, and given that the hermeticism described in this and in the other tractates represent varied weltanschauungen (albeit having a similar underlying ethos) rather than one well-defined philosophy, I have translated not as 'forms' but as semblances.

as if in a cavern. Does this refer to Plato's allegory of the cave, as so many seem to have assumed? Probably not, since - to give just one example - in the Βιβλιοθήκη of Pseudo-Apollodorus - written around the same time as this tractate - ἐν ἄντρῳ refers to a cave, or cavern, in which Maia, one of the seven Pleiades, gave birth to Hermes: Μαῖα μὲν οὖν ἡ πρεσβυτάτη Διῷ συνελθοῦσα ἐν ἄντρῳ τῆς Κυλλήνης Ἑρμῆν τίκτει. οὗτος ἐν σπαργάνοις ἐπὶ τοῦ λίκνου κείμενος.

deliberation. qv. Poemandres 8. As with the preceding such substance ...
particular quality, the text here is quite obscure, and any translation - whatever emendation is accepted - is conjectural.

thesis. θέλησις, qv. tractate IV:1. As noted in the commentary there, a transliteration to suggest something more metaphysical than a human type wish or desire. Such as that the physis - the being - of substance (ὕλη) might be such that without the intervention of theos it might naturally dissolve into disorderliness (ἀταξία).

4.

one order allotted to them. That is, celestial beings - those resident in and of the heavens - have a particular order distinct from that of ordinary mortals, but which order mortals can, via an anados such as described in the Poemandres tractate, journey to, discover, and become a part of.

the periodicity of earthly living beings is of a separation of their bringing together and of the indissoluble corporeal. While the periodicity of celestial beings is unchanging and is maintained from disintegration, the periodicity of mortals is varied and involves the cycle, the separation, of life and death and yet also involves the reality of death not being an end - since what is deathless, the indissoluble part of what is corporeal, cannot suffer from disintegration.

influencing impressions. αἰσθήσεις. qv. Poemandres 22, and my commentary thereon, for what is meant is not simply 'the [bodily] senses' nor what is perceptible to or perceived by the senses but rather those particular impressions, conveyed by the senses, which may influence a person in a particular way.

what is embodied. The indissoluble part of what is apprehended as corporeal.

5.

perceiverance. νοῦς. Not 'mind', qv. Poemandres 2, tractate III:1, etcetera. As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 2:

I incline toward the view that the sense of the word νοῦς here, as often in classical literature, is perceiverance; that is, a particular type of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed 'the body'.

Perceiverance thus describes the ability to sense, to perceive, when something may be amiss; and hence also of the Greek word implying resolve, purpose, because one had decided on a particular course of
action, or because one's awareness of a situation impels or directs one to a particular course of action.

empathy. συμπάθεια.

perception. cf. Poemandres 18. An apprehension of the numinous, and thus of theos, of Kosmos as eikon, and so on.

there is an influencing impression as of the incorporeal and of a noble perceiverance. This refers to 'the first', to theos, the father; with the preceding "apprehension as of the corporeal" referring to 'the second', that is, to Kosmos.

Regarding ἀγαθός as 'noble/nobility', qv. my commentary on Poemandres 22. and especially the commentary on φανερώτερα δὲ ἐστι τὰ κακά τὸ δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἀφανὲς τοῖς φανεροῖς in tractate IV:9.

Thus theos is apprehended - understood, felt - in the same, mystical, numinous, way not only as the incorporeal is, but also as inherently noble.

Speak softly. εὐφήμησον. qv tractate XI:22.

(Kosmos is ...) within theos. ἐν τῷ θεῷ. Literally, 'within the theos'.

Αναθεματισμός Του Εμπαθή

From Perceiverance To Hermes

A Translation Of And A Commentary On The Eleventh Tractate
Of The Corpus Hermeticum

The eleventh tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, the cosmogony in which Aion, Kronos, and Sophia feature. Second, possible links to the Poemandres tractate, given - for example - the mention of a septenary system and the supposition that Perceiverance - νοῦς - who addresses Hermes Trismegistus may well be Poemandres himself.

As with my translations of tractates I, III, and IV of the Corpus Hermeticum, I here transliterate certain Greek words, such as theos, in order to avoid what I have described as 'retrospective re-interpretation'.
Translation

[1] Take account of this discourse, Hermes Trismegistus, remembering what is said for I shall not refrain from mentioning what occurs to me.

Because there is much difference among the many who speak about theos and all other things, I have not uncovered the actuality. Therefore, my Lord, make it unambiguous for me, for you are the one I trust in this.

[2] Hear then, my son, of theos and of everything: theos, Aion, Kronos, Kosmos, geniture. Theos brought Aion into being; Aion: Kosmos; Kosmos, Kronos; Kronos, geniture. It is as if the quidditas of theos is actuality, honour, the beautiful, good fortune, Sophia. Of Aion, identity; of Kosmos, arrangement; of Kronos, variation; of geniture, Life and Death.

The vigour of theos is perceiveration and Psyche; but of Aion: continuance and exemption from death; of Kosmos, a cyclic return and renewal; of Kronos, growth and abatement; of geniture, capability. Aion, thus, is of theos; Kosmos of Aion; Kronos of Kosmos; and geniture of Kronos.

[3] The foundation of all being is theos; of their quidditas, Aion; of their substance, Kosmos. The craft of theos: Aion; the work of Aion: Kosmos, which is not just a coming-into-being but always is, from Aion. Thus it cannot be destroyed since Aion is not destroyable nor will Kosmos cease to be since Aion surrounds it.

But the Sophia of theos is what?

The noble, the beautiful, good fortune, arête, and Aion. From Aion to Kosmos: exemption from death, and continuance of substance.

[4] For that geniture depends on Aion just as Aion does on theos. Geniture and Kronos - in the heavens and on Earth - are jumelle; in the heavens, unchanging and undecaying; yet on Earth, changeable and decayable.

Theos is the psyche of Aion; Aion that of Kosmos; the heavens that of the Earth. Theos is presenced in perceiveration, with perceiveration presenced in psyche, and psyche in substance, with all of this through Aion, with the whole body, in which are all the bodies, replete with psyche with psyche replete with perceiveration and with theos. Above in the heavens the identity is unchanged while on Earth there is changement coming-into-being
Aion maintains this, through necessitas or through foreseeing or through physis, or through whatever other assumption we assume, for all this is the activity of theos. For the activity of theos is an unsurpassable crafting that no one can liken to anything mortal or divine.

Therefore, Hermes, never presume that what is above or below is similar to theos since you will descend down from actuality. For nothing is similar to that which, as the one and only, has no similitude. Never presume that he would delegate his work to someone else, for who else is the cause of life, of exemption from death, of Changement? What else but create?

Theos is not inactive for otherwise everything would be inactive; instead they are replete with theos, and there is nowhere in the cosmos nor anywhere else where there is inaction. Inactive is thus a vacant nomen in regard to a creator and what is brought into being.

For every being there is a coming-into-being, each one in balance with its place, with the creator in all that exists, not found in just some nor creating only some but everything. His craft is in what he creates so that their coming-into being is not independent of him but rather comes-into-being because of him.

Correctly consider and observe Kosmos as suggested by me and thus the beauty thereof, a body undecayable and nothing more eldern and yet always vigorous and fresh, even more now than before.

Observe also the septenary cosmos ordered in arrangement by Aion with its separate aeonic orbits. Everything replete with phaos but with no Fire anywhere. For fellowship, and the melding of opposites and the dissimilar, produced phaos shining forth in the activity of theos, progenitor of all that is honourable, archon and hegemon of the septenary cosmos.

The Moon, prodomus of all of those, an instrument of Physis, of the changement of the substance below - with the Earth amid them all, a settled foundation of the beautiful Kosmos - and nourisher and nurturer of those on Earth.

Consider also the numerous deathless, and just how many, as well as deathful lives there are. And amid both the deathless and the deathful, the travelling Moon.

All are replete with psyche, all in motion, some around the heavens with others around the Earth, with those on the right not toward to the left and those on the left not toward the right, not those above to below nor below to above. That all have come-into-being you do not, dear Hermes, have to learn from me, for they have bodies, psyche, motion, and to meld them into one is not possible
without someone to bring them together. Such a one must exist and be, in every way, a unity.

[9] For, given dissimilar objects, motion is different and diverse with one hastiness appointed to them all, and thus it is not possible for there to be two or more creators for if there are many then such an arrangement cannot be kept. For the result of many is strifeful emulation of the stronger, and if one of two was the creator of changeable mortal living beings they would covet creating deathless ones even as the creator of the deathless would deathful ones.

If indeed there were two with one substance and the other psyche who would provide the creations? If both of them, which would have the larger part?

[10] Consider that every living being, deathful and deathless, and whether devoid of logos, is formed of substance and psyche, for all living beings presence life while the non-living are substance only. Similarly, psyche of itself from its creator is the cause of the living while the cause of all life is the creator of deathless beings.

What then of the living that die and the deathless ones? For why does the deathless one who creates deathless beings not create other living beings so?

[11] It is evident someone is so creating and that he is One; for Psyche is one, Life is one, Substance is one.

But who is it?

Who could it be if not One, the theos? To whom if not to theos alone would it belong to presence life in living beings?
Theos therefore is One, for having accepted the Kosmos is one, the Sun is one, the Moon is one, and divinity-presenced is one, could you maintain that theos is some other number?

[12] He creates all beings, and how supreme it is for the theos to create life and psyche and the deathless and changement, with you doing so many things, for you see, hear, speak, smell, touch, walk, perceive, and breathe. Yet it is not someone else who is seeing and another who is hearing and another who is speaking and another who is touching and another who is hearing and another who is smelling and another who is walking and another who is perceiving and another who is breathing, but one being doing all such things.

None of which are separate from theos. Just as you are not really living if you are otiose so would theos, if otiose - and it is not the custom to say this - no longer be theos.

[13] If it is demonstrated that no one really exists without producing something how much more so for theos? If there is anything he has not created then -
although it is not the custom to say this - he is incomplete, while if theos is complete and not otiose then he creates all things.

For a little longer, Hermes, give way to me and you will more readily apprehend that the work of theos is one: of everything brought-into-being; what is coming-into-being, what has come-into-being, and what will come-into-being. This, my friend, is Life; this is the beautiful, this is the noble; this is the theos.

[14] If you maintain this should be apprehended in deeds, consider when you seek to procreate, for it not the same for him since there is no delight, no colleague. Instead, a working alone, and forever working for he is what he creates. If ever isolated from it, everything would - because of Necessitas - fall apart, with everything dying because there would be no Life. But if everything is alive, and Life is One, then theos is One. While if everything is alive, and Life is One, then theos is One. Also, if everything is alive both in the heavens and on Earth and Life is One for them all as brought-into-being by theos and theos is that, then all are brought-into-being by theos.

Life is the enosis of perceiverance and psyche, while death is not the loss of what was joined but the end of enosis.

[15] Kosmos is the eikon of theos, Kosmos that of Aion, the Sun that of Aion, and mortals that of the Sun. It is said that changement is death since the body disintegrates with life departing to the unperceptible. My dear Hermes, while I state there is changement in Kosmos because every day portions of it come-into-being in the unperceptible, it never disintegrates. These are the occurrences of the Kosmos, cyclicity and occultations; the cyclic a turning and occultation renewal.

[16] The Kosmos is polymorphous and forms are not imposed on it but rather, within itself, it is such changement. Since the Kosmos is polymorphous who created it and who would that be? Whomsoever cannot be without-form and yet if polymorphous would be akin to Kosmos and if only one form would be lower than Kosmos.

What therefore can be said without confusion given that there should be no confusion concerning apprehending theos? If there is a kind then it is a singular kind, incorporeal, and not subject to perception but revealed through the corporeal.

[17] And do not wonder about an incorporeal kind since it is akin to words, mountains which appear in depictions to be rugged but which when examined are flat and smooth. So heed these words of mine bold as they are but honest, for as mortals cannot be separate from Life, theos cannot be separate from creating nobility since for theos this creating is Life and motion, the movement of everything and the giving of life.
[18] Some of the matters spoken of require a certain apprehension, so consider what I say: everything is in the theos but not as if lying in a particular place - since the place is a body and also immovable and what is lain does not move - but an incorporeal representation apprehends what is lain otherwise.

Thus apprehend what embraces everything and apprehend that the incorporeal has no boundary, that nothing is swifter, nothing as mighty, since the incorporeal is boundless, the swiftest, the mightiest.

[19] And apprehend this about yourself and so urge your psyche to go to any land and, swifter than that urging, it will be there. Likewise, urge it to go to the Ocean and again it will be swiftly there without passing from place to place but as if already there.

Urge it to go up into the heavens and it will be there without the need of any wings. Indeed, nothing will impede it: not the fire of the Sun nor Aether, nor the vortex, nor the bodies of the other stars, but - carving through them all - it will go as far as the furthest body. Should you desire to burst through The Entirety and observe what is beyond - if indeed there be anything beyond that ordered system - then it is possible for you.

[20] Thus see how much might and swiftness you have. If you can do all those things then cannot theos? In such a manner you should consider theos as having all - Kosmos, The Entirety - as purposes within himself. For until you compare yourself with theos you cannot apprehend theos because what is similar can understand the similar.

Extend yourself greatly, immeasurably; leap beyond every body, surpass Kronos, become Aion, and you can apprehend theos. Having supposed that for you there is nothing that is not possible, regard yourself as deathless, capable of apprehending everything: every craft, all learning, the nature of every living being. Become elevated above every elevation, deeper than every depth. Gather within yourself awareness of every creation; of Fire and Water; the Dry and the Moist; and jointly be at all places on land, at sea, in the heavens. Be not yet born; in the womb; young; old; having died; what is beyond death.

And if you apprehend all that together - durations, places, occurrences, quality, quantity - you will be capable of apprehending theos.

[21] But if you enclose your psyche in your body and lessen it, saying "I comprehend nothing; have no power; fear the sea; am unable to go up into the heavens; do not know who I was and cannot know what I will be," then what is there with you and also with the god?

For, indulging the body and rotten, you are unable to apprehend the beautiful, the noble. To be completely rotten is to be unaware of the numinous, while having the ability to discover, to have volition, to have expectations, is the
direct, the better - its own - way to nobility, and which you will encounter everywhere and which will everywhere be perceived whether you anticipate it or not: awake, asleep, at sea; whether journeying by night, by day, when speaking or when silent. For there is nothing that cannot be an eikon of theos.

[22] Do you affirm that theos is unperceived?

Speak softly. Who is more clearly revealed? He created everything such that in them you might discern him, for such is the nobility, such is the arête, of the theos, that he is revealed in everything. For nothing is unperceivable, not even the incorporeal, with perceiveration evident through apprehension, theos through creation.

So Trismegistus, let what has been revealed so far be apprehended by you, and if you consider other things in the same way you will not be deceived.

***

Commentary

Title.

perceiverance. νοῦς. qv. my commentary on the term in Poemandres where I wrote:

"The conventional interpretation [of νοῦς] is 'mind', as if in contrast to 'the body' and/or as if some fixed philosophical and abstract principle is meant or implied.

This conventional interpretation is in my view incorrect, being another example of not only retrospective reinterpretation but of using a word which has acquired, over the past thousand years or more, certain meanings which detract from an understanding of the original text. Retrospective reinterpretation because the assumption is that what is being described is an axiomatic, reasoned, philosophy centred on ideations such as Thought, Mind, and Logos, rather than what it is: an attempt to describe, in fallible words, a personal intuition about our existence, our human nature, and which intuition is said to emanate from a supernatural being named Pœmandres [...]

I incline toward the view that the sense of the word νοῦς here, as often in classical literature, is perceiverance; that is, a particular type
of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed 'the body'.

Perceiverance thus describes the ability to sense, to perceive, when something may be amiss; and hence also of the Greek word implying resolve, purpose, because one had decided on a particular course of action, or because one's awareness of a situation impels or directs one to a particular course of action."

1.

The first paragraph of this section is spoken by Perceiverance [Νοῦς], the second by Hermes Trismegistus.

theos. As with my translations of tractates I, III, and IV of the Corpus Hermeticum, I here transliterate θεός rather than translate as God (as most others do) which translation in my opinion imposes a particular and Christian interpretation on the text given two thousand years of Christian exegesis regarding both God and the Old and New Testaments. A suitable alternative to 'theos' might be 'the god', which emphasizes that the theos described in this tractate is, like Zeus in classical times, the pre-eminent divinity. Occasionally, when the text warrants it - for example τῷ θεῷ and εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός - I have used 'the theos' instead of theos.

I have not uncovered the actuality. ἐγὼ τὸ ἀληθὲς οὐκ ἔμαθον. I incline toward the view that the sense of ἀληθής here is not some abstract (disputable) 'truth' but rather of the reality, the actuality, beyond the conflicting views, beyond appearance, and thus of uncovering - of learning - the reality of theos and other things.

2.

Aion. αἰών. A transliteration since the usual translation of 'eternity' imposes modern (cosmological and theological) meanings on the text, especially as αἰών can also imply a personification of a 'divine being', and 'an age or era' of long duration, or the lifespan of a mortal (as in Herodotus: πρὶν τελευτήσαντα καλῶς τὸν αἰῶνα πύθωμαι, Book 1, 32.5). In Aristotle, αἰών has specific meanings which the English term 'eternity' does not describe. For instance, in Περί Οὐρανοῦ where he writes: Ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὐπερ γέγονεν ὁ πᾶς οὐρανὸς οὐτ' ἐνδέχεται φθαρῆναι, καθάπερ φασιν αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ἔστιν εἰς καὶ αἰώνιος, ἀρχὴν μὲν καὶ τελευτὴν οὐκ ἔχων τοῦ παντὸς αἰώνος, ἔχων δὲ καὶ περιέχων ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν ἀπειροῦ χρόνον (Book 2, 1).
Which is somewhat echoed in this tractate in respect of Kosmos which is not just a coming-into-being but always just is, from Aion (γενόμενος οὐποτε καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰώνος).

Interestingly, Jung used the term to describe a particular archetype, one which provides "intimations of a kind of enantiodromian reversal of dominants" as he writes in his *Aion: Researches Into The Phenomenology Of The Self*.

In addition, αἰών - as with the following χρόνος - might well be a personification, or an esoteric/philosophical term or principle which requires interpretation, as might κόσμος (Kosmos). Since κόσμος here does not necessarily imply what we now understand, via sciences such as astronomy, as the physical cosmos/universe it seems inappropriate to translate it as 'the cosmos', especially given expressions such as οὐδὲ ἀπολεῖταί τι τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τοῦ κόσμου υπὸ τοῦ αἰώνος ἐμπεριεχομένου.

*Kronos. χρόνος.* For reasons I have explained many times in my writings (for instance in Appendix I), I do not translate χρόνος as 'time', which translation seems to me to impose a particular modern meaning on the text given that for centuries the term 'time' has denoted a certain regularity (hours, minutes) measured by a mechanism such as a clock and given that the term 'duration' is usually more appropriate in relation to ancient Greek texts where the duration between, for example, the season of Summer and the season of Autumn was determined by the observations (the appearance in the night sky) of certain constellations and stars.

*geniture. γένεσις.* The unusual English word geniture expresses the meaning of γένεσις here: that which or those whom have their genesis (and their subsequent development) from or because of something else or because of someone else. Alongside χρόνος, αἰών, and κόσμος, here γένεσις could well be a personification.

*It is as if the quidditas of theos is [...] τοῦ δὲ θεοῦ ὠσπέρ οὐσία ἐστι...* Quidditas - post-classical Latin, from whence the English word quiddity - is more appropriate here, in respect of οὐσία, than essence, especially as 'essence' now has so many non-philosophical and modern connotations. Quidditas is thus a philosophical term which requires contextual interpretation. In respect of οὐσία, qv. Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* Book 5, 1015α: ἐκ δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων ἡ πρώτη φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστίν ἡ οὐσία ἡ τῶν ἐχόντων ἀρχή κινήσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ἡ αὐτά: ἡ γὰρ ὑλή τῶν ταύτης δεκτικὴ εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῶν ἀρχής τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύων ὤντων αὐτή ἐστίν, ἐνυπάρχουσα πως ἡ δυνάμει ἡ ἐντελεχεία. [Given the foregoing, then principally - and to be exact - physis denotes the quidditas of beings having changement inherent within them; for substantia has been denoted by physis because it embodies this, as have the becoming that is a coming-into-being, and a burgeoning, because they are changements predicated on it. For physis is inherent changement either manifesting the potentiality of a
being or as what a being, complete of itself, is.]

In addition, I follow the MSS, which have τὸ ἀγαθόν, τὸ καλὸν, ἡ εὐδαιμονία.

*honour*. ἀγαθός. That is, the substance of theos - in mortals - is manifest in the brave, in nobility of character, in what being noble means. Regarding ἀγαθός as honour rather than some abstract, disputable 'good', qv. my commentary (i) on Poemandres 22 and (ii) on τὰ μὲν γὰρ φαινόμενα τέρπει [...] φανεροῖς in section 9 of Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς (tractate IV), and (iii) Appendix II and III.

good fortune. εὐδαιμονία.

*Sophia*. σοφία. A transliteration, because - just like ἀληθής - it is not necessarily here something abstract, something disputable, such as 'wisdom' or 'good judgement'. Just as with Aion and Kronos, it might be a personification or used here as an esoteric term which thus requires contextual interpretation.

*identity...arrangement*. ταὐτότης...τάξις. An alternative for 'identity' would be 'form' (but not necessarily in the sense used by Plato and Aristotle) for the meaning seems to be that Aion provides the form, the identity, of beings with Kosmos arranging these forms into a particular order.

*of Kronos, variation*. See the note on Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015α, above.

*vigour*. ἐνέργεια. As at Poemandres 14, not 'energy' given that the word energy has too many modern connotations and thus distracts from the meaning here. See also the note on 'activity' in section 5 where 'activity' is a more perspicacious translation.

cyclic return and renewal. ἀποκατάστασις καὶ ἀνταποκατάστασις. I take this expression as implying something metaphysical rather than astronomical; an astronomical meaning as described, for example, in the Greek fragments of a book on astrology by Dorotheus of Sidon (qv. Dorothei Sidonii carmen astrologicum. Interpretationem Arabicam in linguam Anglicam versam una cum Dorothei fragmentis et Graecis et Latinis, edited by Pingree, Teubner, Leipzig, 1976).

For there is a similar metaphysical theme in Poemandres 17 - μέχρι περιόδου τέλους (cyclic until its completion) - with apokatastasis becoming (possibly as an echo of Greek Stoicism) a part of early Christian exegesis as exemplified by Gregory of Nyssa who wrote ἀνάστασις ἐστιν ἡ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς φύσεως ἠμῶν ἀποκατάστασις (De Anima et Resurrectione, 156C) where apokatastasis implies a return to, a resurrection of, the former state of being (physis) of mortals lost through 'original sin' and in respect of which returning baptism is a beginning.
3. substance. ὕλη. qv. Poemandres 10. Given that the ancient Greek term does not exactly mean 'matter' in the modern sense (as in the science of Physics) it is better to find an alternative. Hence substance, the materia of 'things' and living beings. Thus 'materia' would be another suitable translation here of ὕλη.

The craft of theos: Aion. δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών. Aion as artisan who has, through theos, the power to not only craft Kosmos but also renew it, for Kosmos was/is not just a once occurring coming-into-being but is forever renewed: γενόμενος οὔποτε, καὶ ἀεὶ γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνο.

On δύναμις as implying an 'artisan-creator' rather than just the 'power/strength' of a divinity, qv. the doxology in Poemandres 31.

From Aion to Kosmos. The suggestion is that 'the cosmic order' - Kosmos - is the work of Aion who/which is the source of, provides, 'the exemption from death' and the continuance of materia/substantia, the cyclic return and renewal.

4. jumelle. διπλοῦς. As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 14, "The much underused and descriptive English word jumelle - from the Latin gemellus - describes some-thing made in, or composed of, two parts, and is therefore most suitable here, more so than common words such as 'double' or twofold."

psyche. ψυχὴ. Avoiding the usual translation of 'soul' which imposes various, disputable, religious and philosophical meanings (including modern ones) on the text. A useful summary of the use of ψυχὴ from classical to Greco-Roman times is given in 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).

Theos is presenced in perceiveration... The term 'presenced' expresses the esoteric meaning of the text better than something such as "theos is in perceiveration", especially given what follows: a description of the layers of being, of the whole, complete, cosmic, Body having within it other bodies, other layers or types of being, such as Kronos.

Within, it is filled; outside, it is enclosed ... a vast, fully-formed, life. The suggestion is that it - the cosmic Body - is enclosed, encircled, by psyche which fills the cosmos with Life.
It is possible to understand this mystically as an allusion to the difference between what is esoteric and what is exoteric, with 'within' referring to an inner/esoteric perception and understanding, and 'outer' as referring to the exoteric. That is, the exoteric understanding is of something vast, fully-formed, complete, and living (μέγα καὶ τέλειον ζώον) while the inner understanding is of living beings who, "replete with psyche", are connected to theos through perceiveration. The exoteric perception is also described in the preceding "unchanging and undecaying" aspect of the heavens, with the esoteric referring to the "changeable and decayable" nature of living things on Earth.

5. **Necessitas.** Although the Latin 'Necessitas' is a suitable alternative for the Greek, a transliteration (Ananke) is perhaps preferable (although less readable), because even if what is meant is not 'wyrd' - qv. Ἀνάγκης, the primordial goddess of incumbency, of wyrd, of that which is beyond, and the origin of, what we often describe as our Fate as a mortal being [cf. Empedocles, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Diels-Kranz, 31, B115] - English terms such as 'necessity' and 'constraint' are somewhat inadequate, vague, especially given what follows: εἴτε πρόνοιαν εἴτε φύσιν καὶ εἴ τι άλλο οἴεται ἢ οἰήσεται τις.

Thus the term requires contextual interpretation.

**physis.** φύσις. An important theme/principle in the Poemandres tractate and in Aristotle, and a term which suggests more than what the English terms Nature - and the 'nature' or 'character' of a thing or person - denote. In respect of Aristotle, qv. Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015α, quoted above in respect of my use of the term quidditas.

What physis denotes is something ontological: a revealing, a manifestation, of not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being.

**activity.** For ἐνέργεια here since the term 'energy' is - given its modern and scientific connotations - inappropriate and misleading.

**crafting.** See the note on δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ό αἰών above.

**descend down.** In respect of ἐκπεσῇ, cf. Basil of Caesarea, Epistulae, Γλυκερίῳ: ἐκπεσῇ δὲ καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν μελῶν σου καὶ τῆς στολῆς.

**changement.** μεταβολή. I have here chosen 'changement' in preference to 'change' since changement (coming into English use around 1584) is more specific than 'change', suggesting variation, alteration, development, unfolding, transmutation.

Inactive is thus a vacant nomen. ἀργία γὰρ δόνου κενὸν ἐστι. The unusual
English word nomen - a direct borrowing from the Latin - is more appropriate than 'word' since nomen can mean a name and also a designation, for what is suggested is that in respect of someone who crafts, creates, things - theos - and what is created, brought-into-being, the designation and the name 'inactive' are not there. A suitable simile might be that of the second personal name (nomen) of a Roman citizen which designated their gens and, later, their status. Thus theos has no gens because theos is unique, and the status of theos cannot be compared to that of any other being because the status of theos is also unique.

In respect of ποιέω, I prefer 'create' rather than the somewhat prosaic 'make'.

6.

I am inclined to agree with Scott - *Hermetica*, Volume I, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924, p.210 - that after the end of the first paragraph of section 6 [For every being there is a coming-into-being ... not independent of him but rather comes-into-being because of him] the tractate should be divided. Indeed, there might even have been a melding of two different tractates (or two different authors) given the contrast between the first and the second part.

*undecayable* ἀκήρατος. That is, a privation of κηραίνω: decay, spoiled, perish. Undecayable is more apt here than 'undefiled' or 'pure' especially as Thomas More, in 1534 in his A Treatise On The Passion, wrote of "the infinite perfection of their undecayable glory."

*eldern*. For παλαιός. The Middle English forms of eldern include elldern and eldrin, and the etymology is 'elder' plus the suffix 'en'. In comparison to this rather evocative English word, alternatives such as 'ancient' seem somewhat prosaic.

7.

*Observe also the septenary cosmos ... separate aeonic orbits*. Nock - who as Copenhaver et al - renders αἰών as 'eternity' translates this passage as: Vois aussi la hiérarchie des sept cieux, formés en bon ordre suivant une disposition éternelle, remplissant, chacun par une différente, l'éternité.

*phaos*. As in my Poemandres - and for reasons explained there - a transliteration of φῶς, using the Homeric φάος. To translate simply as 'light' obscures the elemental nature of phaos.

*no fire anywhere*. As in the Poemandres tractate (qv. sections 4, 5, et seq.) not 'fire' in the literal sense but fire as an elemental principle. In the Poemandres tractate - which describes the origins of beings - Fire plays an important role, as at section 17,
"those seven came into being in this way. Earth was muliebral, Water was lustful, and Fire maturing. From Ἀθερ, the pnuema, and with Physis bringing forth human-shaped bodies. Of Life and phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceiveration; from Life - psyche; from phaos - perceiveration; and with everything in the observable cosmic order cyclic until its completion."

fellowship. The meaning of φιλία here is debatable, as usual renderings such as 'love' and 'friendship' seem somewhat inappropriate given the context. It is possible it refers to a principle such as the one suggested by Empedocles where it is the apparent opposite of νείκος, qv. the mention of Empedocles by Isocrates (Antidosis, 15.268) - Ἐμπεδοκλῆς δὲ τέτταρα, καὶ νείκος καὶ φιλίαν ἐν αὐτοῖς - and fragments such as 31, B35 and 31, B115 (Diels-Kranz: Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker) with νείκος implying 'disagreement' and φιλότης something akin to 'fellowship'.

The contrast between νείκος and φιλότης is also mentioned - interestingly in regard to the source of motion - by Aristotle in Metaphysics, Book 12, 1072a: Ἐμπεδοκλῆς φιλίαν καὶ τὸ νείκος.

archon and hegemon. I follow the MSS which have ἄρχων καὶ ἡγέμων. Since both ἄρχων and ἡγέμων have been assimilated into the English language (ἄρχων c. 1755 and ἡγέμων c. 1829) and retain their original meaning it seemed unnecessary to translate them.

prodromus. πρόδρομος. Another Greek word assimilated into the English language (c. 1602 and appearing in a translation of Ovid's Salmacis and Hermaphroditus) and which retains the meaning of the Greek here: a forerunner, a precursor; a moving ahead and in front of.

the Earth amid them all. I incline toward the view that τήν τε γῆν μέσην τοῦ παντός does not mean that 'the Earth is at the centre of the universe' (or something similar) - since κόσμος is not directly mentioned - but rather that the Earth is in the midst of - among - all, the whole, (παντός) that exists.

foundation. I take the sense of ὑποστάθμη here to be 'foundation' rather than implying some sort of 'sediment', gross or otherwise.

nurturer. τιθήνη.

deadless, deathful. qv. Poemandres 14: θυητός μὲν διὰ τὸ σώμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἀθάρσωμον. As there, I take the English words from Chapman's Hymn to Venus from the Homeric Hymns: "That with a deathless goddess lay a deathful man."

travelling. ὑποστάθμη. The context suggests 'travelling', and 'going around or about' in a general sense, rather than 'circling' in some defined astronomical
sense.

8.

All in motion. In a passage critical of Plato and in respect of motion, psyche and the heavens, Aristotle in his Metaphysics wrote: τὸ αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ κινοῦν: ὅστερον γὰρ καὶ ἀμα τῷ οὐρανῷ ἡ ψυχή, ὡς φησίν. (Book 12, 1072a)

In every way, a unity. Cf. sections 10 and 11 of the Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς tractate (IV) with their mention of μονάς.

Hastiness. ταχυτής. To translate as either 'speed' or 'velocity' is to leave the text open to misinterpretation, since the concept of speed/velocity as a measure (precise or otherwise) of the time taken to travel a certain distance was unknown in the ancient world.

10.

Devoid of logos. Qv. Poemander 10. As there, ἄλογος is simply 'without/devoid of or lacking in logos'. It does not necessarily here, or there, imply 'irrational' or 'unreasoning'. It might, for example, be referring to how logos is explained in texts such as Poemandres where distinctions are made between logoi, such as pneumal logos and phaomal logos.

In addition, I follow the MSS which have only καὶ τοῦ ἀλόγου.

Presence life. ἔμψυχος. That is, are living; have life; embody, are animated by, life; and thus are not lifelessly cold.

Psyche of itself [...] the creator of deathless being. Although the Greek wording is somewhat convoluted the meaning is that while psyche is the "cause of the life" of beings which are animated with life, it is the creator of deathless life who is the cause of all life.

What then of the living that die and the deathless ones? I follow the emendation of Tiedemann who has ἀθάνατῶν in place of θνητῶν.

11.

If not One, the theos. The phrase εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός occurs in Mark 10.18 and Luke 18.19. I have translated literally in an attempt to preserve the meaning, lost if one translates as The One God.

Theos therefore is One. I have omitted the following γελοιότατον - "most absurd" - as a gloss. In respect of 'One' here - εἷς - what is implied is not the numeral one but rather "not composed of separate parts", complete of itself, the
opposite of 'many', and so on. That is, an undivided unity.

divinity-presenced. θειότης. This word imputes the sense of 'the divine (made) manifest' or less literally 'divine-ness' whence the usual translation of 'divinity'. I have opted for divinity-presenced to express something of its original meaning and its uncommonality.

12.

*He creates all things*. I have omitted the following ἐν πολλῷ γελοιότατον as an untranslatable gloss.

otiose. καταργέω. Since otiose implies more than being 'idle' or 'unoccupied' it is apt, implying as it does "having no practical function; redundant; superfluous".

13.

*no one really exists without producing*... Following the emendations of Nock, who has σε μηδὲν ποιοῦντα μὴ δυνάμενον εἶναι.

apprehend. νοέω. To apprehend also in the sense of 'discover'.

*this is Life; this is the beautiful, this is the noble; this is the theos.*

This is Life; this is the beautiful, this is the noble; this is the theos. ἕστι δὲ τοῦτο [...] ζωή, τοῦτο δὲ ἐστι τὸ καλὸν, τοῦτο δὲ ἐστι τὸ ἀγαθὸν, τοῦτο ἐστιν ὁ θεός. A succinct expression of the main theme of the tractate and of one of the main themes of the hermetic weltanschauung.

14.

enosis. ἕνωσις. A transliteration given that it is a mystical term with a particular meaning and describes something more than is denoted by the ordinary English word 'union'. It was, for example used by Plotinus, by Maximus of Constantinople, and was part of the mystic philosophy attributed to Pseudo-Dionysius, The Areopagite - qv. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Series Graeca. vol IV, 396A. 1857 - and denoted, for Plotinus, a desirable ascent (ἄνοδος) and a 'merging with The One', and for both the Areopagite and Maximus of Constantinople a self-less mystical experience of God.

15.

eikon. εἰκών. Another mystical term requiring contextual interpretation, cf. Poemandres 31, regarding which I wrote in my commentary: "I have transliterated εἰκών as here it does not only mean what the English words 'image' or 'likeness' suggest or imply, but rather it is similar to what Maximus of Constantinople in his Mystagogia [Patrologiae Graeca, 91, c.0658] explains.
Which is of we humans, and the cosmos, and Nature, and psyche, as eikons, although according to Maximus it is the Christian church itself (as manifest and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles and their successors and in scripture) which, being the eikon of God, enables we humans to recognize this, recognize God, be in communion with God, return to God, and thus find and fulfil the meaning of our being, our existence."

My dear Hermes. Omitting the following δεισιδαίμων ὡς ἀκούεις as a gloss.

occurrences. πάθη. I interpret this not in some anthropomorphic way - as 'passions' - but metaphysically (as akin to πάθημα), and thus as occurrences, events, happenings, that here regularly occur to Kosmos and which change and renew it despite (or perhaps because of) the change it undergoes. cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 1, 982b: οἷον περί τῶν τῆς σελήνης παθημάτων καὶ τῶν περὶ τοῦ ἥλιου καὶ ἀστρα καὶ περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντός γενέσεως.

the cyclic a turning. The meaning here of στροφή is problematic. Given the context, my suggestion is 'turning' in the sense of a change that is positive and possibility evolutionary, as πάθη can lead to positive change, in humans, in Nature, and in things.

16.

polymorphous. παυτόμορφος. As for the rest of the sentence, vis-a-vis 'form', there is no adequate, unambiguous, word to re-present μορφή given how, for example, the English term 'morph' has acquired various meanings irrelevant here and given that the English term 'form' has associations with Plato when used to translate ἰδέα.

without-form. ἄμορφος.

kind. For ἰδέα. To avoid confusion with 'form' and because it is apposite here.

17.

incorporeal kind. In respect of ἀσώματος, cf. the comment about Socrates and Plato in Placita Philosophorum by Pseudo-Plutarch: τὸν θεόν τὴν ὕλην τὴν ἴδεαν. ὁ δὲ θεός νοοῦ ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου, ὕλη δὲ τὸ ύποκείμενον πρῶτον γενέσει καὶ φθορά, ἰδέα δ’ οὐσία ἀσώματος ἐν τοῖς νοήμασι καὶ ταῖς φαντασίαις τοῦ θεοῦ. (1.3)

mountains which appear in depictions. I have chosen 'depictions' because depiction could refer to paintings on vases or to wall-paintings or to some other medium or art-form where mountains might be depicted, and it is not clear from the context which is meant.
18.

φαντασία. Not here simply 'appearance' in the ordinary sense of the term but a 'making visible' such that it is apprehended by us in a particular way, as a re-presentation of what it actually is. Hence: "an incorporeal representation apprehends what is lain otherwise."

19.

urge your psyche to go to... The whole passage is interesting and evocative, with psyche here signifying 'spirit' as in "let your spirit wander to other places" and thus invoking something akin to what we now might describe as conscious imagination.

go to any land. Following the MSS rather than the emendation Nock accepts which is εἰς Ἰνδικὴν. There seems to me no justification for jarringly introducing India here.

Ocean. Ὡκεανός. That is, a sea beyond the Mediterranean, such as the Atlantic.

Aether. cf. Poemandres 17, ἐκ δὲ αἰθέρος τὸ πνεῦμα ἔλαβε, where I noted in my commentary: "It is best to transliterate αἰθήρ - as Æther - given that it, like Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and pnuema, is an elemental principle, or a type of (or a particular) being, or some-thing archetypal."

nor the vortex. οὐχ ἡ δίνη. Presumably δίνη here refers to the celestial movement of the planets and stars as observed from Earth.

burst through. cf. Poemandres 14: ἀναρρήξας τὸ κράτος τῶν κύκλων, "burst through the strength of the spheres."

The Entirety. Even though 'universe' is implied, I have refrained from using that English word given its modern astronomical and cosmological connotations, and have instead opted for a literal translation of ὅλος.

ordered system. κόσμος here as 'the ordered system' just described: the land, ocean, Sun, the heavens, the bodies of the stars.

20.

purposes. νοήματα.

21.

enclose your psyche in your body. cf. section I of tractate VII where enclosing the psyche in the body is also mentioned.
*indulging the body and rotten.* φιλοσώματος here implies 'indulging the body' rather than 'loving the body' just as κακός implies 'rotten', 'base', rather than some abstract, disputable 'evil' or (vide Nock) "le vice suprême."

*the numinous.* τὸ θεῖον. In other words, 'the divine'.

*its own (way).* Following the MSS which have ἰδία, omitted by Nock.

*eikon.* Tentatively reading οὐδὲν γάρ ἐστιν ὃ οὐκ εἰκὼν θείου, which is not altogether satisfactory. The MSS have εἰκόνι. Nock emends to οὐδὲν γάρ ἐστιν ὃ οὐκ ἐστιν (there is nothing that it is not) which seems somewhat at odds with the preceding "to be completely rotten is..." and with theos/the numinous being evident, presenced, in τὸ ἀγαθὸν, τὸ καλὸν, ἡ εὐδαιμονία.

Regarding eikon, qv. the note in the commentary on section 15.

22.

*speak softly.* εὐφήμησον is a formulaic phrase (cf. Tractate XIII:8, ὦ τέκνον, καὶ εὐφήμησον καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐ καταπαύσει τὸ ἔλεος εἰς ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ) suggesting "speak softly" and with reverence.
Appendix I

Some Examples Regarding Translation and Questions of Interpretation

Interpretation and The Question of Sin

I incline toward the view that in translations into English it is often best to avoid words that impose or seem to impose a meaning on an ancient text especially if the sense that an English word now imputes is the result of centuries of assumptions or opinions or influences and thus has acquired a modern meaning, or an interpretation [1], somewhat at variance with the culture, the milieu, of the time when the text that is being translated was written. Especially so in the matter of religious or spiritual texts where so many people rely or seem to rely on the translations, the interpretations, of others and where certain interpretations seem to have become fixed. [2]

Thus, it may be helpful if one can suggest, however controversial or iconoclastic they may seem in their time, reasoned alternatives for certain words important for a specific and a general understanding of a particular text, and helpful because such alternatives might enable a new appreciation of such a text, as if for instance one is reading it for the first time with the joy of discovery.

For example, one of the prevalent English words used in translations of the New Testament, and one of the words now commonly associated with revealed religions such as Christianity and Islam, is sin. A word which now imputes and for centuries has imputed a particular and at times somewhat strident if not harsh moral attitude, with sinners starkly contrasted with the righteous and the saved, and with sin, what is evil, what is perverse, to be shunned and shudderingly avoided.

One of the oldest usages of the word sin - so far discovered - is in the c. 880 CE translation of the c. 525 CE text Consolatio Philosophiae, a translation attributed to King Ælfred. Here, the Old English spelling of syn is used:

Þæt is swiðe dyslic & swiðe micel syn þæt mon þæs wenan scyle be Gode
The context of the original Latin of Boethius [3] is cogitare, in relation to a
dialogue about goodness and God, so that the sense of the Latin is that it is
incorrect - an error, wrong - to postulate/claim/believe certain things about God.
There is thus here, in Boethius, as in early English texts such as Beowulf [4], the
sense of doing what was wrong, of committing an error, of making a mistake, of
being at fault; at most of overstepping the bounds, of transgressing limits
imposed by others, and thus being 'guilty' of such an infraction, a sense which
the suggested etymology of the word syn implies: from the Latin sons, santis.

Thus, this early usage of the English word syn seems to impart a sense
somewhat different from what we now associate with the word sin, which is why
in my translation of John 8.7 I eschew that much overused and now often
pejorative word in order to try and convey something of the numinous original:

So, as they continued to ask [for an answer] he straightened himself,
saying to them: Let he who has never made a mistake [ Αναμαρτητος ]
throw the first stone at her.

גּ-Perfil-Texto-1550581061252.jpg

Jesus here is not, in my view, sermonizing about sin, as a puritan preacher
might, and as if he is morally superior to and has judged the sinners. Instead, he
is rather gently and as a human pointing out an obvious truth about our human
nature; explaining, in v.11, that he has not judged her conduct:

[And] she answered, No one, my Lord. Whereupon Jesus replied
Neither do I judge [κατακρίνω] you, therefore go, and avoid errors
such as those. [5]

Such a translation avoids the rather contradictory nature of most other
translations which have Jesus clearly stating that he also does not judge her but
then have him go on to say that she should 'sin no more' with the obvious
implication that he has indeed judged her in that in his judgement she had
indeed sinned before.

Understood and appreciated thus, sans the now somewhat culturally-biased
word sin, these passages from the gospel according to John - together with
passages such as Luke 19.10 and Romans 13.10 [6] - perhaps usefully
summarize the evangel of Jesus of Nazareth; the (in my view) rather human
message of avoiding judging others because we ourselves are prone to error;
the message of love, and the message of redemption (forgiveness) for those who
in the past have made mistakes but who have thereafter tried to avoid making
such mistakes again, those hitherto perhaps damaged or lost.
In respect of ἁμαρτάνω [7] consider, for example, Matthew 18.21:

Τότε προσελθὼν ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν [αὐτῷ] Κύριε, ποσάκις ἁμαρτήσει εἰς ἐμὲ ὁ ἀδελφός μου καὶ ἀφήσω αὐτῷ; ἕως ἑπτάκις

Peter then approached [προσέρχομαι] him saying My Lord, how often [ποσάκις] may my brother fail [ἁμαρτάνω] me and be ignored [ἀφίημι]? Up to seven times?

Which is somewhat different from the usual "how many times shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him."

Translation and Al-Quran

The problem of sometimes projecting modern interpretations onto ancient texts by the injudicious use, in a translation, of a particular English word is especially relevant in the matter of the Quran, for it seems to be increasingly common for someone reliant on translations - on the interpretations of meaning given by others - to misunderstand the text of the Quran and then, from that misunderstanding, form a somewhat misconceived opinion about the Quran in particular and Islam in general.

For example, an ayah [verse] often (mis)quoted is Ayah 151 of Surah Al 'Imran, which is usually interpreted as "Soon shall we cast terror into the hearts of the unbelievers."

However, the word 'terror' is an inappropriate interpretation for several reasons. The Arabic of Ayah 151 of Surah Al 'Imran is:

سَلَلْفِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرَّعْبُ بِمَا أَشْرَكُوا بِاللّهِ مَنْ يَتَّرَكُ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَمَا آتَهُمُ الدَّأْرُ وَبِئْسَ مِنْ مَلَائِكَةِ الْمَلِئِينَ

Does ṭَرَعْبَ imply 'terror' as the aforementioned interpretation suggests, along with all that the modern English word terror now implies, as in the difficult to define term terrorism? No, it does not; rather, the Arabic implies the fear/the dread and 'the astonishment/awe' - that is, that human feeling inspired by apprehending or experiencing some-thing supernaturally or extraordinarily powerful and numinous; for example, an Ayah (Sign) of Allah, Al-Khaliq, Al-Azim, Al-Jalil. The kind of fear/trembling/awe/astonishment felt, for instance and importantly, by the Apostles when, as recounted in Luke 24.37, they witnessed Jesus alive after the crucifixion.
That is, I suggest that what is referred to in Ayah 151 of Surah Al 'Imran - as in the other four Ayat where рущ/ букв occur - is similar to the 'suffusion with fear' and the 'being scared' that occurs and has occurred, as recounted in both Christian scripture and the Quran, when a mortal is (a) confronted by God/Allah or some-thing divine/numinous/awe-inspiring, and/or (b) has such fear, and such a being scared, thrust into their hearts by God/Allah, as a Sign, a warning, or as mention of their fate.

In respect of Luke 24.37, for instance, the Greek text is:

πτοηθέντες δὲ καὶ ἐμφόβοι γενόμενοι ἐδόκουν πνεῦμα θεωρεῖν

The term ἐμφόβος means 'suffused with/by phobos' - held/gripped by fear; timorous - and occurs in Sirach 19.24 and Luke 24.5, the latter of which is very interesting: ἐμφόβων δὲ γενομένων αὐτῶν καὶ κλινοῦσῶν τὰ πρόσωπα εἰς τὴν γῆν εἰπὼν πρὸς αὐτὰς Τί ἥμετετε τὸν ζωνταν αὐτῶν μετὰ τῶν νεκρῶν. That is, suffused with phobos, they assumed a posture of submission/reverence/respect by bowing their heads; in effect prostrating themselves in the presence of some-thing divine/numinous/awe-inspiring. Since πνεῦμα - pneuma - here implies apparition or ghost, and πτοηθεντες suggests they were 'scared' (cf. Odyssey 22.298 - τῶν δὲ φρένες ἐπτοίηθεν) then Luke 24.37 could be translated as "But they, suffused with fear and scared, felt that they saw an apparition." [8]

My, admittedly fallible, view now - after some years of reflexion and study - is that, in an English interpretation of the meaning of a work as revered, and misunderstood, as the Quran, English words in common usage must be carefully chosen, with many common words avoided, and that it would sometimes be better to choose an unusual or even archaic word in order to try and convey something of the sense of the Arabic. Thus, with a careful interpretation common misunderstandings of the text - by those unversed in Arabic - can possibly be avoided, especially if - as might be the case with unusual words - the reader has to pause to consider the meaning or make the effort to find the meaning, if only in a glossary appended to the interpretation. A pause and/or an effort that is suited to reading a work revered by millions of people around the world.

In the matter of Ayah 151 of Surah Al 'Imran, a possible interpretation of meaning therefore is:

Into the hearts of they who disbelieve We shall hurl redurre because they, without any authority revealed about such things, associate others with Allah; and for their home: The Fire, that harrowing resting place of the unjust.

Here, I have used the unusual English word redurre, with a meaning of 'awe combined with a trembling fear'. A word suggested by its occurrence in religious works by Richard Rolle and John Gower, and also by texts such as
Morte Arthure [9] and which word therefore places this Ayah from the Quran into the correct context, which is that of a religious revelation, a spiritual message, comparable to that of Christianity, and of the particular ontology that Islam offers as answers to questions concerning the meaning and the purpose of our mortal lives; of how that purpose may be attained; and thus of what wisdom is. Answers which have nothing whatsoever to do with ‘terrorism’, or even with 'terror' as that word in now commonly understood.

**The Art of Translation, and A Question About Time**

One question of possibly projecting modern interpretations onto ancient texts by the injudicious use of a particular English word, occurred to me some twenty years ago during my translation of the Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles, and concerned the Greek word χρόνος. This is almost always translated as ‘time’, a word we now associate with a regular linearity - of past-present-future - measured in terms of the minutes, hours, and fixed days, of a reliable timepiece such as a watch or clock.

In the classical world of Homer and Sophocles, this type of reliable, linear, regularity was almost unknown, with χρόνος thus sometimes denoting some ill-defined period - long or short - and with the passing of a year, for example, often determined by the changes of the seasons, and which seasons themselves were marked in their arrival by the appearance of certain constellations in the night sky, something beautifully expressed by Aeschylus at the beginning of the Agamemnon:

\[
θεοὺς μὲν αἰτῶ τῶνδ᾽ ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων
φρουρᾶς ἄγκαθεν, κυνὸς δίκην,
καὶ τοὺς φέροντας χεῖμα καὶ θέρος βροτοῖς
καὶ νῦν φυλάσσω λαμπάδος τὸ σύμβολον,
αὐγὴν πυρὸς φέρουσαν ἐκ Τροίας φάτιν
ἄλωσιμον τε βάξιν: ὥδε γὰρ κρατεῖ
γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον ἐλπίζον κέαρ.
\]

Again I have asked the gods to deliver me from this toil,
This vigil a year in length, where I repose
On Atreidæ'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.
And still I keep watch for the sign of the beacon,
The light of the fire which will bring report of Troy,
Announcing it is captured.
For such is the command
And expectation of that woman with a man's resolve.

However, in Oedipus Tyrannus, Sophocles has the memorable phrase καὶ μ᾽ ἢμαρ ἢδη ξυμμετρούμενον χρόνω, indicating something not only about χρόνος but also about the classical world and (importantly) about the character of Oedipus. The phrase is therefore worth quoting in context:

ὦ παῖδες οἰκτροί, γυνώτα κοῦκ ἁγρωτά μοι προσήλθεθ’ ἵμερον, ἵτα νοσεῖτε πάντες, καὶ νοσοῦντες, ὡς ἐγὼ οὐκ ἔστιν ύμων ὅστις εἰς ἱππον νοσεῖ.
τὸ μὲν γὰρ ύμων ἀλγος εἰς ἔν’ ἔρχεται μόνον καθ’ αὐτὸν κοῦδέν’ ἄλλου, ἢ δ’ ἐμὴ ψυχὴ πόλιν τε καὶ σ’ ὀμοῦ στένει.
δὴ τὸν γὰρ ὑπὸ γυνώτα μ’ εὐδοντά μ’ ἐξεγείρετε, ἀλλ’ ἵστε πολλά μὲν με δακρύσαντα δή, πολλάς δ’ ὧδους ἐλθόντα φροντίδος πλάνοις: ἦν δ’ εὗρεν ἡμῶν ἡμῖν παῖδα μνήσκες μόνη, ταῦτην ἐπράξα: παῖδα γὰρ Μενοίκεως Κρέοντ’, ἐμαυτοῦ γαμβρόν, ἐς τὰ Πυθικὰ ἐπέμπει Φοίβου δώμαθ’ ὡς πῦθοιθ’ ὑπὶ δρόων ἢ τι φωνῆς τηνὶ δρόμης ὑπαίσμην πόλιν.
καὶ μ’ ἢμαρ ἢδη ξυμμετρούμενον χρόνω λυπεῖ τι πράσσει: τοῦ γὰρ εἰκότος πέρα ἀπεστὶ πλείω τοῦ καθῆκουτος χρόνου.
ὅταν δ’ ἵκηται, τηνικαῦτ’ ἀγὼ κακὸς μὴ δρῶν ᾧν εἶπην πάνθ’ ὅσ’ ἂν δῆλοιθ᾽ ὑεός.

You, my children, who lament - I know, for I am not without knowledge,
Of the desire which brings you here. For well do I see
All your sufferings - and though you suffer, it is I
And not one of you that suffers the most.
For your pain comes to each of you
By itself, with nothing else, while my psyche
Mourns for myself, for you and the clan.
You have not awakened me from a resting sleep
For indeed you should know of my many tears
And the many paths of reflection I have wandered upon and tried.
And, as I pondered, I found one cure
Which I therefore took. The son of Menoeceus,
Creon - he who is my kin by marriage - I have sent to that Pythian dwelling
Of Phoebus to learn how I
By word or deed can give deliverance to the clan.
But I have already measured the duration
And am concerned: for where is he? He is longer than expected
For his absence is, in duration, greater than is necessary.
Yet when he does arrive, it would dishonourable
For me not to act upon all that the gods makes clear.

vv.58-77

To translate χρόνος in v.73 abstractly as 'time' is therefore to overlook not only the context - of a world where the seasons were often determined by observation of the night sky - but also the significance of what Oedipus says. For he has, out of his urgent concern for both his people and himself - out of fear of the wrake of the gods - gone to the trouble to determine how long Creon's journey should take and to measure/calculate/record, or to have someone do this for him, precisely how long Creon has been away.

A pedantic point, possibly; but one which perhaps illustrates the engaging art of translation and the possibilities of interpretation, and of misinterpretation, that exist.

Notes

[1] By interpretation here is meant (i) commentaries (academic, theological, and otherwise); (ii) explanations (critical, and otherwise); (iii) translations; and – most importantly – (iv) a seeking of the meaning of (a) both the text (in whole and in parts) and (b) of the words and terms used.

[2] One misused English word is 'terror', often used to translate الرُّعْبِ in Ayah 151 of Surah Al 'Imran. See below: Translation and Al-Quran.

[3] Quare quod a summo bono diversum est sui natura, id summum bonum non est; quod nefas est de eo cogitare, quo nihil constat esse praestantius. Consolatio Philosophiae, Liber Tertius, pr. x

[4] Beowulf, 2470f, where the spelling synn is used:

eaferum læfde, swa deō eadig mon,
lond ond leodbyrig, þa he of life gewat.
þa wæs synn ond sacu Sweona ond Geata
ofer wid wæter, wroht gemæne,
herenið hearda, syððan Hreðel swealt
The conventional interpretation of ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μηκέτι ἁμάρτανε is "from now on sin no more".

Luke 19.10:

ἣλθεν γάρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζητῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός

The arrivance [ἐρχομαι] of the Son of Man was to seek and to save what was lost

However, a more interesting interpretation is:

The arrivance of the Son of Man was to seek and to repair [σώζω] what had been damaged [ἀπόλλυμι]

and which interpretation is suggested by (i) the sense of σώζω: keep safe, preserve, maintain - whence repair, and (ii) the sense of ἀπόλλυμι: destroy, ruin, kill, demolish, and - metaphorically - damaged, lost, and die.

Romans 13.10:

ἡ ἀγάπη τῷ πλησίον κακὸν οὐκ ἐργάζεται· πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη

love brings no harm to the neighbour; love is the completion of the law

ἁμαρτάνω classically implies a failure, mistake, an error, deprivation, loss, to miss/fail. qv (i) Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus:

ὅταν ταχύς τις οὑπιβουλεύων λάθρᾳ χωρῇ, ταχὺν δὲν κἀμὲ βουλεύειν πάλιν:
εἰ δ᾽ ἡσυχάζων προσμενῶ, τὰ τοῦδε μὲν πεπραγμέν᾽ ἔσται, τἀμὰ δ᾽ ἡμαρτημένα | 621

But when there is a plot against me which is swiftly and furtively Moving forward, then I must be swift in opposing that plot Since if I remain at rest, then indeed What is about to be done, will be - because of my mistake.

and (ii) Aeschylus, Agamemnon:

ὁφλὼν γὰρ ἁρπαγῆς τε καὶ κλοπῆς δίκην τοῦ ρυσίου θ᾽ ἡμαρτε καὶ πανώλεθρον 535 αὐτόχθονον πατρῷον ἔθριεν δόμον.
The penalty for the pillage and theft was fair -
He lost his booty and completely ruined
His own land with his father's family cut down

[8] On a pedantic note, I understand δοκέω as meaning here not the conventional unemotional 'suppose/thought' nor (worse) 'opinion' but rather as 'felt' in the sense of experiencing (as they do) an intense and personal feeling. Hence my rendering that they "felt that they saw..."


That thogh thi love more drawe
And peise in the balance more,
Thou miht noght axe ayein therfore
Of duete, bot al of grace.
For love is lord in every place,
Ther mai no lawe him justefie
Be reddour ne be compaignie,
That he ne wole after his wille
Whom that him liketh spede or spille

Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899-1902

*Morte Arthure* [written c. 1400 ce]

That thow ne schall rowte ne ryste vndyr the heuene ryche, Þofe thow
for reddour of Rome ryne to þe erthe  [108-109]

***

Appendix II

On Ethos And Interpretation

One of the intentions of these translations of mine of various tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum is provide an alternative approach to such ancient texts and hopefully renew interest in them beyond conventional current, and past interpretations, which - based on using terms such as God, Mind, and Soul - makes them appear to be proto-Christian or imbued with an early Christian weltanschauung or express certain philosophical and moralistic abstractions.
Why an alternative approach to such ancient texts? For two reasons. First, because the choice of English words hitherto in respect of Greek terms such as λόγος, νοῦς, θεός, ἀγαθός, φῶς, and φύσις, seems to me to be based on various assumptions such as that those and other terms express something definite and philosophical and relate to various ancient 'schools of thought'. I dissent from this view; instead, regarding such terms as descriptors used by individuals to express their own often mystical weltanschauung based on their own personal insights or, more probably, on what they had learned from others and/or from various MSS they had read. That is, many of the tractates present mythos, and/or ancient aural esoteric traditions, rather than the teachings of some established and philosophical 'school of thought'. Thus, such Greek terms require contextual interpretation and are often best transliterated or at least referred to the ethos underlying such weltanschauung and such mythos.

Second, because such texts seem to me to be, in the matter of cosmogony and metaphysics, more influenced by the classical Greek and the Hellenistic ethos than by any other, and thus in many ways are representative of that ethos as it was being developed, or as it was known, at the time texts such as those in the Corpus Hermeticum were written. An ethos, a cosmogony and a metaphysics, exemplified - to give just a few examples - by terms such as ἀρρενόθηλυς (Poemander), by the shapeshifting of Poemander (τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἠλλάγη τῇ ἰδέᾳ), by mention of a septenary system (Poemander, Tractate XI), by the 'voyages of the psyche' (Tractate XI: 20) and by terms such as Ἰερός Λόγος (Tractate III) and which term dates back to the time of Hesiod [1].

In respect, for example, of the Ἰερός Λόγος tractate, my view - as noted in the Preface of my translation of and commentary on that tractate - is that it 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 certainly older, as an aural tradition, than the story given in the Biblical Genesis; and a text which the author of the Poemandres tractate might well have been familiar with, as a reading of both texts indicates.

As an example of my alternative approach (and perhaps the most controversial example) is my interpretation of ἀγαθός as honour/nobility, τὸ ἀγαθὸν as the honourable/the noble/nobility, and thus as embodied in brave, noble, trustworthy, honest, individuals - exemplified in legend by the likes of the hero Leonidas - which interpretation I am inclined to view as an expression of both the classical Greek and the Greco-Roman (Hellenic) ethos, just as the expression τί ἐστιν ἀλήθεια, attributed to a certain Roman, is an expression of that ethos; whereas ἀγαθὸς as some disputable 'abstract', impersonal or philosophical 'good' does not in my view exemplify that ethos and the milieu in which it flourished. Furthermore, given how such a disputable 'abstract', moral, good has been generally understood for the last millennia (partly due to the influence of Christianity, partly due to post-Renaissance philosophy, and partly due to Western jurisprudence) then it seems desirable to avoid using the term
'good' in translations of such ancient texts - as also elsewhere, in other
metaphysical tractates of the Hellenic era - since 'good' now has certain
post-Hellenic connotations which can distance us from what such ancient
tractates may well express and have expressed.

Thus, such an iconoclastic interpretation of such an important ancient Greek
word - in terms of individuals and their physis, as opposed to in terms of some
abstract, moral, impersonal schemata or dogma or as part of some conjectured
philosophy - might provide a new perspective on this and on some other
tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum.

But whether this particular insight of mine regarding ἄγαθός is valid, others
will have to decide.

[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.

Appendix III

Concerning ἄγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum

Extract from a letter in reply to a correspondent who, in respect of the Corpus Hermeticum,
enquired about my translation of terms such as ἄγαθός and νοῦς. I have, for publication here,
added a footnote which references my translations of and commentaries on five tractates of the
Corpus Hermeticum.

Three of the many Greek terms of interest in respect of understanding the
varied weltanschauungen outlined in the texts that comprise the Corpus
Hermeticum are ἄγαθός and νοῦς and θεός, with conventional translations of
these terms as 'good' and 'Mind' and 'god' (or God) imparting the sense of
reading somewhat declamatory sermons about god/God and 'the good' familiar
from over a thousand years of persons preaching about Christianity
interspersed with definitive philosophical statements about 'Mind', as if a
"transcendent intelligence, rationality," or a "Mental or psychic faculty" or both,
or something similar, is meant or implied.
Thus the beginning of tractate VI - τὸ ἀγαθόν, ὡς Ἄσκληπιέ, ἐν οὐδενί ἐστιν, εἰ μὴ ἐν μόνῳ τῷ θεῷ, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ ἀγαθόν αὐτὸς ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς ἀεί - and dealing as it does with both ἀγαθός and θεός, has been translated, by Mead, as "Good, O Asclepius, is in none else save God alone; nay, rather, Good is God Himself eternally," [1] and by Copenhaver as "The good, Asclepius, is in nothing except in god alone, or rather god himself is always the good." [2]

In respect of νοῦς, a typical example is from Poemandres 12 - ὁ δὲ πάντων πατήρ ὁ Νοῦς, ὡς ἰμμὴ καὶ φῶς, ἀπεκύησεν Ἄνθρωπον αὐτῶ ἴσον, οὐ ἠράσθη ὡς ἰδίου τόκου· περικαλλὴ γάρ, τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς εἰκόνα ἔχων· ὄντως γὰρ καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἠράσθη τῆς ἰδίας μορφῆς, παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουργήματα. The beginning of this is translated by Mead as "But All-Father Mind, who is life and light, did bring forth Man co-equal to Himself, with whom He fell in love, as being His own child for he was beautiful beyond compare," and by Copenhaver as "Mind, the father of all, who is life and light, gave birth to a man like himself whom he loved as his own child. The man was most fair: he had the father's image."

Similarly, in respect of Poemandres 22 - παραγίνομαι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ὁ Νοῦς τοῖς ὁσίοις καὶ ἀγαθοῖς καὶ καθαροῖς καὶ ἐλεήμοσι, τοῖς εὐσεβοῦσι, καὶ ἡ παρουσία μου γίνεται βοήθεια, καὶ εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς καὶ εὐχαριστοῦσιν εὐλογοῦντες καὶ ὑμνοῦντες τεταγμένως πρὸς αὐτὸν τῇ στοργῇ - which is translated by Mead as "I, Mind, myself am present with holy men and good, the pure and merciful, men who live piously. [To such] my presence doth become an aid, and straightway they gain gnosis of all things, and win the Father's love by their pure lives, and give Him thanks, invoking on Him blessings, and chanting hymns, intent on Him with ardent love," and by Copenhaver as "I myself, the mind, am present to the blessed and good and pure and merciful - to the reverent - and my presence becomes a help; they quickly recognize everything, and they propitiate the father lovingly and give thanks, praising and singing hymns affectionately and in the order appropriate to him."

As explained in various places in my commentary on tractates I, III, IV, VIII, and XI, and in two appendices, I incline toward the view that - given what such English terms as 'the good', Mind, and god now impute, often as a result of two thousand years of Christianity and post-Renaissance, and modern, philosophy - such translations tend to impose particular and modern interpretations on the texts and thus do not present to the reader the ancient ethos that forms the basis of the varied weltanschauungen outlined in the texts of the Corpus Hermeticum.

To avoid such impositions, and in an endeavour to express at least something of that ancient (and in my view non-Christian) ethos, I have - for reasons explained in the relevant sections of my commentary - transliterated θεὸς as theos [3], νοῦς as perceivereation, or according to context, perceiverance; and ἀγαθός as, according to context, nobility, noble, or honourable [4]. Which is why my reading
of the Greek of the three examples above provides the reader with a somewhat different impression of the texts:

° Asclepius, the noble exists in no-thing: only in theos alone; indeed, theos is, of himself and always, what is noble. [5]

° Perceiveration, as Life and phaos, father of all, brought forth in his own likeness a most beautiful mortal who, being his child, he loved.

° I, perceiveration, attend to those of respectful deeds, the honourable, the refined, the compassionate, those aware of the numinous; to whom my being is a help so that they soon acquire knowledge of the whole and are affectionately gracious toward the father, fondly celebrating in song his position.

But, as I noted in respect of ἀγαθός in the On Ethos And Interpretation appendix, whether these particular insights of mine are valid, others will have to decide. But they - and my translations of the tractates in general - certainly, at least in my fallible opinion, convey an impression about ancient Hermeticism which is rather different from that conveyed by other translations.

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Notes


[3] To be pedantic, when θεὸς is mentioned in the texts it often literally refers to 'the' theos so that at the beginning of tractate VI, for example, the reference is to 'the theos' rather than to 'god'.

[4] In respect of 'the good' - τὸ ἀγαθόν - as 'honourable', qv. Seneca, Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, LXXI, 4, "sumnum bonum est quod honestum est. Et quod magis admireris: unum bonum est, quod honestum est, cetera falsa et adulterina bona sunt."

[5] The suggestion seems to be that 'the theos' is the origin, the archetype, of what is noble, and that only through and because of theos can what is noble be presenced and recognized for what it is, and often recognized by those who are, or that which is, an eikon of theos. Hence why in tractate IV it is said that "the eikon will guide you,"; why in tractate XI that "Kosmos is the eikon of theos, Kosmos [the eikon] of Aion, the Sun [the eikon] of Aion, and the Sun [the eikon] of mortals," and why in the same tractate it is said that "there is nothing that
cannot be an eikon of theos,” and why in Poemandres 31 theos is said to "engender all physis as eikon."

As I noted in my commentary - qv. especially the mention of Maximus of Constantinople in respect of Poemandres 31 - I have transliterated εἰκὼν.

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