

Corpus Hermeticum

VI, XII

Translation And Commentary

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Preface

This translation of and commentary on tractate VI and tractate XII compliments my five other translations of and commentaries on Corpus Hermeticum texts which were published in one volume in March 2017. I have included, as an appendix, a translation of and a commentary on the Esoteric Song from sections 17 and 18 of tractate XIII.

The references in the commentary to other tractates are to those five translations and commentaries: I (Ποιμάνδρης), III (Ιερός Λόγος), IV (Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς), VIII (Ὅτι οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων ἀπόλλυται), and XI (Νοῦς πρὸς Ἑρμῆν).

As in my other translations of Corpus Hermeticum texts, I have transliterated certain Greek words and occasionally chosen an unusual English word where a more usual (conventional) choice would, in my opinion, impose a modern and inappropriate meaning on such an ancient text.

The Greek text used is that of A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, *Corpus Hermeticum*, Tome I, Third Edition, 1972. Text enclosed in angled brackets < > indicates a conjectural editorial addition, and <...> indicates a lacuna.

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May 2017

Corpus Hermeticum

Tractate VI

Ὅτι ἐν μόνῳ θεῷ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐστὶν ἀλλαχόθι δὲ οὐδαμοῦ

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Introduction

The sixth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, concentrating as it does on τὸ ἀγαθὸν in relation to theos and mortals, is - in respect of the milieu of ancient Greco-Roman culture - metaphysically interesting even though existing translations, given that they invariably translate τὸ ἀγαθὸν as 'the good' and θεός as 'god', impart "the sense of reading somewhat declamatory sermons about god/God and 'the good' familiar from over a thousand years of persons preaching about Christianity." [1]

Since, for reasons explained elsewhere [1], I translate τὸ ἀγαθὸν as 'the noble' - implying nobility, honour, as expressed for example by Seneca, summum bonum est quod honestum est; et quod magis admireris: unum bonum est, quod honestum est, cetera falsa et adulterina bona sunt [2] - and also transliterate θεός as theos, then what emerges from this tractate is something redolent of Greco-Roman mysticism and thus of how τὸ ἀγαθὸν was understood by learned men such as Cicero: in terms of personal character [3] rather than as an impersonal moral abstraction leading as such an abstraction invariably does to dogmatic interpretations and thence to disputations and dissent and thence to the accusations of religious 'heresy' that bedevilled Christian churches for centuries, redolent as such moral abstractions, such dogmatism and accusations, are of an ethos that is rather un-Hellenic.

Such an understanding of τὸ ἀγαθὸν is evident in a passage in section nine of the fourth tractate:

τὰ μὲν γὰρ φαινόμενα τέρπει, τὰ δὲ ἀφανῆ δυσπιστεῖν ποιεῖ.
φανερώτερα δὲ ἐστὶ τὰ κακά, τὸ δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἀφανὲς τοῖς φανεροῖς.

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.

For what is expressed in that fourth tractate is that while what is bad is often outwardly obvious (as in the case of a rotten tree or a bad person) what is good, honourable, is often being concealed because it has no guise, no particular, discernable, pattern - no outward sign or appearance - becoming revealed only through noble, honourable, personal, deeds.

In respect of tractate six, the choice of τὸ ἀγαθὸν as 'the noble' (instead of the conventional 'the good') and κακός as 'bad' (instead of the conventional 'evil') elevates the text from a type of pious sermon to a metaphysical weltanschauung, something especially evident at the beginning of section three:

In mortals, the noble are arrayed to compare with the bad, for in this place those not especially bad are the noble given that in this place nobility has the smallest portion of the bad.

ἐν δὲ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ κατὰ σύγκρισιν τὸ ἀγαθὸν τοῦ κακοῦ τέτακται τὸ γὰρ μὴ λίαν κακὸν ἐνθάδε τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐστὶ τὸ δὲ ἐνθάδε ἀγαθὸν μόνιον τοῦ κακοῦ τὸ ἐλάχιστον

Also, while the language of this sixth tractate is on occasions somewhat convoluted and apparently contradictory - as for example in the description in section two of Kosmos having nobility (τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ἀγαθὸς ὁ κόσμος καθὰ καὶ αὐτὸς πάντα ποιεῖ) and yet being not noble in other ways (ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις πᾶσιν οὐκ ἀγαθός) what is expressed metaphysically differs somewhat from some other tractates, revealing just how diverse the pagan mystical traditions represented in the Corpus Hermeticum are.

Despite the differences, most obvious when this tractate - with its rather negative portrayal of mortals and the insistence that beauty and nobility cannot be found in this world - is compared to the Poemandres tractate and the third (Ἱερός Λόγος) tractate, what emerges is a hermetic weltanschauung and one that can best be summarized by the following lines from the last two sections:

"[an] apprehension of theos [is] an apprehension of the beautiful and of the noble... [and] a quest for theos is a quest for the beautiful, and there is only one path there: an awareness of the numinous combined with knowledge [...]"

Yet those who do not apprehend, who do not follow the path of awareness of the numinous, have the effrontery to declare that mortals are beautiful and noble even though they have not observed, and have no semblance of, what the noble is."

This goes some way toward resolving the apparently contradictory nature of the text, asserting as it does at the beginning that "the noble exists in no-thing: only in theos alone" and yet also asserting toward the end not only that "if you are

able to apprehend theos you can apprehend the beautiful and the noble." This is the ethos of a contemplative pagan, and a cultured, mysticism that seems to have been much neglected.

Notes

[1] Myatt, David. *Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum*. Included as an appendix in my *Corpus Hermeticum I, III, IV, VIII, XI*. 2017.

[2] Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, LXXI, 4.

[3] In *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, Marcus Tullius Cicero, in criticizing Epicurus and others, presents his view of Summum Bonum: that honestum (honourable conduct) is its foundation and that it can be discerned by careful consideration (ratio) in conjunction with that knowing (scientia) of what is divine and what is mortal that has been described as wisdom (sapientia).

aequam igitur pronuntiabit sententiam ratio adhibita primum divinarum humanarumque rerum scientia, quae potest appellari rite sapientia, deinde adiunctis virtutibus, quas ratio rerum omnium dominas, tu voluptatum satellites et ministras esse voluisti. (II, 37)

He then writes that honestum does not depend on any personal benefit (omni utilitate) that may result or be expected but instead can be discerned by means of consensus among the whole community in combination with the example afforded by the honourable actions and motives of the finest of individuals.

Honestum igitur id intellegimus, quod tale est, ut detracta omni utilitate sine ullis praemiis fructibusve per se ipsum possit iure laudari. quod quale sit, non tam definitione, qua sum usus, intellegi potest, quamquam aliquantum potest, quam communi omnium iudicio et optimi cuiusque studiis atque factis, qui permulta ob eam unam causam faciunt, quia decet, quia rectum, quia honestum est, etsi nullum consecuturum emolumentum vident. (II, 45f)

In effect, Summum Bonum - what the Greeks termed τὸ ἀγαθὸν - depends on certain personal qualities such as a careful consideration of a matter; on a personal knowing of what is divine and what is mortal; on the example of personal noble deeds and motives, and on a communal consensus.

There is therefore nothing morally abstract or dogmatic about Cicero's understanding of Summum Bonum which so well expresses, as does Seneca, the Greco-Roman view, with a perhaps more apt translation of the term Summum Bonum thus being "the highest nobility."

[4] David Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum I, III, IV, VIII, XI*. 2017.

Translation

[1] Asclepius, the noble exists in no-thing: only in theos alone; indeed, theos is, of himself and always, what is noble. If so, then it can only be the quidditas of all changement and of geniture since nothing is deserted by it but has about itself a stability of vigour, neither excessive nor lacking, a replenishable provider, there at the origin of all things. When saying the provider to all-things is noble, that nobility always exists, an attribute of theos alone and of no one else.

He is not in need of anything since for him to desire something would be bad. Nothing that has come into being is lost to him, for such loss would be vexing with vexation a division of badness. Nothing is superior to him so as to be an enemy, nor is there a partner who might harm him through him having a passionate desire. Nor any-thing so unheeding of him that he becomes enraged; nor anyone of better judgement to be jealous of.

[2] Because none of those have being in his quidditas then only nobility is left, and since nothing of what is bad is in that quidditas then nothing of what is noble will be found in those other things, since, in all others be they big or small, those things exist, in each of them and also in that living being which is bigger and mightier than them all. For what is begotten is replete with physicality with breeding itself being physical. Yet where physicality is, nobility is not, and where nobility is there is no physicality just as when there is night there is no day. It is impracticable regarding breeding for nobility to be there for that is only of what is not begotten.

But as substance has been assigned to partake of all being so it does of nobility which is how Kosmos has nobility because of the construction done regarding all things, even though not noble in other ways since there is physicality, and changement: the construction of the physical.

[3] In mortals, the noble are arrayed to compare with the bad, for in this place those not especially bad are the noble given that in this place nobility has the smallest portion of the bad. But it is impractical in this place to refine the noble from the bad, for in this place the noble deteriorate and, deteriorating, become rotten and no longer noble. Thus the noble is of theos alone or rather it is theos who is the noble one.

Thus it is, Asclepius, that among mortals they are noble in name only and not in the matter itself for that would be impracticable since the physical body cannot hold on to it, restrained on all sides as it is by badness, by toil, by grief, by

desire, by rage, by dishonesty, and by unreasonable opinions; and, Asclepius, most ignoble of all, in this place each such thing is believed to be most noble even though unsurpassably bad.

The mistake, the patron of all things rotten, is the absence in this place of nobility.

[4] For myself, I am beholden to theos who has directed my perceivration toward a knowing of nobility; that it is impracticable for it to be in this world replete as it is with badness just as it is with the nobility of theos or as theos is with nobility.

For the eminence of the beautiful is around that quidditas so perhaps revealing that quiddity as certainly unmixed and most refined, and I venture to say, Asclepius, that the quidditas of theos - if he has quidditas - is the beautiful and yet the beautiful and the noble cannot be discerned in the things of the world for everything exposed to the eye are as tenuous depictions, and what is not exposed to it, particularly the beautiful and the noble <...> and since the eye is unable to perceive theos so it is with the beautiful and the noble. For they are intrinsically part of theos, of him alone, belonging to him, unseverable, most fair; loved by theos or by those who love theos.

[5] If you are able to apprehend theos you can apprehend the beautiful and the noble, the exceptionally radiant, but a radiance surpassed by theos, and with that beauty unequalled with the noble defying imitation, as it is with theos. Such is the apprehension of theos, and thus is there an apprehension of the beautiful and of the noble, and since they are inseparable from theos they cannot be shared among other living beings. Thus a quest for theos is a quest for the beautiful, and there is only one path there: an awareness of the numinous combined with knowledge.

[6] Yet those who do not apprehend, who do not follow the path of awareness of the numinous, have the effrontery to declare that mortals are beautiful and noble even though they have not observed, and have no semblance of, what the noble is. Believing that what is bad is noble, they are subsumed by every badness and, thus glutted with it, are fearful of being robbed of it so that they in whatever way fight to not only keep it but to increase it.

Such are, Asclepius, for mortals the beautiful and the noble and from which we are unable to flee or despise. But what is most grievous to bear is that we are unable to live without them.

Commentary

Title.

Ὅτι ἐν μόνῳ θεῷ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐστὶν ἀλλαχόθι δὲ οὐδαμοῦ. That In The Theos Alone Is Nobility And Not Anywhere Else.

The consensus is that the title is not original and was added by some scribe.

1.

The noble. τὸ ἀγαθὸν. As mentioned in the Introduction, I translate ἀγαθός not as some abstract (impersonal) and disputable 'good' but as, and according to context, nobility, noble, honourable.

no-thing. In respect of ἐν οὐδενί ἐστιν I have here (and occasionally elsewhere) used 'no-thing' - "no entity of any kind" - instead of 'nothing' or 'naught' to emphasize the ontological nature of what is expressed. In addition, as often in the Corpus Hermeticum, what is transliterated here as 'theos' - and by others translated as 'god' - can be taken literally to refer to 'the theos', 'the deity'.

...theos is, of himself and always, what is noble. The suggestion of the first sentence seems to be that 'the theos' is the origin of what is noble, and thus the origin of nobility, and that only through and because of theos can what is noble be presented 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."

then it... Referring to "what is noble".

quidditas. οὐσία. Here, a more appropriate translation of οὐσία - instead of 'essence' or 'substance' - is quidditas, as in tractate XI:2: "it is as if the quidditas of theos is actuality, honour, the beautiful..."

As I noted in my commentary on XI:2,

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, 1015a:

ἐκ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων ἢ πρώτη φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία ἢ τῶν ἐχόντων ἀρχὴν κινήσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ἢ αὐτά: ἡ γὰρ ὕλη τῷ ταύτης δεκτικὴ εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις. καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύσει ὄντων αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐνυπάρχουσα πῶς ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐντελεχείᾳ.

Given the foregoing, then principally - and to be exact - physis denotes the quidditas of beings having change 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 changes predicated on it. For physis is inherent change either manifesting the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is.

One interpretation of quidditas here is 'the being of that being/entity', with such quidditas often presented in - and perceived via or as - physis.

change...geniture. κινήσεως καὶ γενέσεως. cf. tractate XI:2 and my note above regarding οὐσία. As mentioned in my commentary on XI:2, "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."

nothing that has come into being. In respect of τῶν ὄντων οὐδὲν, cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics, 191a27f: φασιν οὔτε γίνεσθαι τῶν ὄντων οὐδὲν οὔτε φθείρεσθαι, διὰ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον μὲν εἶναι γίνεσθαι τὸ γιγνόμενον ἢ ἐξ ὄντος ἢ ἐκ μὴ ὄντος.

lost. ἀπόλλυμι. qv. the title of tractate VIII, and my note regarding it.

bad...badness. κακός, κακίας. As with ἀγαθός not some moral impersonal disputable abstraction - in this case 'evil' - but the personal sense of something or someone being bad, rotten, ignoble.

a partner who might harm him. Literally, "a partner to be harmed by." The exact nature of this partnership is not specified, although the following καὶ διὰ τοῦτο αὐτοῦ ἐρασθήσεται indicates a certain scenario. I have omitted the editorial emendation of οὔτε κάλλιον - "nothing is as beautiful."

2.

nothing of what is bad. Reading κακῶν with the MSS and not the emendation ἄλλων.

physicality. Given the context - ἐν τοῖς καθ' ἐν καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ ζῶν τῷ πάντων μείζονι καὶ δυνατωτάτῳ - here πάθος, παθῶν, παθητῆς suggest a physicality, a

physical actuality/occurrence, which the English word 'passion', with its often implicit anthropomorphism, does not quite express.

The author, in these first two sections, is making a distinction between their hermetic concept of theos and other living beings, especially mortals; of theos as detached from all those things - such as physicality, jealousy, anger - which mortals are subject to and with theos as described here is thus not only very different from the vengeful, angry, Jehovah of the Old Testament but also quite similar to, if not in perhaps some manner based on, the Hellenic concept as mentioned by Aristotle:

ὥστε ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνέργεια, μακαριότητι διαφέρουσα, θεωρητικὴ ἂν εἴη:
καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων δὴ ἡ ταύτη συγγενεστάτη εὐδαιμονικωτάτη.
σημεῖον δὲ καὶ τὸ μὴ μετέχειν τὰ λοιπὰ ζῶα εὐδαιμονίας.
Nicomachean Ethics (Book X) 1178b.22

Therefore the activity of theos, excelling others in bliss, is wordless-awareness [θεωρέω] and the nearest thing to that among mortals arises from good-fortune [εὐδαιμονία].

construction. cf. tractate II, ὁ οὖν θεὸς <τὸ> ἀγαθόν, καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὁ θεός. ἡ δὲ ἕτέρα προσηγορία ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ πατρός, πάλιν διὰ τὸ ποιητικὸν πάντων. πατὴρ 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.)

not noble in other ways. That is, while Kosmos - qv. tractate XI for what or who this Kosmos may be - has nobility by the act of construction, of forming substance into beings, because some of those beings possess physicality then Kosmos unlike theos is not completely noble.

3.

in this place. I incline toward the view that ἐνθάδε here does not refer, as some have conjectured, to "here below" (qv. Plato, Gorgias, 525b: ὅμως δὲ δι' ἀληθῶν καὶ ὀδυνῶν γίνεταί αὐτοῖς ἡ ὠφελία καὶ ἐνθάδε καὶ ἐν Ἄιδου) but rather just to "this place, here."

refine. καθαροῖς. cf. Poemandres 10, and 22. As I noted in my commentary on Poemandres 22:

Literally [καθαροῖς] 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 καθαρὰ 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'.

Here however, the choice of refine seems apposite, given the text:

ἀδύνατον οὖν τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐνθάδε καθαρεύειν τῆς κακίας

It is impractical in this place to refine the noble from the bad

This makes perfect (and practical) sense, in contrast to the fairly recent, conventional, and somewhat moralistic translation of Copenhaver: "the good cannot be cleansed of vice here below."

Interestingly, the Greek word καθαροῖς formed the basis for the relatively modern (c.1803) English term 'catharsis'.

physical body. cf. Poemandres 24: ἐν τῇ ἀναλύσει τοῦ σώματος τοῦ ὑλικοῦ παραδίδωσ ἀντὸ τὸ σῶμα εἰς ἀλλοίωσιν (the dissolution of the physical body allows that body to be transformed).

restrained on all sides. παντόθεν ἐσφιγμένον.

each such thing. This might well be a reference to "restrained on all sides as it is by badness" - to bad things in general - and not to the immediately preceding "toil, grief, desire, rage, dishonesty, and unreasonable opinion."

the patron of all things rotten. I have omitted the very odd reference to "gluttony" - ἡ γαστριμαργία - which follows τὸ μᾶλλον ἀνυπέρβλητον κακόν, as in all probability it is a gloss. Nock, in his text, indicates a lacuna between the following χορηγὸς and ἡ πλάνη.

If the reference to gluttony is not omitted then a possible interpretation of the text would be: "Gluttony is the patron of all things rotten <...> the mistake in this place is the absence of nobility."

4.

or as theos is with nobility. In order to try and express in English something of the meaning of the Greek - and to avoid repeating "replete" (πλήρωμά), which repetition is not in the Greek text - I have slightly amended the word order. Nock indicates a lacuna between ἀγαθὸν τοῦ θεοῦ and αἱ γὰρ ἔξοχαῖ. The transition between "replete with" and "the beautiful" is certainly abrupt.

For the eminence of the beautiful is around that quidditas. Although the Greek text here is rather obscure and various emendations have been proposed - none of which are entirely satisfactory - the general sense, of the beautiful surrounding or being near to the quidditas (οὐσία) of theos, seems clear.

tenuous depictions. The Greek words εἶδωλον and σκιαγραφία require careful consideration if one is not to read into the text philosophical meanings from other ancient authors which may not be relevant here, as might be the case in respect of εἶδωλον if one chose the word 'image'. In addition, if the English word chosen has other, perhaps more modern, associations then there may well be a 'retrospective re-interpretation' of the text, reading into it a meaning or meanings which also might not be relevant, as might be the case in respect of εἶδωλον if one chose 'phantom' given what that word now often imputes. Hence I have chosen 'tenuous' and 'depiction' respectively.

particularly the beautiful and the noble. Some text is missing in the MSS so that what follows οὐδὲ τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν unfortunately remains unknown.

5.

quest. The sense of ζητέω here is more than that of a simple 'inquiry' or an 'asking'. It is to 'seek after' something with an earnest purpose, as in Matthew 2:13 where there is a desire by Herod to seek out and kill the infant Jesus:

Ἀναχωρησάντων δὲ αὐτῶν ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου φαίνεται κατ' ὄναρ τῷ Ἰωσήφ λέγων· ἐγερθεὶς παράλαβε τὸ παιδίον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ φεῦγε εἰς Αἴγυπτον καὶ ἴσθι ἐκεῖ ἕως ἂν εἶπω σοι· μέλλει γὰρ Ἡρώδης ζητεῖν τὸ παιδίον τοῦ ἀπολέσαι αὐτό.

awareness of the numinous. As I noted in my commentary on Poemandres 22:

As with ὁσίους, 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'.

6.

semblance. Here, ὄναρ suggests 'semblance' rather than 'dream'.

Addendum

Concerning Personal Pronouns

Regarding the interpretation of ancient texts - of translating an ancient language into English - there is the matter of personal pronouns with the convention being to default to the masculine singular (Man, his, he) even when the gender is not specified but only assumed, as in the matter of θεός in the sixth tractate where unlike some other tractates (such as Poemandres and tractate VIII) the term πατήρ does not occur.

Thus, conventionally defaulting to the masculine singular in sections 12 and 13 of tractate XI of the Corpus Hermeticum - based on the assumption that the MS reading ἄρχων καὶ ἡγέμων [1] and the title πρόδρομος refer to a man - one translates as:

He creates all things [...] 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. [2]

πάντα οὖν αὐτὸς ποιεῖ [...] εἰ γὰρ ἀποδέδεικται μηδὲν δυνάμενον εἶναι, πόσω μᾶλλον ὁ θεός; εἰ γὰρ τί ἐστιν ὃ μὴ ποιεῖ, ὃ μὴ θέμις εἰπεῖν, ἀτελής ἐστιν· εἰ δὲ μήτε ἀργός ἐστι, τέλειος δέ, ἄρα πάντα ποιεῖ.

However, if one uses the plural - non-gender specific - "they" as a personal pronoun then one has:

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

Which somewhat changes the meaning and is perhaps confusing for some,

although the non-literal alternatives of "the theos" or "the divinity" are rather cumbersome:

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

An alternative would be the neutral if even more cumbersome phrase "that Being":

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

As I noted in my commentary on the phrase ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν in the Poemandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, given that in that tractate theos is not only referred to using the ancient honorific πατήρ [3] but also described as ἀρρενόθηλος, as both male and female:

"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". [2]

While I have in my translation here of tractate six used the conventional default of the masculine singular pronoun it might be an interesting exercise for those interested to provide a version using, where appropriate, gender-neutral personal pronouns, which undoubtedly would result in an interpretation of the text quite different from other translations available, my own included.

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[1] Nock - *Corpus Hermeticum*, Third Edition, 1972 - has the emendation ἄρχοντος καὶ ἡγεμόνος.

[2] Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum I, III, IV, VIII, XI*. 2017.

[3] cf. τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων (Epistle of James, I, 17), "the father of phaos". In respect of phaos, cf. Poemandres 4-6; tractate III, 1 (φῶς ἅγιον), and tractate XI, 7.

Corpus Hermeticum

Tractate XII

Περὶ νοῦ κοινοῦ πρὸς Τάτ

οοο

Introduction

While the first few sentences of the twelfth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum have some similarity to what Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, wrote in a polemic a century or two later [1], the rest of the twelfth tractate - with its mention of the Ἄγαθος Δαίμων (the Noble Daimon), with its echo of Heraclitus, with its mention that "some mortals are deities with their mortal nature close to divinity," and with its themes of ψυχή (psyche) and ἀνάγκη (wyrd, 'necessity', 'fate') - is ineluctably part of Greco-Roman paganism, where by the term paganism I personally - following Cicero [3] - mean "an apprehension of the complete unity (a cosmic order, κόσμος, mundus) beyond the apparent parts of that unity, together with the perceivization that we mortals - albeit a mere and fallible part of the unity - have been gifted with our existence so that we may perceive and understand this unity, and, having so perceived, may ourselves seek to be whole, and thus become as balanced (perfectus), as harmonious, as the unity itself." [3] Furthermore, this unity derives from 'the theos', the primary divinity, who gifted we mortals with life, and is manifest in - presenced by - other divinities, by daimons [4], and by what we have come to describe as Nature, that is, as the natural world existing on Earth with its diversity of living beings.

Furthermore, although, as with several other tractates, the name of Τάτ (Thoth) appears in the title, there is nothing in the text, or in the other texts of the Corpus, which points to native Egyptian influence; a lack of influence supported by the recent scholarly edition of the ancient *Book of Thoth* edited by Jasnow and Zauzich [5], and by the earlier work of A-J. Festugiere [6].

οοο

[1] *Epistula de Decretis Nycaenae Synodi*, II, 3f, and IV, 22ff.

[2] "Neque enim est quicquam aliud praeter mundum quod nihil absit quodque

undique aptum atque perfectum expletumque sit omnibus suis numeris et partibus [...] ipse autem homo ortus est ad mundum contemplandum et imitandum - nullo modo perfectus, sed est quaedam particula perfecti." M. Tullius Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, Liber Secundus, xiii, xiv, 37

[3] The quotation is from my 2014 essay *Education And the Culture of Patheism*, and paraphrases what Cicero wrote in Book II (xiii and xiv) of his *De Natura Deorum*.

As I noted in the aforementioned essay,

"it is my considered opinion that the English term 'balanced' (a natural completeness, a natural equilibrium) is often a better translation of the classical Latin *perfectus* than the commonly accepted translation of 'perfect', given what the English word 'perfect' now imputes (as in, for example, 'cannot be improved upon'), and given the association of the word 'perfect' with Christian theology and exegesis (as, for example, in suggesting a moral perfection)."

[4] A δαίμων was considered to be a divinity who undertook to protect places 'sacred to the gods' or who - following the deliberations of a particular deity or of various deities - undertook to intercede in the lives of mortals by, for example, bringing them good fortune or misfortune. It was thus a tradition in ancient Greece and Rome to, at a meal, toast with wine the Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων in the hope that he would bring them good fortune. Similarly, the Romans especially would offer a toast to the Ἄγνωστος Θεός (the Unknown Theos) and/or to the Ἄγνωστος Δαίμων (the Unknown Daemon) in the hope of not offending a deity or daimon whose name they did not know.

To translate δαίμων as 'demon' - as some do - is misleading, and can lead to a retrospective reinterpretation of the text given what the English term 'demon' now imputes as a result of over a thousand years of Christianity.

[5] Richard Jasnow & Karl-Theodore Zauzich, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth: A Demotic Discourse on Knowledge and Pendant to the Classical Hermetica*. Volume 1: Text. Harrassowitz, 2005.

[6] A.J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 4 volumes. J. Gabalda, 1944-1954

Translation

[1] Perceivation, Thoth, is of the quidditas of theos, if there is a quidditas of theos, and if so then only theos completely understands what that quidditas is. Perceivation is thus not separated from the quiddity of theos but rather expands forth, as does the light of the Sun, with this perceivation, in mortals, theos so that some mortals are deities with their mortal nature close to divinity.

For the noble daimon spoke of deities as deathless mortals and of mortals as deathful deities, while in living beings deprived of logos perceivance is their physis.

[2] Where psyche is, there also is perceivation just as where Life is there also is psyche. But in living beings deprived of logos, psyche is Life empty of perceivance while perceivation is the patron of the psyche of mortals labouring for their nobility. For those deprived of logos it co-operates with the physis of each, while for mortals it works against that.

Every psyche presented in a body is naturally rotted by pleasure and pain for in that mixtion of a body the pleasure and the pain boil as profluvia into which the psyche is immersed.

[3] Whatever psyches perceivation governs it manifests its own resplendence, working as it does against their predispositions. Just as an honourable physician painfully uses cautery or a knife on a body seized by sickness so does perceivation distress psyche, extracting from it that pleasure which is the genesis of all psyche's sickness.

A serious sickness of psyche is neglect of the divine from whence prognostications and thence all rottenness and nothing noble. Yet perceivation can work against this to secure nobility for psyche as the physician does for soundness of body.

[4] But the psyche of mortals who do not have perceivation as their guide suffer the same as living beings deprived of logos, for when there is co-operation with them and a letting-loose of yearnings they are dragged along by their cravings to be voided of logos, and - akin to living beings deprived of logos - they cannot stop their anger nor their emotive yearnings nor become disgusted by rottenness.

For such yearnings and anger are overwhelmingly bad. And on those ones, the theos - avenger, confutant - will impose what custom demands.

[5] Father, if that is so, then your previous discourse regarding Meiros seems at risk of being altered. For if it is indeed Meiros-decreed for someone to be unfaithful or desecrate what is sacred or be otherwise bad, then why is that

person punished when they have been constrained by Meiros to do the deed?

My son, all that is done is Meiros-decreed with nothing corporeal independent of that. For neither nobility nor rottenness are produced by accident. It is Meiros-decreed that they having done what is bad are afflicted which is why it was done: to be afflicted by what afflicts them.

[6] But for now let the discourse not be about badness or Meiros; they are spoken about elsewhere. Instead, let us discourse about perceivation; what it is able to do and how it varies. For mortals, it is a particular thing while for living beings deprived of logos it is something else. Also, in those other living beings it does not produce benefits. But because it can control the irritable, the covetous, it is not the same for everyone with it being appreciated that some of those persons are reasonable while others are unreasonable.

All mortals are subjected to Meiros as well as to geniture and changement, which are the origin and the consummation of Meiros,

[7] with all mortals afflicted by what is Meiros-decreed, although those gifted with sentience who - as mentioned - are governed by perceivation are not afflicted in the same way as others. Because they are distanced from rottenness, they are not afflicted by the rotten.

What, father, are you then saying? That the unfaithful one, that the killer, and all other such ones, are not bad?

My son, the one gifted with sentience will, though not unfaithful, be afflicted as if they had been unfaithful just as, though not a killer, they will as if they had killed. It is not possible to avoid geniture nor the disposition of changement although the one of perceivation can avoid rottenness.

[8] I heard that from of old the noble daimon spoke of - and would that he had written it for that would have greatly benefited the race of mortals since he alone, my son, as first-born divinity beholding everything, certainly gave voice to divine logoi - but, whatever, I heard him to say that all that exists is one, particularly conceptible things.

We have our being in potentiality, in activity, in Aion, whose perceivation is noble as is his psyche, and with this as it is, there is nothing separable among what is conceptible. Thus perceivation, Archon of everything and also the psyche of theos, can do whatever it desires.

[9] Therefore you should understand, relating these words to your previous question when you asked about Meiros. For if, my son, you diligently eliminate disputatious argument you will discover that perceivation - psyche of theos - does in truth rule over Meiros and Custom and everything else. There is nothing he is unable to do: not placing a mortal psyche over Meiros, nor, if negligent of

what comes to pass, placing it under Meiros. And of what the noble daimon said, these were the most excellent about all this.

How numinous, father; and how true, how beneficial.

[10] And now, can you explain this to me. You said that perceivance in living beings deprived of logos is in accordance with their physis and in consort with their cravings. Yet the cravings of living beings deprived of logos are, I assume, somatic, and if perceivance co-operates with the cravings and if the cravings of those deprived of logos are somatic then is not perceivance also somatic, in alliance with the somatic?

Excellent, my son. A good question which I have to answer.

[11] Everything incorporeal when corporified is somatical, although it is properly of the somatic. For all that changes is incorporeal with all that is changed corporeal. The incorporeal is changed by perceivance, with changeability somatic. Both the changing and the changed are affected, with one leading, the other following. If released from the corporeal, there is release from the somatic. In particular, my son, there is nothing that is asomatic with everything somatic with the somatic being different from the somatical. For one is vigorous, the other non-active. The corporeal, in itself, is vigorous, either when changed or when not changing, and whichever it is, it is somatic, However, the incorporeal is always acted upon which is why it is somatical.

But do not allow such denotata to vex you, for vigour and the somatic are the same, although there is nothing wrong in using the better-sounding denotatum.

[12] Father, that was a clear answer that you gave.

Take note, my son, of the two things that theos has favoured mortals with, over and above all other deathful living beings: perceivance and logos, equal in value to deathlessness, and if they use those as required then there is no difference between them and the deathless. And when they depart from the corporeal they will be escorted by both to the assembly of the gods and the fortunate ones.

[13] And yet, father, do other living beings not have language?

No, my son, they have sounds, and language is quite different from sounds. Language is shared among all mortals while each kind of living being has its own sounds.

And also, father, among mortals for each folk have a different language.

Yes, my son, different but since mortal nature is One then language is also One, for when interpreted they are found to be the same whether in Egypt or in

Persia or in Hellas. Thus it seems, my child, that you are unaware of the significance and the merit of language.

That hallowed divinity, the noble daimon, spoke of psyche in corporeality, of perceivation in psyche, of logos in perceivation, of perceivation in the theos, and of the theos as the father of those.

[14] For logos is eikon of perceivation, perceivation that of theos, with corporeality that of outward form, and outward form that of psyche. The finest part of Substance is Air. Of Air, psyche. Of psyche, perceivation. Of perceivation, theos, with theos encompassing all things and within all things; with perceivation encompassing psyche, psyche encompassing Air, and Air encompassing Substance.

Necessitas, forseeing, and physis, are implements of Kosmos, and of the arrangement of Substance, and whatever is apprehended is essence with that essence of each their ipseity. Of the corpora that exist, each is a multiplicity, and since the ipseity of combined corpora is the chagement of one corpus to another they always retain the imputrescence of ipseity.

[15] Yet in other combined corpora there is for each of them an arithmos, for without arithmos it is not possible for such a bringing together, such a melding, such a dissolution, to come-into-being. Henads beget and grow arithmos and, on its dissolution, receive it into themselves.

Substance is One, and the complete cosmic order - a mighty theos and eikon of and in unison with a mightier one - is, in maintaining the arrangements and the purpose of the father, replete with Life. And through the paternally given cyclic return of Aion there is nothing within it - in whole or in part - which is not alive.

For nothing of the cosmic order that has come-into-being is - or is now or will be - necrotic since the father has determined that Life shall be there while it exists. And thus, because of Necessitas, it is divine.

[16] Thus, how - my son - in that eikon of all things with its repletion of Life can there be necrosis? For necrosis is putritude and putritude is perishment. How then is it possible for any portion of what is not putrid be be putrid or for anything of theos to perish?

Therefore, father, do not the living beings - who have their being there - not perish?

Speak wisely, my son, and do not be led away by the denotata of being-becoming. For, my son, they do not perish but as combined corpora are dissolved with such a dissolving not death but the dissolution of the melding, and dissolved not so as to perish but for a new coming-into-being. For what is the vigour of Life if not change?

What then, of Kosmos, does not change? Nothing, my child.

[17] Does the Earth seem to you, father, to not change?

No, my son. But she is alone in that there are many changes but also stasis. For would it not be illogical if the nourisher - she who brings-forth everything - never changed? It is not possible for she, the bringer-forth, to bring-forth without being changed. It is illogical for you to enquire if the fourth parsement is inactive, since an unchanging corpus is indicative of inactivity.

[18] You should therefore understand that what exists of Kosmos is everywhere changing, either growing or declining, and that what is changing is living with all that lives not, because of Necessitas, the same. For Kosmos, in the entirety of its being, is not changeable even though its parts can be changeable, with nothing putrefiable or perishable, although such denotata can confuse we mortals. For geniture is not Life but rather alertness, nor is changement death but rather a forgetting.

Since this is so, Substance, Life, Pneuma, Psyche, Perceivation, are all deathless, with every living being some combination of them.

[19] Because of perceivation all living beings are deathless, and most certain of all is that mortals are, for they - receptive to theos - can interact with theos. For only with this living being does theos commune in nightful dreams and daylight auguration, forewarning what is possible through birds, through entrails, through the movements of air, and through trees of Oak. And thus do mortals profess to know what was past, what is now, what will be.

[20] Observe, my son, that every other living being inhabits a certain part of the world; in water for those of the water, on dry land for those on land, and above the ground for those of the air. But mortals employ them all; land, water, air, fire. They observe the heavens, and touch it through their senses, and theos encompasses and is within all such things, for he is Change and Capability.

Thus, my son, it is not difficult to apprehend theos.

[21] If you are disposed to consider him, then perceive the arrangement of Kosmos and how that arrangement is well-ordered. Perceive Necessitas in what is apparent and the foreseeing in what has come-into-being and what is coming-into-being. Perceive Substance replete with Life, and the great, the influentive, theos together with all the noble and the beautiful divinities, daimons, and mortals.

But those, father, are actuosities.

Yet, my son, if they are only actuosities then by whom - other than theos - are

they actuose? Or do you not know that just as aspects of the world are the heavens, the land, the Water, and the Air, then in the same way his aspects are deathlessness, blood, Necessitas, Foreseeing, Physis, Psyche, Perceiveration, and that the continuance of all these is what is called nobility? And that there is not anything that has come-into-being or which is coming-into-being that is or will be without theos?

[22] He is within Substance, then, father?

If, my son, Substance was separate from theos then where, to what place, would you assign it? To some heap that is not actuose? But if it is actuose, then by whom is it actuose? And we spoke of actuosities as aspects of theos.

So who then brings life to living beings? Who deathlessness to the deathless? Who change to those changed? And if you say Substance or corpus or essence, then understand that they also are actuosities of theos, so that the substantiality is the actuosity of Substance, corporeality the actuosity of corpora, and essentiality the actuosity of essence. And this is theos, All That Exists.

[23] For in all that exists there is no-thing that he is not. Therefore, neither size, nor location nor disposition, nor appearance, nor age, are about theos. For he is all that exists; encompassing everything and within everything.

This, my son, is the Logos, to be respected and followed. And if there is one way to follow theos, it is not to be bad.

ooo

Commentary

Title.

Περὶ νοῦ κοινοῦ πρὸς Τάτ. To Thoth, Concerning Mutual Perceiveration.

1.

perceiveration. As with my other translations of Corpus Hermeticum texts I translate νοῦς not as 'mind' but as perceiveration/perceiverance, qv. my commentary on Poemandres, 2.

quidditas. οὐσία. Here, as with tractates VI and XI, 'essence' in respect of theos

is not an entirely satisfactory translation given what the English term essence often now imputes. Quidditas is post-classical Latin, from whence the English word quiddity, and requires contextual interpretation. As in tractate VI, one interpretation of quidditas is ontological, as 'the being of that being/entity', with such quidditas often presented in - and perceived by we mortals via or as - φύσις (physis). Which interpretation has the virtue of avoiding assumptions as to whether the author is here presenting something similar to the Stoic weltanschauung or to other ancient weltanschauungen.

understands. In respect of οἶδεν as 'understand' rather than 'know' qv. 1 Corinthians 14:16, ἐπειδὴ τί λέγεις οὐκ οἶδεν: "since he does not understand what you say." Furthermore, in Plato, Meno, 80e 'understanding' and 'understand' make more sense than the conventional 'knowing' and 'know':

ὄραξ τοῦτον ὡς ἐριστικὸν λόγον κατάγεις ὡς οὐκ ἄρα ἔστιν ζητεῖν ἀνθρώπῳ οὔτε ὃ οἶδε οὔτε ὃ μὴ οἶδε; οὔτε γὰρ ἂν ὃ γε οἶδεν ζητοῖ οἶδεν γὰρ καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖ τῷ γε τοιούτῳ ζητήσεως οὔτε ὃ μὴ οἶδεν οὐδὲ γὰρ οἶδεν ὅτι ζητήσει.

Do you realize what a contestable argument you introduce? That a mortal cannot inquire either about what he understands or about what he does not understand? That he cannot inquire about what he understands because he understands it with an inquiry thus not necessary; and that he cannot inquire about what he does not understand because he does not understand what he should inquire about.

quiddity of theos. οὐσιότητος τοῦ θεοῦ. Using the word quiddity here not as a synonym of quidditas but as a synonym of 'quidditiveness', where quidditative is "of or relating to the essential quidditas of some-thing", in this case theos.

mortal nature. ἀνθρωπότης. I incline toward the view that the neutral term 'mortal nature' is appropriate here, given what the English word 'humanity' now so often implies; a neutral term suggested not only by the scholia to the first verses of Orestes by Euripides:

κατασκευὴν ποιούμενος ὁ ποιητὴς τῆς ἰδίας προτάσεως τῆς ὅτι πάντα φέρει τὰ δεινὰ ἢ ἀνθρωπότης, ἐπιφέρει ὅτι καὶ αὐτοὶ οἱ μακάριοι καὶ ὄλβιοι δόξαντες ἀνθρωποὶ οὐκ ἄμοιροι συμφορῶν καὶ παθῶν γεγόνασιν· ἐξ ἐνὸς δὲ τοῦ Ταντάλου καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους παραδηλοῖ. τὸν Τάνταλον δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἄλλον τῇ ὑποθέσει προσείληφε διὰ τὸ ἐξ ἐκείνου τοῦ γένους καὶ τὸν Ὀρέστην κατάγεσθαι

but also by *De Sancta Trinitate Dialogus* of Athanasius (Migne, *Patrologiæ Græcæ*, 28, 1115), with the first verse of the Orestes expressing what is meant and implied:

Οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν δεινὸν ὧδ' εἰπεῖν ἔπος οὐδὲ πάθος οὐδὲ ξυμφορὰ θεήλατος, ἧς οὐκ ἂν ἄραιτ' ἄχθος ἀνθρώπου φύσις.

There is nothing that can be described, no suffering, and nothing sent by the gods, which is so terrifyingly strange that mortal nature cannot endure it.

the noble daimon. Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων. The daimon who can bring good fortune (health, wealth, happiness, honour) and other benefits to mortals and who thus is considered to be noble. As mentioned in the Introduction, a daimon is not a 'demon'.

deathless...deathful. For these in respect of ἀθάνατος and θνητὸς qv. my commentary on Poemandres 14, tractate VIII:1, and tractate XI:7ff.

The phrase spoken by the Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων is similar to one attributed to Heraclitus:

ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶτες. (Fragment 62, Diels-Krantz)

The deathless are deathful, the deathful deathless, with one living the other's dying with the other dying in that other's life.

deprived of logos. ἄλογος. As at Poemandres 10 and tractate XI:10, a literal translation suggested by the context which thus avoids rather awkward expressions such as "animals without reason" and "irrational animals", and which might also suggest not only various other meanings of logos such as "lacking (the faculty of) speech, lacking in sentience," but also that such living beings have not been gifted by theos with logos:

τὸ ἐν σοὶ βλέπον καὶ ἀκοῦον, λόγος κυρίου, ὁ δὲ νοῦς πατὴρ θεός. οὐ γὰρ διίστανται ἀπ' ἀλλήλων· ἕνωσις γὰρ τούτων ἐστὶν ἡ ζωὴ

Then know that within you - who hears and sees - is logos kyrios, although perceivance is theos the father. They are not separated, one from the other, because their union is Life. (Poemandres 6)

perceivance is their physis. Reading ὁ νοῦς ἡ φύσις. Here φύσις implies their being - the type of being (the 'character') they have, and are - and thus means their quidditas, which quidditas is in contrast to that of theos, deities, and mortals.

2.

psyche. A transliteration, as in my translations of other tractates. It is possible

to read the line as referring to personifications: "Where Psyche is, there also is Perceiveration just as where Life is there also is Psyche." Classically understood, psyche is the anima mundi, the power that animates - gives life to and which orders - the world.

in living beings deprived of logos, psyche is Life. On first reading there seems to be a contradiction between what follows - ἡ ψυχὴ ζωὴ ἐστὶ κενὴ τοῦ νοῦ, [in living beings deprived of logos] psyche is Life empty of perceivance - and the preceding ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἀλόγοις ζώοις ὁ νοῦς ἢ φύσις ἐστίν, which states that "in living beings deprived of logos perceivance is their physis." The sense of the Greek therefore seems to suggest that the perceivance of living beings deprived of logos is a vacuous, empty, one: they perceive but it does not benefit them in the same manner as perceivance benefits mortals because there is no understanding of, no rational apprehension of, what is perceived.

mixture. σύνθετος. Mixture is more appropriate here in such a metaphysical text than either 'composite' or 'compound', meaning as mixture does compounded, combined; the condition or state of being mixed, melded, or composed of various parts.

profluvia. χυμός. That is, the bodily 'humours', anciently named as blood, phlegm, cholera (χολέρα), and bile. Since the English word 'humour' now often suggests an entirely different meaning, I have chosen profluvia - from the Latin profluvium - in order to try and convey something of the meaning of the Greek, γν. Coleridge: "The same deadly sweats - the same frightful Profluvium of burning Dregs, like melted Lead - with quantities of bloody mucus from the Coats of the Intestines." *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1956. Volume II, 911: Letter dated 8th Jan.

immersed. βαπτίζω. Cf. tractate IV:3: καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός, "and were immersive with perceivance."

3.

cautery or a knife. καίων ἢ τέμνων. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 848-850,

ὄτῳ δὲ καὶ δεῖ φαρμάκων παιωνίῳ,
ἦτοι κέαντες ἢ τεμόντες εὐφρόνως
πειρασόμεσθα πῆμ' ἀποστρέψαι νόσου

Whomsoever needs a healing potion
By a burning-out or a well-judged cutting-away
I shall seek to defeat the sickness of that injury.

neglect of the divine. ἀθεότης. The usual translation, atheism, seems to me to impose a particular and rigid meaning on the text given the association the

word atheism now has with Christianity and in modern philosophy. The phrase 'neglect of the divine' expresses a more Hellenistic view, qv. the term ἀθεράπευτος and also Plutarch, who wrote:

Οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ ὧν ὁ λόγος, ἡ μὲν ἀθεότης κρίσις οὕσα φαύλη τοῦ μηδὲν εἶναι μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον εἰς ἀπάθειάν τινα δοκεῖ τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ περιφέρειν, καὶ τέλος ἐστὶν αὐτῇ τοῦ μὴ νομίζειν θεοὺς τὸ μὴ φοβεῖσθαι, *De Superstitione*, 165b

Thus we return to our topic, neglect of the divine, which is the bad decision that nothing is hallowed or everlasting, which with its disbelief in the divine seems to lead to a type of apathy with the result that there is no fear of divinity since it does not exist.

4.

for when there is co-operation with them...voided of logos. The Greek here is somewhat obscure, although the meaning seems to be along the following lines: when perception co-operates with a serious sickness such as neglect of the divine then yearnings, desires, are given free reign so that those mortals, haplessly carried away by their cravings, become just like animals, voided of what makes them human.

what custom demands. In respect of νομός the term 'law' - with all its modern and Old Testament associations (as in 'the law of God') - is inappropriate since the Greek term implies what it is the customary thing to do. Hence, "what custom demands."

5.

Meiros. While μείρομαι here is conventionally understood as referring to 'fate', given the variety of meanings attributed to that term - a useful summary of classical usage is given in Book I, chapter XXVII of *Placita Philosophorum* attributed to the Pseudo-Plutarch - it seems apposite to suggest an alternative, especially as the text apparently does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question which Thoth goes on to ask: if 'fate' does compel someone to do something bad then why are they punished?

The mention of ἀνάγκης - 'Necessity', Ananke - in what follows (section 14: ἀνάγκη δὲ καὶ ἡ πρόνοια καὶ ἡ φύσις ὄργανά ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῆς τάξεως τῆς ὕλης) might indicate the Heraclitean sense of μείρομαι, as summarized by the Pseudo-Plutarch,

Ἡράκλειτος πάντα καθ' εἰμαρμένην, τὴν δ' αὐτὴν ὑπάρχειν καὶ ἀνάγκην.

Yet the immediate context - ἔλεγχον ὁ θεὸς ἐπέστησε τὸν νόμον - might seem to

suggest θέσφατον (divine decree), as for example in Sophocles:

"εἴ τι θέσφατον πατρὶ χρησμοῖσιν ἰκνεῖθ' ὥστε πρὸς παίδων θανεῖν."
Oedipus at Colonus, 969-970

However, given that what follows - Εἵμαρμένης γὰρ πάντα τὰ ἔργα [...] καὶ χωρὶς ἐκείνης οὐδέν ἐστι τῶν σωματικῶν - I have chosen to use a transliteration, Meiros, based on the personification Moros in Hesiod's Theogony:

νύξ δ' ἔτεκεν στυγερόν τε Μόρον καὶ Κῆρα μέλαιναν καὶ Θάνατον,
τέκε δ' Ὕπνον, ἔτικτε δὲ φύλον Ὀνειρώων (211-212)

And Night gave birth to odious Moros, to darksome Kir and to Death, and also brought-into-being Hypnos and the folk of Dreams.

While the transliteration Meiros has the undoubted advantage - as with logos, theos, physis, καὶ τὰ λοιπά - of requiring contextual interpretation and thus avoiding whatever presumptions the reader might have in respect of the meaning of the English term 'fate', it has the disadvantage of not having, in English, an appropriate suffix such as, in respect of fate, -ed allowing as that does εἵμαρτός to be translated by 'fated'. The only solution - somewhat awkward as it is - is to translate such a word by a term such as 'Meiros-decreed' (or Meiros-appointed) so that the phrase εἰ δ' ἄρα τις οὗτος εἵμαρτός ἤκει χρόνος (Plutarch, Alexander, 30.6) would approximate to "if indeed a Meiros appointed moment has now arrived."

unfaithful. The sense of μοιχεύω is not stridently moralistic, as the English term adultery - with all its Old Testament associations - now often still denotes and has for centuries denoted with its implication of 'sin'. Rather, the sense is more anciently pagan: of marital unfaithfulness, of a personal (and thus dishonourable) betrayal, as in Aristotle, Rhetoric, 1374a, συγγενέσθαι ἄλλ' οὐ μοιχεῦσαι (not unfaithful in the matter of [sexual] intercourse). Similarly in Aristophanes:

ὁ δ' ἀλούς γε μοιχὸς διὰ σέ που παρατίλλεται. (Plutus, 170)

it will be because of you if the unfaithful one is caught, and their head shaved.

In addition, in origin the Anglo-Norman word adulterie - derived as it was from the Latin adulterium (adulteration, contaminating or debasing something) - simply meant marital unfaithfulness without the later religious associations such as voiced by Thomas More in his 1532 work *The Confutacyon of Tyndales Answer*: "wedlokke [...] whyche god hym selfe bothe blessed and commaunded in paradyse and whyche holy scrypture commendeth where it sayth that wedlokke is honorable where the bedde is vndefyled wyth auowtry." (ccliiv)

what is bad. Reading τὸ κακὸν and not τὸ καλόν.

6.

geniture and changement. γενέσει καὶ μεταβολῆι. In respect of geniture, qv. my commentary on tractate XI:2, that "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."

In respect of changement, as I noted in a comment on tractate XI:4, "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."

7.

gifted with sentience. ἔλλογος. The Greek term occurs in the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle where he discusses the views of Eudoxus:

εὐδοξος μὲν οὖν τὴν ἡδονὴν τάγαθὸν ᾧετ' εἶναι διὰ τὸ πάνθ' ὀρᾶν
ἐφιέμενα αὐτῆς καὶ ἔλλογα καὶ ἄλλογα (1172b.10)

Eudoxus considered that delight was the beneficent since his perception was that all, sentient or not sentient, sought it.

In a comment on this passage from Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas wrote:

quod Eudoxus existimabat delectationem esse de genere bonorum,
quia videbat quod omnia desiderant ipsam, tam rationalia scilicet
homines, quam irrationalia, scilicet bruta animalia. (*Sententia libri
Ethicorum*, Book X, l. 2 n. 2)

where the contrast, as in Aristotle, is between those gifted with sentience and those lacking sentience, but with Aquinas adding that the latter are 'dumb' animals (*brutis animalibus*), a difference between humans and animals that he considers in detail in his *Summa Theologiae* (*Prima Secundae, Quaestiones 6-17*).

killer. φονεὺς. To use the English word 'murderer' as a translation of the Greek carries with it relatively modern connotations that in my opinion are inappropriate, given that the word 'murder' can impute the sense of "the deliberate and unlawful killing of a human being" and "the action of killing or causing destruction of life, regarded as wicked and morally reprehensible irrespective of its legality."

The classical sense is evident, for example, in Sophocles:

φονέα σε φημι τάνδρὸς οὐ ζητεῖς κυρεῖν (Oedipus Tyrannus, 362)

I said you are the killer and thus the man you seek

κάνταῦθ' Ἀπόλλων οὔτ' ἐκεῖνον ἤνυσεν
φονέα γενέσθαι πατρὸς οὔτε Λαΐου
τὸ δεινὸν οὐφοβεῖτο πρὸς παιδὸς θανεῖν (Oedipus Tyrannus, 720-702)

So, in those days, Apollo did not bring about, for him,
That he slay the father who begot him - nor, for Laius,
That horror which he feared - being killed by his son.

Thus the choice is between two relatively neutral terms: killer, and slayer. Neither of which imputes the moralistic or legal sense of "unlawful killing" or of the act being "wicked and morally reprehensible." Instead, it is a statement of fact.

the one gifted with sentience will, though not unfaithful, be afflicted... just as, though not a killer, they will as if they had killed. An interesting passage which might be taken to mean that those gifted with sentience - who presumably are also, as the tractate states, "governed/guided by their perceiviation" - have the ability because of such things to know, understand, to intuit, what killing and unfaithfulness mean and imply (especially in terms of affliction) as if they themselves had done such things. That is, they have empathy, and thus can avoid doing what is bad.

disposition. See the note regarding ποιότης in section 23 below.

8.

the noble daimon spoke of... would that he had written it. This seems to allude to an aural tradition, perhaps (qv. my introduction to tractate III) an Ἱερός Λόγος, which was never written down, with the suggestion that what is being recounted in this tractate is such a tradition.

first-born divinity. πρωτόγονος θεός. While some assume that this refers to something Egyptian - for example, to the deity Khnum - I incline toward the view that it may be (i) a reference to an Orphic tradition, given that there is an Orphic poem which beings Πρωτόγονον καλέω διφυῆ μέγαν αἰθερόπλαγκτον, or (ii) more probably a term still in general use in Hellenic culture given it that was, for example, an epithet of the goddess Persephone, and given that it occurs in the commentary on Plato's Timaeus by Proclus.

divine logoi. θεῖους λόγους. Cf. τοὺς λόγους διδάσκων and σοφίας λόγους in Poemandres 29. There, the logoi are the various forms (or emanations) of the logos, and include the pneumatic logos, the phasical logos, and the logos kyrios.

I [...] 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. (Poemandres 29)

conceptible things. νοητὰ σώματα. That is, objects - things, materia, 'bodies' - which can be conceived of, which are conceptible, rather than having been physically seen, qv. the 'atoms' of Democritus: ἐτεῆι δὲ ἄτομα καὶ κενόν. See also Sextus Empiricus: οἱ γὰρ ἀτόμους εἰπόντες ἢ ὁμοιομερείας ἢ ὄγκους ἢ κοινῶς νοητὰ σώματα πάντων τῶν ὄντων κατώρθωσαν πῆ δὲ διέπεσον (Adversus Mathematicos, X, 252).

We have our being in potentiality, in activity, in Aion. ζῶμεν δὲ δυνάμει καὶ ἐνεργείαι καὶ Αἰῶνι. In respect of Aion, qv. tractate XI:3,

πηγὴ μὲν οὖν πάντων ὁ θεός, οὐσία δὲ ὁ αἰών, ὕλη δὲ ὁ κόσμος, δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών, ἔργον δὲ τοῦ αἰῶνος ὁ κόσμος, γενόμενος οὐποτε, καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος·

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.

nothing separable. οὐδὲν διαστατὸν. As noted in respect of διαστατός in the commentary on tractate IV:1, "what is not meant is 'dimension', given what the term 'dimension' now imputes scientifically and otherwise."

Archon. Cf. the MS reading ἄρχων καὶ ἡγέμων (archon and hegemon) in tractate XI:7. Since ἄρχων has been assimilated into the English language and retained (c. 1755) its original meaning (ruler, governor, regent) it seems unnecessary to translate the term.

perceiveration...whatever it desires. Cf Poemandres 12: ὁ δὲ πάντων πατὴρ ὁ Νοῦς ὢν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς... Perceiveration, as Life and phaos, father of all...

9.

Numinous. θεῖος. As at tractate IV:6 I have opted for the English word numinous - which dates from 1647, derived from the classical Latin *numen* - to express the meaning of θεῖος here.

10.

somatic. πάθος. The English word somatic - from the Greek σῶμα - means "of or relating to the body; physical, corporeal". As in tractate VI:2 the sense of πάθος here is one of physicality, as in being physically afflicted or affected such that a 'living being deprived of logos' cannot control or affect the affliction, in this instance their cravings. As such, the English word 'passion' is inappropriate

here as a translation of πάθος because it implies strong or deep feelings or emotions generally in human beings and thus is somewhat anthropomorphic, especially as a distinction is being made, as in sections 2 and 5, between mortals and those living beings, such as animals, who lack logos, which logos together with perceiviation, are - as mentioned in section 12 - the two most precious gifts theos has given to mortals: ὅτι δύο ταῦτα τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ὁ θεὸς παρὰ πάντα τὰ θνητὰ ζῶια ἔχαρίσατο τὸν τε νοῦν καὶ τὸν λόγον, σότιμα τῆι ἀθανασίαι.

in alliance with the somatic. Reading συγχορηματίζων with the MSS and not the emendation συγχρωτίζων.

11.

corporeal, incorporeal. σῶμα, ἀσώματος. To try and express at least something of the meaning of the Greek here - which is somewhat metaphysically obscure - I have occasionally resorted to obsolete forms of those two English terms, such as 'corporified' (from corporify) implying "having a material or a bodily form".

In respect of the corporeal and the incorporeal, see tractates VIII and XI. In VIII one of the main themes is the corporeal: "It is regarding psyche and the corporeal that we now must speak..." In XI:22 it is stated that

οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀόρατον, οὐδὲ τῶν ἀσωμάτων· νοῦς ὁράται ἐν τῷ νοεῖν, ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῷ ποιεῖν

nothing is unperceivable, not even the incorporeal, with perceiviation evident through apprehension, theos through creation.

somatical. παθητά. The sense is of being affected by, or subject to, what is somatic. As what follows - καὶ κυρίως αὐτὰ ἐστὶ πάθη - attempts to explain, and as is made clear later on in this section (διαφέρει δὲ πάθος παθητοῦ) somatical should not be confused with somatic.

changes, changed. Given the context, the various senses of κίνησις here are change, not motion - moving, move - in the physical sense as at tractate XI:8, πάντα δὲ πλήρη ψυχῆς καὶ πάντα κινούμενα, τὰ μὲν περὶ τὸν οὐρανόν, τὰ δὲ περὶ τὴν γῆν, all are replete with psyche, all in motion, some around the heavens with others around the Earth.

vigour. ἐνέργεια. Qv. Poemandres 14 and 15. The English terms energy and energize have too many modern, irrelevant, connotations, in respect of the science of physics and otherwise.

12.

perceiviation and logos. Omitting - with Patrizi - the following τὸν δὲ

προφορικὸν λόγον ἔχει as a gloss.

deathlessness. In respect of this unusual English word, cf. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Soul's Travelling* (IX),

"And as they touch your soul, they borrow
Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,
That deathly odour with which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness always."

denotata, denotatum. προσηγορία here implies more than 'name'. That is, a terminology; a specialized vocabulary, in this case one related to metaphysics (cf. πλανώμενος τῆι προσηγορίαι τοῦ γινομένου in section 16). Hence the translations 'denotata' and denotatum (singular) to suggest this.

13.

And yet, do other livings not have language. τὰ γὰρ ἄλλα ζῶια λόγῳ οὐ χράται. While λόγος here is generally taken to mean 'speech', given what follows with its mention of animals making 'sounds' and the exposition regarding the different languages spoken by mortals, the translation 'language' is more apt, as in being able to communicate, to say something specific the meaning of which can be explained and understood by diverse others. A usage of λόγος as for example in the following exchange between Oedipus and the Chorus:

Οἰδίπους:

οἶσθ' οὖν ἃ χρήζεις.

Χορός:

οἶδα.

Οἰδίπους:

φράζε δὴ τί φής.

Χορός:

τὸν ἐναγῆ φίλον μήποτ' ἐν αἰτίᾳ σὺν ἀφανεῖ λόγῳ σ' ἄτιμον βαλεῖν.

Oedipus:

Do you know what it is that you so desire?

Chorus:

I do know.

Oedipus:

Then explain what you believe it to be.

Chorus:

When a comrade is under oath, you should never accuse him because of unproved rumours and brand him as being without honour.

(Oedipus Tyrannus, vv. 653-657)

folk. ἔθνος. Since the English term 'nation' now implies things which the Greek word does not - such as a modern political State - it is inappropriate here. A suitable alternative to folk would be 'people'.

mortal nature, Qv. section 1.

one. εἷς. It is probable that this refers to a metaphysical concept such as described in tractate XI:11,

καὶ ὅτι μὲν ἔστι τις ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα δῆλον· ὅτι δὲ καὶ εἷς,
φανερῶτατον· καὶ γὰρ μία ψυχὴ καὶ μία ζωὴ καὶ μία ὕλη. τίς δὲ
οὗτος; τίς δὲ ἂν ἄλλος εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός; τίτι γὰρ ἄλλωι ἂν καὶ πρέποι
ζῶια ἔμψυχα ποιεῖν, εἰ μὴ μόνωι τῶι θεῶι; εἷς οὖν θεός καὶ τὸν μὲν
κόσμον ὠμολόγησας ἀεὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἕνα καὶ τὴν σελήνην μίαν
καὶ θειότητα μίαν, αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν θεὸν πόστον εἶναι θέλεις

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-presented is one, could you maintain that theos is some other number?

psyche in corporeality. The context is indicative of σώματι here referring to corporeality in general; that is, the quality or state of being corporeal; bodily form or nature; materiality.

14.

eikon. εἰκὼν, qv. my commentary on Poemandres 21 and 31, and also see tractate VIII:2 and tractate XI:15.

outward form. ἰδέα. To translate here simply as 'form' (or idea) may give the impression that the ἰδέα of Plato may be meant with the text thus interpreted in accord with his philosophy and especially with what has been termed his 'theory of forms'. However, since the reference here is to corporeality in the context of perceivment as εἰκὼν of theos, a more metaphysical sense is suggested.

Hence, my interpretation as 'outward form', which thus leaves open the question as to whether or not there is any correlation with 'the theory of forms'.

substance. ὕλη. That is, the materia of 'things' and living beings. Qv. Poemandres 10 and tractate III:1.

Air. ἀήρ. Air as a fundamental element, hence the capitalization as with the preceding Substance.

necessitas. ἀνάγκη. In myth, Ananke was the ancient goddess of wyrd, thus having power over Meiros ('fate') and of what is considered necessary for mortals (such as death), hence the translation of 'necessity'. As mentioned in my commentary on tractate XII:5, although the Latin 'Necessitas' is a suitable alternative for the Greek, a transliteration (Ananke) is perhaps preferable although less readable.

Necessitas, foreseeing, and physis, are implements of Kosmos. Qv. tractate XII:5 where a similar expression occurs:

συνέχει δὲ τοῦτον ὁ αἰὼν, εἴτε δι' ἀνάγκην εἴτε πρόνοιαν εἴτε φύσιν
καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο οἶεται ἢ οἰήσεται τις

Aion maintains this through *necessitas* or through foreseeing or through *physis*, or through whatever other assumption we assume

foreseeing. πρόνοια. Foreseeing includes such arts as prophecy.

apprehended. Cf. Poemandres 3: νοῆσαι τὴν τοῦ τῶν φύσιν, to apprehend the *physis* of beings; that is to discern, discover, their being, their relation to other beings, and to Being.

corpus, corpora. I have here used a Latin term for σῶμα (*corpus*, plural *corpora*) in order to try to give some intimation of the meaning of the text (the Greek is somewhat obscure), and to avoid using the rather prosaic terms 'body' and 'bodies', and to thus suggest technical terms which expound and befit a metaphysical *weltanschauung*, implying as they do here 'materia' in general; the stuff, the material, that exists in the Universe, and how such *corpora* including mortals relate to *theos*.

15.

arithmos. I have detailed the reasons for transliterating ἀριθμὸς in my commentary on tractate IV:10. In essence, the translation 'number' does not express the metaphysical meaning here, qv. Aristotle *Metaphysics*, Book XIII, 1080b.20 and 1083b.10 et seq.

In addition, Proclus (in his Στοιχείωσις θεολογική, propositions 113f) wrote of

ἀριθμὸς and ἐνάδες (henads) as essential parts of a cosmogony involving the gods, with Proclus equating ἐνάδες with those gods (op.cit., propositions 114ff),

εἰ γὰρ τῶν ἐνάδων διττὸς ὁ ἀριθμὸς, ὡς δέδεικται πρότερον, καὶ αἱ μὲν αὐτοτελεῖς εἰσιν αἱ δὲ ἐλλάμπεις ἀπ' ἐκείνων, τῷ δὲ ἐνὶ καὶ τάγαθῷ συγγενῆς καὶ ὁμοφυῆς ὁ θεῖος ἀριθμὸς, ἐνάδες εἰσὶν αὐτοτελεῖς οἱ θεοί. (114)

There is also an interesting passage in a fragment of the commentary on Aristotle by Andronicus of Rhodes where psyche is said to have been described as ἀριθμὸς:

ἀριθμὸν γὰρ ἐκάλουν φησὶ 'τὴν ψυχὴν ὅτι μηδὲν ζῶον ἐξ ἀπλοῦ σώματος ἀλλὰ κατὰ τινὰς λόγους καὶ ἀριθμοὺς κραθέντων τῶν πρώτων στοιχείων. (Themistii in libros Aristotelis De anima paraphrasis, XXXII, 23)

Regarding ἀριθμὸς in tractate IV:10, the relevant part is:

μονὰς οὕσα οὖν ἀρχὴ πάντα ἀριθμὸν ἐμπεριέχει, ὑπὸ μηδενὸς ἐμπεριεχομένη, καὶ πάντα ἀριθμὸν γεννᾷ ὑπὸ μηδενὸς γεννωμένη ἑτέρου ἀριθμοῦ.

The Monas, since it is the origin, enfolds every arithmos without itself being enfolded by any, begetting every arithmos but not begotten by any.

henads. ἐνάδες. A transliteration in common use since the concept of the ἐνάς - the Unity, often equated with μονὰς - is metaphysical and has various interpretations in Plato, Iamblichus, Proclus, and others.

cosmic order. κόσμος. Cf. Poemandres 7.

a mighty theos. In respect of the term μέγας θεὸς it is interesting to note that frescoes in a Minoan settlement in Akrotiri on the island of Santorini depict ἡ μεγάλη θεά (the mighty goddess) among women holding bunches of flowers and a woman holding a net which, given the presence of birds in the fresco, is possibly for catching birds as gifts for the goddess.

The term μέγας θεὸς also occurs in Acts 19:17 in reference to the Temple of Artemis - μεγάλης θεᾶς Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερόν - with Artemis mentioned again in v.28, Μεγάλη ἡ Ἀρτεμις Ἐφεσίων (Powerful is Artemis of the Ephesians).

cyclic return. Qv. tractate XI:2, ἀποκατάστασις καὶ ἀνταποκατάστασις, cyclic return and renewal.

while it exists. Referring to the 'cosmic order' and thus to Kosmos, eikon of a

more mighty divinity.

16.

the denotata of being-becoming. Qv. the comment in section 11 regarding denotata and denotatum.

17.

nurturer. τιθήνη. Cf. tractate XI:7, τροφὸν καὶ τιθήνην, nourisher and nurturer.

fourth parsement. τέταρτον μέρος. By a parsement - partiment, from the Latin partimentum - is meant the fundamental (the basic, elemental, primal) component or principle of 'things' as understood or as posited in Hellenic times. Here Earth is described as the fourth part, the other three being Air, Water, and Fire. Cf. Poemandres 8.

18.

alertness. αἴσθησις. Alertness as in being perceptively aware of one's surroundings. Cf. Poemandres 5.

pnuema. πνεῦμα. A transliteration for reasons explained in my commentary on the text of Poemandres 5. In sum, the usual translation of 'spirit' is too restrictive and has too many modern and Christian associations. The various senses of πνεῦμα in classical times are summarized 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).

19.

Therefore all living beings [...] perceivervation. Reading διὰ τὸν νοῦν and not δι' αὐτόν.

20.

capability. δύναμις. Not 'strength' or 'power' per se, but rather having the capacity, the capability, to do - to change, to craft, to bring-into-being - anything. Cf. δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰὼν in tractate XI: 3,

πηγὴ μὲν οὖν πάντων ὁ θεός, οὐσία δὲ ὁ αἰὼν, ὕλη δὲ ὁ κόσμος,
δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰὼν, ἔργον δὲ τοῦ αἰῶνος ὁ κόσμος, γενόμενος
οὔποτε, καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος· διὸ οὐδὲ φθαρήσεται ποτε
αἰὼν γὰρ ἀφθαρτος οὐδὲ ἀπολεῖται τι τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, τοῦ κόσμου
ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐμπεριεχομένου.

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.

21.

influencive. κινέω. That is, to affect things, to set things in motion, to cause change.

actuosities. ἐνέργεια. The sense of the Greek here is of (often vigorous) activity or occurrences either natural or which result from the actions of divinities or daimons. To try and convey something of this, I have chosen the English term 'actuosities' rather than 'energies' which - given what the English term 'energy' now often imputes - does not in my view express the metaphysical meaning here. The English word actusity derives from the classical Latin actuosus, with the adjective actuose occurring in a 1677 book by Theophilus Gale: " Ἐνεργεῖν, as applied to God, notes his actuose, efficacious, and predeterminate concurse in and with althings." (The Court of The Gentiles. Part III, London, 1677).

A more recent usage was by Ferrarin in chapter 8 - Aristotle's De anima and Hegel's philosophy of subjective spirit - of his book *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) where he wrote: "Hegel appropriates and transforms the meaning of *energeia* to define spirit. Spirit is actusity..."

aspects. Reading μέρη ἐστὶ not μέλη ἐστὶ.

blood. Reading καὶ αἷμα with the MSS. In the metaphysical context of the tractate, blood as an 'aspect of theos' makes sense.

22.

All That Exists. τὸ πᾶν. Literally, 'the all', but metaphysically implying 'all that exists', that is, the Universe.

23.

disposition. ποιότης. As in section 7, not signifying here 'quality' but rather 'disposition,' qv. ποιός, what kind, nature, type, character.

What is being enumerated - οὔτε μέγεθος οὔτε τόπος οὔτε ποιότης οὔτε σχῆμα οὔτε χρόνος - are not abstractions (such as 'time') but rather mortal-type attributes and appellations that are irrelevant in respect of theos.

respected and followed. Given the metaphysical - not religious - tone and content of the tractate, I incline toward the view that προσκύνει καὶ θρήσκευε here does not imply a Christian-type reverence or worship or even being

religious, but rather respect and following, as various Hellenic weltanschauungen or philosophies were respected and followed.

Appendix

Cantio Arcana

Introductory Note

A (non-literal) translation of the ancient Esoteric Song from sections 17 and 18 of tractate XIII of the Corpus Hermeticum, entitled as that tractate is:

Ερμού του τρισμεγίστου προς τον υιόν Τάτ
εν όρει λόγος απόκρυφος περί παλιγγενεσίας και σιγής επαγγελίας

On A Mountain:
Hermes Trismegistus To His Son Thoth,
An Esoteric Discourse Concerning Palingenesis
And The Requirement of Silence

Given the content, the song is pagan and without any Christian influence, although it has been described by some scholars as 'gnostic' in nature. For reasons of readability - and because of the songful nature of the text - I have divided the translation into (somewhat arbitrary) verses.

The Greek text used is that of A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, *Corpus Hermeticum*, Tome II, Third Edition, 1972, and the references to other tractates are to my respective translations and commentaries.

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2017

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Text

πάσα φύσις κόσμου προσδεχέσθω τοῦ ὕμνου τὴν ἀκοήν. ἀνοίγηθι γῆ, ἀνοιγῆτω
μοι πᾶς μοχλὸς ἀβύσσου, τὰ δένδρα μὴ σειέσθε. ὕμνεῖν μέλλω τὸν τῆς κτίσεως

κύριον, καὶ τὸ πᾶν καὶ τὸ ἕν. ἀνοίγητε οὐρανοί, ἄνεμοί τε στῆτε. ὁ κύκλος ὁ ἀθάνατος τοῦ θεοῦ, προσδεξάσθω μου τὸν λόγον· μέλλω γὰρ ὑμνεῖν τὸν κτίσαντα τὰ πάντα, τὸν πῆξαντα τὴν γῆν καὶ οὐρανὸν κρεμάσαντα καὶ ἐπιτάξαντα ἐκ τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ τὸ γλυκὸ ὕδωρ εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην καὶ ἀοίκητον ὑπάρχειν εἰς διατροφήν καὶ κτίσιν πάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων, τὸν ἐπιτάξαντα πῦρ φανῆναι εἰς πᾶσαν πρᾶξιν θεοῖς τε καὶ ἀνθρώποις. δῶμεν πάντες ὁμοῦ αὐτῷ τὴν εὐλογίαν, τῷ ἐπὶ τῶν οὐρανῶν μετεώρῳ, τῷ πάσης φύσεως κτίστη.

οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τοῦ νοῦ ὀφθαλμός, καὶ δέξαιτο τῶν δυνάμεων μου τὴν εὐλογίαν. αἱ δυνάμεις αἱ ἐν ἐμοί, ὑμνεῖτε τὸ ἕν καὶ τὸ πᾶν· συνάσατε τῷ θελήματί μου πᾶσαι αἱ ἐν ἐμοὶ δυνάμεις. γνώσις ἀγία, φωτισθεὶς ἀπὸ σοῦ, διὰ σοῦ τὸ νοητὸν φῶς ὑμῶν χαίρω ἐν χαρᾷ νοῦ. πᾶσαι δυνάμεις ὑμνεῖτε σὺν ἐμοί. καὶ σύ μοι, ἐγκράτεια, ὕμνει. δικαιοσύνη μου, τὸ δίκαιον ὕμνει δι' ἐμοῦ. κοινωνία ἢ ἐμή, τὸ πᾶν ὕμνει δι' ἐμοῦ· ὕμνει ἀλήθεια τὴν ἀλήθειαν. τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀγαθόν, ὕμνει· ζωὴ καὶ φῶς, ἀφ' ὑμῶν εἰς ὑμᾶς χωρεῖ ἢ εὐλογία. εὐχαριστῶ σοι, πάτερ, ἐνέργεια τῶν δυνάμεων. εὐχαριστῶ σοι, θεέ, δύναμις τῶν ἐνεργειῶν μου· ὁ σὸς Λόγος δι' ἐμοῦ ὕμνει σέ. δι' ἐμοῦ δέξαι τὸ πᾶν λόγῳ, λογικῆν θυσίαν.

Translation

Let every Physis of Kosmos favourably listen to this song.
Gaia: be open, so that every defence against the Abyss is opened for me;
Trees: do not incurvate;
For I now will sing for the Master Artisan,
For All That Exists, and for The One.

Open: you Celestial Ones; and you, The Winds, be calm.
Let the deathless clan of theos accept this, my logos.
For I shall sing of the maker of everything;
Of who established the Earth,
Of who affixed the Heavens,
Of who decreed that Oceanus should bring forth sweet water
To where was inhabited and where was uninhabited
To so sustain all mortals;
Of who decreed that Fire should bring light
To divinities and mortals for their every use.

Let us all join in fond celebration of who is far beyond the Heavens:
That artisan of every Physis.

May the one who is the eye of perceivration accept this fond celebration
From my Arts.
Let those Arts within me sing for The One and for All That Exists
As I desire all those Arts within me to blend, together.

Numinous knowledge, from you a numinal understanding:

Through you, a song of apprehended phaos,
Delighted with delightful perceivance.
Join me, all you Arts, in song.

You, mastery, sing; and you, respectful of custom,
Through me sing of such respect.
Sing, my companions, for All That Exists:
Honesty, through me, sing of being honest,
The noble, sing of nobility.

Phaos and Life: fond celebration spreads from us to you.

My gratitude, father: actusity of those my Arts.
My gratitude, theos: Artisan of my actuosities;
Through me, the Logos is sung for you.
Through me, may All That Exists accept
Such respectful wordful offerings as this.

Commentary

every Physis of Kosmos. Among the presencings of the Kosmos described here by their physis are Earth, Trees, the Heavens, Air, and Water.

In respect of Kosmos and physis, qv. tractate XII:14,

ἀνάγκη δὲ καὶ ἡ πρόνοια καὶ ἡ φύσις ὄργανά ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου

Necessitas, foreseeing, and physis, are implements of Kosmos

song. ὕμνος. Not a 'hymn' in the Christian sense (which the word hymn now so often imputes) but rather celebrating the numinous, and theos, in song, verse (ode), and chant.

Gaia. γῆ. Earth as elemental principle, hence the personification here since Earth is being directly, personally, invoked.

open. ἀνοίγνυμι. Cf. Papyri Graecae Magicae, XXXVI. 312ff. The term was often used in both mystic odes and in classical magicae incantations. The Latin *aperio* well expresses the sense, as in "aperire librum et septem signacula eius," (Jerome, Revelation V:5) and "et cum aperuisset sigillum secundum." (Jerome, Revelation VI:3)

μοχλός. Here, not a literal 'bolt' or 'lock' but what prevents (access to) or is a defence against something.

Abyss. ἀβύσσου. This is the emendation of Reitzenstein for the various readings

of the MSS. Nock has ὄμβρου which does not make sense here, for why "open what prevents" rain? In respect of ἄβυσσος, qv. tractate III:1.

incurvate. This unusual English term is appropriate here to poetically suggest the sense of the Greek - σείω - which is to bend from side to side as if shaken by an earthquake, by a trembling of the Earth.

Master Artisan. κτίσεως κύριον. 'Founding Lord', or less poetically, Lord of Creation. Theos as creator-artisan is mentioned in Poemandres 9, with the term there, and in tractate IV:1, being δημιουργόν. Qv. also δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών (the craft of theos: Aion) in tractate XI:3.

All That Exists. τὸ πᾶν. Qv. tractate XII: 22.

clan. κύκλος. Here signifying a particular group, or a particular assembly, of people as in the English expression "the inner circle." Hence, "the clan of theos".

Sweet water. γλυκὸ ὕδωρ. The sweetness of water suitable to drink.

bring light to. In respect of φαίνω as 'bringing light', cf. Plato, Timaeus, 39b,

φῶς ὁ θεὸς ἀνῆψεν ἐν τῇ πρὸς γῆν δευτέρᾳ τῶν περιόδων, ὃ δὴ νῦν
κεκλήκαμεν ἥλιον, ἵνα ὅτι μάλιστα εἰς ἅπαντα φαίνοι τὸν οὐρανὸν

theos ignited a light in that second circle from Earth, named now as Helios, so that it could bring light to all of the heavens

fond celebration. Regarding εὐλογία in a neutral way which does not impute the Christian sense of "praise the Lord", qv. Poemandres 22,

παραγίνομαι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ὁ Νοῦς τοῖς ὀσίοις καὶ ἀγαθοῖς καὶ καθαροῖς
καὶ ἐλεήμοσι, τοῖς εὐσεβοῦσι, καὶ ἡ παρουσία μου γίνεται βοήθεια,
καὶ εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἰλάσκονται
ἀγαπητικῶς καὶ εὐχαριστοῦσιν εὐλογοῦντες καὶ ὑμνοῦντες
τεταγμένως πρὸς αὐτὸν τῇ στοργῇ

I, perceiviation, 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.

perceiviation. νοῦς. As in the Poemandres tractate and other tractates.

my Arts. As at Poemandres 31 - which is also a traditional doxology (δοξολογία) to theos - the sense of δυνάμεων is not 'powers', forces (or something similar and equally at variance with such a laudation) but 'arts'; that is, particular abilities, qualities, and skills. Here, these abilities and skills - the craft - relate

to esoteric song; to be able to be an effective laudator in respect of theos and "every Physis of Kosmos."

numinous. ἅγιος. As in the Poemandres tractate and other tractates.

knowledge. As at Poemandres 26, γνῶσις here could be transliterated as gnosis although I incline toward the view that such a transliteration might - given what the term gnosis now imputes, as for example in being a distinct 'spiritual way' - lead to incorrectly imposing modern meanings on the text.

numinal understanding. φωτίζω here implies an understanding given by a divinity, as for example in spiritual enlightenment, something that is not conveyed if a single word such as 'enlightened' is used as a translation. In order to express something of the Greek, I had used the term 'numinal understanding' with numinal implying 'divine' as at tractate III:1,

Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς καὶ θεῖον καὶ φύσις θεία

The numen of all beings is theos: numinal, and of numinal physis.

phaos. As at Poemandres 4ff - and in other tractates - a transliteration of φῶς - using the the Homeric φάος, given that it (like physis) is a fundamental principle of Hermetic weltanschauungen and one which the overused English word 'light', with all its modern and Christian interpretations, does not satisfactorily express.

mastery. Implying mastery over one's self, cf. Chaucer, The Physician's Tale: "Bacus hadde of hir mouth right no maistrie." (v. 58)

respectful of custom. δίκαιος. Not 'righteous', which imposes abstract theological meanings (derived from the Old Testament) on the text, but rather 'respectful of custom', of dutifully doing one's duty (that is, being honourable) toward both the gods and other mortals.

Honesty. ἀλήθεια. Given that those who are urged to sing are personifications, this is not some abstract, disputable, 'truth' but as often elsewhere in classical literature, a revealing, a dis-covering, of what is real as opposed to what is apparent or outer appearance. In personal terms, being honest and truthful.

actuality. ἐνέργεια. Qv. tractate XII:21. The English term actuality derives from the classical Latin actuosus and expresses the Greek here better than the word 'energy' given the modern connotations of that word. The meaning is of (often vigorous) activity or occurrences either natural or which result from the actions of divinities or daimons. Here, there are the actualities of theos and of the mortal who uses their arts, their skill, in laudation.

respectful wordful offerings. Qv. Poemandres 31. The difficult to translate Greek term λογικὴν θυσίαν implies an offering, and one which is both respectful and

conveyed by means of words but which words are of themselves insufficient, inadequate, with the term 'wordful' suggesting such insufficiency.

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(Second Edition)

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