Corpus Hermeticum

Eight Tractates

I, III, IV, VI, VIII, XI, XII, XIII

Translation and Commentary

David Myatt
Contents

Preface

**Tractate I.** Ποιμάνδρης. Poemandres

**Tractate III.** Ιερός Λόγος. An Esoteric Mythos

**Tractate IV.** Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατήρ ἡ μονάς. From Hermes To Thoth: Chaldron Or Monas

**Tractate VI.** Ὅτι ἐν μόνῳ θεῷ τὸ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν ἀλλαχόθι δὲ οὐδαμοῦ. That In The Theos Alone Is Nobility And Not Anywhere Else

**Tractate VIII.** Ὅτι οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων ἀπόλλυται ἀλλὰ τὰς μεταβολὰς ἀπωλείας καὶ θανάτους πλανώμενοι λέγουσιν. That no beings are lost, despite mortals mistakenly claiming that such transformations are death and a loss.

**Tractate XI.** Νοῦς πρὸς Ἑρμῆν. From Perceiverance To Hermes

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

**Tractate XIII.** Ἑρμοῦ του τρισμεγίστου προς τον υἱὸν Τάτ εν όρει λόγος απόκρυφος περὶ παλιγγενεσίας και σιγῆς επαγγελίας. On A Mountain: Hermes Trismegistus To His Son Thoth, An Esoteric Discourse Concerning Palingenesis And The Requirement of Silence

Bibliography
This work collects together my translations of and commentaries on the eight tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum which were published separately between 2013 and 2017. From the fourteen Greek tractates that have been traditionally referred to as the Corpus Hermeticum, I chose the eight (the ogdoad) whose texts I considered were the most metaphysical and mystical and thus which can provide an understanding of what came to be termed hermeticism.

In the case of the Corpus Hermeticum, the task of translating ancient Greek into English is complicated by the terminology used in the text. Words such as λόγος, νοῦς, πνεῦμα, δημιουργόν, φῶς, ψυχή (καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ), 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 (i) θεός translated as god or as God, and of λόγος translated as 'word' (or Word) which thus suffuse, or can suffuse, the text with the meanings that nearly two thousand years of Christian exegesis have ascribed to those terms; of (ii) νοῦς translated as either "intellect" or as "mind", neither of which is satisfactory especially given what both of those English words have come to denote, philosophically and otherwise, in the centuries since the Greek tractates were written. 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.

However, given that the goal of the translator is to provide for the general reader an intelligible interpretation of the text, to utilize transliterations for every problematic word would fail to accomplish that goal. Which is why the translator has to use their judgement and why every translation is 'a fallible interpretation of meaning'.

The methodology of using some transliterations, some relatively obscure
English words, and some new term or expression (such as noetic sapientia) results in a certain technical - an 'esoteric' - vocabulary which requires or may require contextual, usually metaphysical, interpretation. Often, the interpretation is provided by reference to the matters discussed in the particular tractate; sometimes by reference to other tractates; and sometimes by considering Ancient Greek, and Greco-Roman, philosophy and mysticism. Occasionally, however, the interpretation is to leave some transliteration - such as physis, φύσις - as a basic term of the particular hermetic weltanschauung described in a particular tractate and, as such, as a term which has no satisfactory English equivalent, metaphysical or otherwise, and therefore to assimilate it into the English language. All of which make these translations rather different from other English versions, past and present, with these translations hopefully enabling the reader to approach and to appreciate the hermetic texts sans preconceptions, modern and otherwise, and thus provide an intimation of how such texts might have been understood by those who read them, or heard them read, in the milieu of their composition.

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 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 texts anew and understand why they have - in the original Greek - been regarded as important documents in respect of particular, ancient, weltanschauungen that have, over the centuries, proved most influential and which can still be of interest to those interested in certain metaphysical speculations and certain esoteric matters.

Why an alternative approach to such ancient texts? Because current, and past interpretations - based on using terms such as God, Mind, and Soul - make them appear to be proto-Christian or imbued with an early Christian weltanschauung or express certain philosophical and moralistic abstractions. Also, because I incline toward the view that such texts, in the matter of cosmogony and metaphysics, are 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 Ιερός Λόγος (Tractate III) and which term dates back to the time of Hesiod [1].

In respect, for example, of the Ιερός Λόγος tractate, my view 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/honesty, τὸ ἀγαθὸν as the honourable/the noble/nobility, and thus as embodied in noble, trustworthy, honest, individuals, and which interpretation I am inclined to view as an expression of both the classical Greek and the Greco-Roman (Hellenic) ethos, including the ethos of Greco-Roman mysticism, just as the expression τί ἐστιν ἀλήθεια, attributed to a certain Roman, is an expression of that ethos; whereas ἀγαθός 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 have expressed. [2]

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; an insight and an understanding no doubt somewhat redolent of, and influenced by, and sometimes perhaps paraphrasing, some such existing philosophies and/or some such schools of thought; and an insight which often differs from tractate to tractate.

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:

χρῆται 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 χρῆται.

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.

The Greek text used is that of A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, *Corpus*
Hermeticum, Third Edition, 1972. Occasionally I have followed the reading of the MSS or the emendations of others rather than Nock's text with such variations noted in my commentary. Text enclosed in angled brackets < > indicates a conjectural editorial addition, and <...> indicates a lacuna.

David Myatt
2017

[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] I have endeavoured to explain such interpretations in various essays, including (i) Some Examples Regarding Translation and Questions of Interpretation, (ii) Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum; and (iii) Cicero On Summum Bonum.
Introduction

The Greek text of the tractate often referred to as the Poemandres/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 νοῦς οἶδα ὃ βούλει καὶ σύνειμί σοι πανταχοῦ

Which implies - qv. my translation, and notes and commentary on the text - that what Poemandres 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, Poemandres 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 ἄνδρόγυνος 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.
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.

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.

Theos, the perceiversation, male-and-female, being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceiversation, 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.

Directly, from the downward parsements, the logos of theos bounded to the fine artisements of Physis and joined with the perceiversation 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.

The perceiversation 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 perceiversation 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 perceiversation had decreed, with Earth delivering from within herself beings four-footed and crawling, and animals savage and benign.

Perceiversation, 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.

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 perceiveration, 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 Äther, 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.
[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 masculous 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 Poémardres.

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 sought. But could you tell me how the Anados will occur?

To which Pœmandres 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?

[27] 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 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.

[28] 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.

[29] 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.

[30] 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.

[31]

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.

***

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᾽ ἑτέρου τοιούτου φωτὸς ώς 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 perceivereation 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 Poemandres.

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 Poemandres.

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 Poemandres? 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 κτήμα 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/perceiveration 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 τού των 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. 'Εχε 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:

ὡς εἰπούσα θεὰ μέγεθος καὶ εἶδος ἀμειψε γῆρας ἀπωσαμένη

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

[An] indefinity of inner sight [inner seeing]. ὁρῶ θέαν ἀόριστον. The sense of ὁρᾶω 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 ἀόριστος, 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 φάος. Since φάος 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 φοβε ρόν 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 - ἀφήτως τεταραγμένην καὶ καπνὸν ἀποδόσα τεταραγμένην καὶ καπνὸν ἀποδόσαν - does not suggest either 'watery' or 'moist'. Cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 314 - ταῦτ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐποίουν υγρᾶν Νεφελᾶν στρεπταιγλᾶν δάιον ὠρμάν - 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 φωτός, which Nock emended to πυρός. While the emendation, given the foregoing mention of fire, makes some sense, it does render what follows, with the mention of φωτός, 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 φωτός 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 πυρός, 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.

*coagulating.* 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 proprius dicitur de verbo spirituali quam de
corporali. Sed omne illud quod magis proprie invenitur 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 pnemal 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 ἄνθρωπος 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 ἔφην 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.
undefined. 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 ἔστιν, οὗ χρείαν ἔχει ὁ γεωγράφος: εὐπεριόριστον δέ, ὅταν ἢ ποταμοῖς ἢ ὄρεσιν ἢ θαλάττῃ δυνατὸν ἦ (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 προἄρχον 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 (προἄρχον) 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 μὲν σφι
tαῦτα 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.

ἡτις 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. ἀρρενόθηλυς. 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 perceiveration. ἀπεκύησε λόγῳ ἕτερον Νοῦν
dημιουργόν. 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 ἡ δύναμις αὐτῶν

with the Greek of LXX, literally translated, meaning "By the logos of the master
[kύριος] the heavens were established and, by the pnuema from his mouth, all
their influence" [δύναμις], with the Hebrew stating it is יְהוָה [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 declaring a logos, that this theos - whomsoever or whatever theos is - brought forth 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 pnuema? 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 ἓν 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᾽ ἤν τοσοῦτον, ἔστ᾽ ἐν αἰθέρι μέσῳ κατέστη λαμπρὸς ἥλιον κύκλος καὶ καυμ᾽ 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 θεός ἀληθινός τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐκ τοῦ φωτὸς ὁ δι᾽ οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο τα τε ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ 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 τοῦ Υἱοῦ 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 - οὐσία (which correctly understood means the very being - the essential nature/physis, 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 ἀπ’ αὐτῆς 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' - ὃς ἐν τῷ ἄλογῳ μορφήν. This is often understood in the pejorative sense, as if this Physis, and the living beings devoid of logos - ζῷα 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 - ἄλογος - could be, depending on how logos is interpreted, akin to ἀθάνατος said in respect, for example, of theos [Θεὸν δ᾽ εἶναι ζῶον ἄθάνατον] or implying 'cannot be reduced to something else' and thus heterogeneous [αἱ δὲ ταύτῃ ἀσύμμετροι ἄλογοι 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. δινῶν ῥοίζῳ.

12.

brought forth...a mortal. ἀπεκύησεν ἄνθρωπον. The word ἀπεκύησεν in relation to πατὴρ 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, ἐξήνεγκεν [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 ἕκαστον τὸν ἔκαστον ἔκαστον τὸν ἔκαστον τὸν ἔκαστον. 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 μεγίστῃ (the fire, embraced by a strong force).

14.

**burst through the strength of the spheres.** I follow the reading of the MSS, which have ἄναρρήξας τὸ κράτος τῶν κύκλων, amended by Scott and Nock to ἄναρρήξας 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 Æomandres 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 μιγεῖσα Ἀστραϊών.

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'.

deadful 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 οὐσιώδη σοφίαν τὸν τε ζῶντα

[Historia Ecclesiastica, Book 1, chapter 2]

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

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 τούτων ἵσθι, ὅτι εἱμαρμένη διχῶς καὶ λέγεται καὶ νοεῖται: ἡ μὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἐνέργεια ἡ δ᾽ οὐσία

of a wakeful one <...> There is some text missing, indicated by <...>, for after ἄϋπνος ἀπὸ ἄϋπνου 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 ἰπνου] - 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 some-thing, 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 some-thing more archetypal/elemental of which such character or personal characteristics are an outward manifestation.

**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 Poemadres 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 ἐνεθυμήθησαν τε καὶ ἔγραψαν οἱ γραφεῖς ἐλαφροὺς τε καὶ μεταρσίους ταῖς τοῦ πατρὸς αὔραις συνθέοντας [Oratones, 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 reliquos omnes complectitur, summus ipse deus arcens et continens ceteros; in quo sunt infixi illi, qui volvuntur, stellarum cursus sempiterni. Cui subiecti 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 mediam 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 convertitur. Infra autem iam nihil est nisi mortale et caducum praeter animos munere deorum hominum generi datos; supra Lunam sunt aeterna 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 θηλυκὴ. 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 θηλυκὴ 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 pnuema. 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 ἄρρενικὰ ἐν μέρει τὰ δὲ θηλυκὰ ὁμοίως. The meaning of ἄρρενικὰ and θηλυκὰ are not 'male' and 'female' but rather masculous (masculine) and muliebral (or considered appropriate to women).

propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning. The same Greek words - αὐξάνεσθε and πληθύνεσθε - occur in LXX, Genesis 1.22: ηὐλόγησεν αὐτὰ ὁ θεὸς λέγων αὐξάνεσθε 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 [Ἦς ἐστι κτίσμα ή 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 ἀϊττων τοῦ θανάτων ἕρωτα. The consensus is, and has been, that ἕρωτα 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 (ἡδ᾽ Ἔρος ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ᾽ ανθρώπων 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 οὐδεὶς ἔρωτα ἐφυγεν ἢ φεύγεσθαι μέχρι ἂν κάλλος ᾖ 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.

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 οὐτά that follows in the text (for example in the Turnebus MS) for which various emendations have been proposed,
including omitting it altogether.

19.

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’
ὑμῶν τὸ αὐτὸ ἀξιοῦμεν κομίζεσθαι ['we now expect to receive the same from you'; Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, Book 1, chapter 43] and (b) ὥστε οὐκ οὐκ οὐκτοῦ οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἄξιοι 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 τούτο διττοὺς ἐχει τοὺς κατ’ ἔτος 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 αὐτόν, 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 physis 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 *Toû ἁγίου Ἰουστίνου πρὸς Τρύφωνα Ἰουδαϊόν 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 ἀνθρώπων 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 και άνατροπή της ψευδωνύμου γνώσεω] - written not long before the *Pœmandres* 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 ἐστὶ δι' ἡμᾶς ἐγκαταστήσασαι (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 ἀγνώστου 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.** ὅσίοις. 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 hubricatly '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:

ἐκείνος γε μὴν ύμνῳν οὐποτ’ ἐληγεν ὡς τοὺς θεοὺς οἴοιτο οὔδὲν ἦττον ὅσιοις ἐργοῖς ἡ ἄγνωστα ἱεροῖς ἥδεσθαι ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ὁπότε εὐτυχοὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ὑπερεφρόνει ἀλλὰ ἱεροῖς χάριν ἦδει καὶ θαρρῶν πλείονα ἐθνεν ἡ ὅκρων ἄχετο εἴθιστο δὲ φοβούμενοι μὲν ἱλαροὶ φαίνεσθαι εὐτυχῶν δὲ πράξες 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 ἐυσεβέω 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 ἐστι τὸ βουλεύσασθαι, τὸ κρίναι τὰ ἄγαθά καὶ τὰ κακά καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ αἱρετὰ καὶ φευκτά, τὸ χρῆσθαι πάσι καλῶς τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἄγαθοῖς, 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. ἐυσεβοῦσι. As with ὁσίοις, ἐυσεβέω 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᾽ Έρινυές, 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 εὔσεβέω 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 ὑμνεῦσιν 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.

desired affectionately. 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 impress upon [cf. Cícero, 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 Britannicum ['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 ὄρος ὡς μὲν πρὸς τοὺς ἀγώνας καὶ τὴν αἰσθητικὴν οὐ τῆς τέχνης ἔστιν - 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 καλός - 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  
ήσθαι δόμοις ἔρημον ἔκπαγλον κακόν   (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 example, 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 καλός:

μηδενὶ κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιούμενοι 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 σαπρόν ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν, ἐκαστὸν γὰρ δένδρον ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου καρποῦ γινώσκεται· ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἀνθρωπός ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ τῆς καρδίας προφέρει τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ προφέρει τὸ πονηρόν· 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 τιμωρῶ δαίμον.

Τιμωρῶ 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 Τιμωρῶ 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. ἄνοδος. 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/progress/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 παραδίδως 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 ἢτοι αὐξητικὴν ἢ μειωτικὴν [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. ὑμνεῖ 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 παραδίδοασι 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 pneuma logos and the phaoma 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':

tῆς ἐπὶ τῷ θεωθῆναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον μυστικῆς ἐνεργείας λήψεται πέρας κατὰ πάντα τρόπον χωρίς 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 γνώσις, 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 -
ἀνοδος - 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 άκροπολί ταύτη Ἑρεχθέος τοῦ γηγενέος λεγομένου εἶναι υἱός, Herodotus, 8.55; and ἄλλοι δὲ γηγενεῖς καὶ χαλκάσπις, Strabo, 10.3] nor even the 'earthly/rural' type [qv. μὴ μισήσῃς ἐπίπονον ἐργασίαν καὶ γεωργίαν ὑπὸ ᾿Υψίστου 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 γηγενέως Ὀλυμπίων ἐντιμότερον ἀλλ᾽ ὁ περὶ ψυχῆς ἄλλως δοξάζων ἀγνοεῖ ὡς θαυμαστοῦ τούτου κτήματος ἐμελεῖ, Laws 727ε]. Hence my suggestion of 'earth-bound', which is apposite considering what follows - οἱ μέθῃ καὶ ὕπνῳ ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδε δωκότες.

sleepfulness. To translate ὕπνος 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 ὕπνος, Jebb in his commentary on Antigone in respect of ὕπνος 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. ἔνθ᾽ Ὕπνῳ ξύμβλητο κασιγνήτῳ Θανάτῳ, Iliad, 14.231] is also in favour of normal, healthy, sleep not being meant, as does what follows - θελγόμενοι ὕπνῳ ἄλλος. Thus a possible alternative would be to interpret ὕπνος 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. ἀγνωσίᾳ 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 κραιπαλῶντες. Literally, 'cease to be intoxicated'. It is interesting to compare this preaching to what Plutarch wrote about Demosthenes:

όδυρομένου δὲ τοῦ Δημοσθένους πρὸς αὐτὸν ὃτι πάντων φιλοπονώτατος ὃν τῶν λεγόντων καὶ μικροῦ δέων καταναλώκεναι τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀκμὴν εἰς τούτο χάριν οὐκ ἔχει πρὸς τὸν δῆμον, ἀλλὰ κραιπαλῶντες ἄνθρωποι ναῦται καὶ ἀμαθεῖς ἀκούονται καὶ κατέχουσι τὸ βήμα, παρορᾶται δ᾽ αὐτὸς [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 φωτὸς. 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 ψυχῆς, 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 perceivereation 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 potentiiis.
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:

ἁγιος ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων.
ἁγιος ὁ θεὸς, οὗ ἡ βουλὴ τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων.
ἁγιος ὁ θεὸς, ὃς γνωσθῆναι βούλεται καὶ γινώσκεται τοῖς ἰδίοις.
ἁγιος εἶ, ὁ λόγῳ συστησάμενος τὰ διὰ ταῦτα.
ἁγιος εἶ, οὐ πάσα φύσις εἰκὼν ἐφώ.
ἁγιος εἶ, ὃς ἐν φύσις σῶμα ἐμφόρωσεν.
ἁγιος εἰ, ὁ πάσης δυνάμεως ἵσχυορότερος.
ἁγιος εἰ, ὁ πάσης υπεροχῆς μείζων.
ἁγιος εἰ, ὁ κρείττων τῶν ἐπαίνων.

ἁγιος ὁ approximates to ‘Numinous is’ [theos] - qv. the note on ἅγιος in section 5 - and ἅγιος εἰ 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:

οὐτε 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 υἱός as the gender neutral 'child', rather than 'son', see the note on υἱός θεοῦ in section 6, and also the note on gender neutrality under ἄναγγελλόν ζαυτὸν in section 19.

share in [your] numinosity. For συναγιάζειν.

---

Ιερός Λόγος
An Esoteric Mythos
Tractate III

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/ἱεροί λόγοι (an esoteric mythos/esoteric mythoi) were phrases often used to describe such mystery traditions, both Greek and Greco-Egyptian, as, for example, by Herodotus {1}.

For it is possible that the often-stated belief of the tractate being influenced by the story recounted in LXX is incorrect, and that whatever similarities there are between the text of the tractate and Greek text of the Biblical story of Genesis might be due either to the scribe of what was a previously esoteric aural tradition being familiar with LXX or some parts of it and borrowing a particular word or words to try and express an aspect of that 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 germane to the period of its composition and one which is based upon or recounts an earlier, and most probably aural, tradition. Furthermore, as Wildberg has suggested, the text might simply incorporate some marginalia.

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

οἱ Γῆς ἐξεγένοντο καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος

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

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 ἀστερόεντος<ερόεντος>

I am a child of Gaia and the starry heavens

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

ΓΑΣ ΥΙΟΣ ΕΙΜΙ ΚΑΙ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΥ ΑΣΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΟΣ

Γὰς υἱὸς ἠμι καὶ Ὠρανῶ ἀστερόεντος

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

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν

In the beginning, Theos produced the heavens and the Earth

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

Ἐν κεφαλαίῳ ἔκτισεν ὁ Θεὸς τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ τῆς γῆς

As foundation, Theos formed the heavens and the Earth
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 Πœmandres 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 Πœmandres 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 Πœmandres, 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 Πœmandres 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 pnuema, 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 ΓΑΙΑ ΘΕΟΣ ΑΣΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΟΣ. 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 τὸ τούτοις κομίσας τῆς ἀρχῆς λέγει δ’ αὐτὴν μὴ ὕδωρ μὴ ἄλλο τι τῶν καλομένων εἶναι στοιχείων ἀλλ’ ἑτέραν τινὰ φύσιν ἑπείρου ἐξ ἧς ἅπαντα γίνεσθαι τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς κόσμους. Simplicius, *Physics*, 24:13-21).

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


{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*. 
[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 exclamat: ῞Ω δόξα, δόξα, μυρίοισι δὴ βροτῶν οὐδὲν γεγῶσι βίοτον ὡγκωσάς 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 Ἐργα καὶ Ἡμέραι [Works and Days], vv 213-218, wrote:

σὺ δ᾽ ἀκοὺε δίκης, μηδ᾽ ὅβριν ὄφελλε:
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 ἄτῃσιν 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, Άτη) 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
[Antiōn, 1337-8] wrote ὡς πεπρωμένης οὐκ ἔστι θνητοῖς συμφορᾶς ἀπαλλαγὴ
(mortals cannot be delivered from the misfortunes of their fate).
c. δίκαιος. Honour expresses the sense that is meant: of being fair; capable of doing
the decent thing; of dutifully observing ancestral customs. A reasonable alternative
for ‘honour’ would thus be ‘decency’, both preferable to words such as ‘just’ and
‘justice’ which are not only too impersonal but have too many inappropriate modern
connotations.
d. νήπιος. Literal – ‘young’, ‘uncultured’ (i.e. un-schooled, un-educated in the ways
of ancestral custom) – rather than metaphorical (‘foolish’, ignorant).

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

Thus, in respect of this tractate, I translate θεοῖ 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 τῶν 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 Being".

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

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 εἴμαρμένη, Pœmandres 15.

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

ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν, ἀίδιον, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρησκότας ἀδόκοις·
ἐξαίτε τις ἀμφιλεγόμενος φόνοι φίλα γυία μηνη, νεικεὶ θ' ὅς κἐ ἐπίπορον ἀμαρτήσας ἐπικούρησσι,
δοῦμεν σὸτε μακραίως λελάχασι βίοι,
τρίς μιν μυρίας ὄρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,
φυομένους παντοίως διὰ χρόνου εἴδεα θυσίων ἄργαλέας βιότοι μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.
αἱθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντυδε διώκει,
πόντος δ' ἐς χθόνος οὐδάς ἀπείπωσε, γαῖα δὲ ἀγάς ήλίου παςθούτος, ὅ δ' αἰθέρος ἐμβαλε δίναις·
ἄλλος δ' ἐς ἄλλους δέχεται, στυγεὺσι δὲ πάντες.
τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγάς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
Νείκεϊ μαυσομένωι πίσυνος.
There exists an insight by Ananke, an ancient resolution
Of the gods, immutable and sealed by vows,
Regarding when one of the daimons - those whose allotted portion of life is long -
Has their own hands stained from murder
Or who, once having sworn an oath, because of some feud breaks that oath.
For they shall for ten thousand tripled seasons wander away from the beautified,
Begotten during that period in all manner of mortal form
And exchanging during that voyage one vexation for another:

The fierce Ætherials chase them to the Sea,
The Sea spits them out onto dusty ground,
Gaia hurls them to the burning light of the Sun
Who flings them back to those swirling Ætherials.
Moved from one to the other, all detest them.

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

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

Notes:

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

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

Abyss. ἄβυσσος.

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

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

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

beneath (that) sandy ground. ὅπ' ἅµµῳ. Regarding ἄµµῳ, qv. Xenophon, Apomnemoneumata 3.3.6 - πότερον ἔπαγειν τοὺς πολεμίους ἐπὶ τὴν ἄµµῳ 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 ἅµµῳ παραπλησίαν ἔχουσι.

It is possible that ἄµµῳ, 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 ἀκατασκευάστος, '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 ἢ στάσεως. Interestingly, in his commentary on the Metaphysics, Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Apposuit autem cum insit, ad differentiam privationis et contrarii: nam statua quidem fit ex aere, quod inest statuae iam factae; fit etiam ex infigurato, quod quidem non inest statuae iam factae. Unde aes est causa statuae, non autem infiguratum, cum sit principium per accidens tantum" (Commentaria, In libros Physicorum, 2, Lectio 5).

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

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

seven spheres. qv. Poemandres 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 ἄερα, 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 ἐσπερµολόγουν. 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 βέλε᾽ ἃπτεται ὅς τις ἀφήῃ ἢ κακὸς ἢ ἀγαθός [whether hurled by someone honourable or dishonourable, all of the missiles still strike their target].

The personal sense of ἀγαθός here also has the virtue of making what follows, at the end of section 3 - γνῶναι ἀγαθῶν καὶ φαύλων καὶ πᾶσαν ἀγαθῶν δαίδαλουργίαν 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 metaphorical, not literal. Hence a "living witness of physis" rather than an 'active' or 'working' one. An alternative would be 'presenced', suggested by Aristotle's Metaphysics: ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ τῆς κατὰ κίνησιν λεγομένης δυνάμεως
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 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 ἐνεργοῦσαν.

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

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

4.

As is - by circumferent deities coursing - wyrdful. This is open to three different interpretations, as perhaps was intended. First, that it is the deities themselves who determine the wyrd of mortals. Second, that a person's wyrd can be discovered - learned, possibly predicted - by astrological means; that is, by understanding the movement of the planets and the stars associated with the deities since "the 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:
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, Ιερός 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
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 and Ιερός Λόγος and Ποιμάνδρης, 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:
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 *Pœmandres* 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 *Pœmandres*, 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 perceiverance and, having perceiverance,  
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, enfolds 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 (Ἰερός 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 <τὸ> ἄγαθόν, καὶ τὸ ἄγαθόν ὁ θεός. ἡ δὲ έτέρα προσηγορία ἐστίν ἢ τοῦ πατρός, μᾶλλον 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 αἵρετὰ καὶ φευκτά, τὸ χρῆσθαι πάσι καλῶς τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἀγαθοῖς, τὸ ὁμιλῆσαι 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.

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 μόνω, with οὐ μόνω 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 Marsili Ficini (published in 1489 CE) has as its heading:

Quomodo per inferiora 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 presenced 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.
deathful 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 ἆθλον ἱδρῦσθαι. 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
tó pénðos ἤ kai tῆς 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
τρύχει ψυχάν, τάδ᾽ εἰ κακοῖς κακὰ
προσάψει τοῖς πάλαι τὰ πρός 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 ψυχῇ, 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 - ἀθλοῦν - via the Greek ἀθλητής and thence
the classical Latin athleta.]

*chaldron*. 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 νοὸς. That is,
were or became characterized by having become immersed with - suffused by -
perceiveration.

Here, as elsewhere the understanding of νοῦς 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.

declaim 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:

θεοῖσι μέν νυν οὐκ ἰσούμενόν σ᾽ ἐγὼ
οὐδ᾽ οἵδε παῖδες ἑζόμεσθ᾽ ἐφέστιοι,
ἀνδρῶν δὲ πρῶτον ἐν τε συμφοραῖς βίου
κρίνοντες ἐν τε δαίμονων συναλλαγαῖς

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:

τότε δὴ οὖν οὐ δήπου νοερῶς καὶ ἀσωμάτως τὸ σῶμα
μεταχειριζόμεθα· οὐ γὰρ πέφυκε τῶν τοιούτων τρόπων τὸ σῶμα
μετέχειν· τῶν δὲ συγγενῶν ἑαυτῷ μεταλαγχάνον, σώμασι σῶμα
θεραπεύεται τε καὶ ἀποκαθαίρεται.

Thus the sense of καταφρονήσαντες πάντων τῶν σωματικῶν καὶ ἀσωμάτων ἐπὶ
tὸ ἓν seems to be that what is important is a striving for the monas not a noetic
cconcern 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: épistémē. The meaning is 'a way', or a means or a method, by
which something can be known, understood, and appreciated. In this case,
perceveration, 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 ιστορία.
Interestingly, the Renaissance Latin text published in 1554 has, for the line,
'scientia mentis est diuinorum contemplatio & intelligentia dei, diuino existente
cratere' with Parthey's 1854 edition reading 'mentis scientia, divinorum
inspectio et dei comprehensio, quia divinus est crater.'

I am inclined toward ιστορία, 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. θείου 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. ᾿Εὰν μὴ πρῶτοντο 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:

ἀπὸ τούτου τε πρῶτον Περδίκκας Βρασίδαν τε πολέμιον ἐνόμισε καὶ ἐς τὸ λοιπὸν Πελοποννησίων τῇ μὲν γνώμῃ δι᾽ Ἀθηναίους οὐ ξύνηθες μῖσος εἶχε, τῶν δὲ ἀναγκαίων ξυμφόρων διαναστὰς ἔπρασσεν ὅτῳ τρόπῳ τάχιστα τοῖς μὲν ξυμβήσεται, τῶν δὲ ἀπαλλάξεται. (4.128)

His reaching an agreement with the Peloponnesians 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 Peloponnesians" seems apt, especially given the qualification mentioned in the text: τῇ μὲν γνώμῃ 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 Poemanderes 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 Poemanderes 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 ἔρως ὡς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ’ ἀνθρώπων 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
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 τούτο παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς ζῷα διπλοῦς ἐστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, άθάνατος 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.

apotelesis 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 ἀποθέωσει 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 ἐνσωβέω 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 ἕνος ἀπὸ πάντων ὦν 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:

> quem tu mihi addidisti sane ad illum σύλλογον personam idoneam. Videbis igitur, si poteris, ceteros, ut possimus πομπεῦσαι καὶ τοῖς 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:

> εἴπὼν ἄπειμ᾽ ὧν οὕνεκ᾽ ήλθον οὐ τὸ σὸν 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."

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

 wards 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 - ἐτι δὲ 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:

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 [...]
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 ἀρχὴν ἔχειν τὴν γνῶσιν 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 ὀδεύσωμεν τάχει 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'.

elden. 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 ἀφανῆ δυσπιστεῖν ποιεῖ. φανερώτερα δὲ ἐστὶ τὰ κακά, τὸ δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἀφανὲς τοῖς φανεροῖς
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 καλόν, 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 φαίνομένων θειότατον, πῶς δ᾽ ἔχων τοιοῦτος ἂν εἴη, ἔχει τινὰς δυσκολίας

The expression δοκεῖ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τῶν φαίνομένων 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 - νοῦς - 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 φανόμενα οὔτω φαίνεται, ἐν τῷ γνωστῷ τελευταίᾳ ἡ τού ἄγαθοῦ ιδέα καὶ μόγις ὁρᾶσθαι

Which brings us, again, to ἄγαθός 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 ἐκαστον δ ἔστιν, and why in Symposium 210e - 211a he states regarding his ideal, his form, his ιδέα/εἶδος, which he sometimes and confusingly uses interchangeably, that:

πρῶτον μὲν ἀεὶ δν 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 ἄγαθος always refers back to Plato's ιδέα/εἶδος (and to those influenced by him or are assumed to be his precursors) leading to moralistic interpretations such as that of Mead where ἄγαθος 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, ἄγαθος, rather than having its genesis, its origin, its very being, in some individual mortals - and attainable by others because of the prize of perceiverance 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 φανήσαί. 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.
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 δέ τις τὸν πρῶτον ἀριθμόν τὸν τῶν εἰδῶν ἔνα εἶναι, ἔνιοι 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 ἀτελές καὶ διαιρετόν.

begeting/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.

\[ \text{That In The Theos Alone Is Nobility And Not Anywhere Else} \]

\[ \text{Tractate VI} \]

---

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, sumnum 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 though 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.

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 (Ιερός 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


[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.

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

In effect, Summum Bonum - what the Greeks termed τὸ ἁγαθὸν - 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."

---

**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 perceiveration 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 ἐστιν 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 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."

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, 1015α:

ἐκ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων ἡ πρώτη φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία ἡ τῶν ἐχόντων ἀρχήν κινήσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ἢ αὐτά; ἢ γὰρ ὑλή τῶ ταύτης δεκτική εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῶ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις, καὶ ἡ ἀρχή τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύσει ὄντων αὐτή ἐστίν, ἐνυπάρχουσα πως ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐντελεχείᾳ.

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.

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

changement...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 άναγκαῖον μὲν εἶναι γίγνεσθαι τὸ γιγνόμενον ἢ ἔξ ὄντος ἢ ἔκ μη 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 some-thing 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 τὸ τὸ σὺν θείεσθαι indicates a certain scenario. I have omitted the editorial emendation of ὄντε 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’ ἓν καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ ζῷῳ 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:

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].

cf. tractate II, ὁ οὖν θεὸς <τὸ> ἀγαθόν, καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὁ θεός. ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα προσηγορία ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ πατρός, πάλιν διὰ τὸ ποιητικὸν πάντων. πατρὸς 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᾽ ἀλγηδόνων καὶ ὀδυνῶν γίγνεται αὐτοῖς ἡ ὀφελία καὶ ἐνθάδε καὶ ἐν Ἅιδου) 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 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'.

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

ἀδύνατον οὖν τὸ ἄγαθὸν 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 αὐτὸ 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" (πλήρωμα), 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 ἔξοχαι. 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 εἴδωλον 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 εἴδωλον 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 εἴδωλον 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 ἀγαθὸν 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 Ἰωσὴφ λέγων· ἐγερθεὶς παράλαβε τὸ παιδίον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ φεῦγε εἰς Αἴγυπτον καὶ ἴσθι ἐκεῖ ἕως ἂν εἴπω σοι· μέλλει γὰρ Ἡρῴδης ζητεῖν τὸ παιδίον τοῦ ἀπολέσαι αὐτό.

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

As with ὅσίοις, 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'.

***

Appendix

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 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, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ὁ θεός; εἰ γάρ τι ἐστιν ὁ μὴ ποιεῖ, ὁ μὴ θέμις εἰπεῖν, ἀτελής ἔστιν· εἰ δὲ μὴτε ἁργὸς ἔστι, 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 ἀναγνώρισας 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 ἀρρενόθηλυς, 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.


[3] cf. τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φῶτων (Epistle of James, I, 17), "the father of phaos". In respect of phaos, qv. Poemandres 4-6; tractate III, 1 (φῶς ἅγιον), and tractate XI, 7.
Ὅτι οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων ἀπόλλυται 
ἀλλὰ τὰς μεταβολὰς ἀπωλείας καὶ θανάτους πλανώμενοι λέγουσιν

That no beings are lost,
despite mortals mistakenly claiming that such transformations are death and a loss.

Tractate VIII

***

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 (ἐικὼν) 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.

***

**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.

***

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 σύμφων τὰ σώματα μίαν τάξιν ἔχει in section 4 and τοῦ δὲ ἐννοιαν λαμβάνει ὡς ἀσωμάτου καὶ νοῦ 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: ἀεὶ ἄντος καὶ
πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἐνὸς μόνου, τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, σύχ ἁπτόν, σύχ ὁρατόν, σύχ μετρητόν, σύχ διαστατόν, σύχ ἀλλῳ τυι σώματι ὁμοιον.

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:

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 ζῶον. 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 ὀργὰς ἐδιδάξατο.
καὶ δυσαύλων πάγων ὑπαίθρεια καὶ δύσομβρα φεύγειν βέλη παντοπόρος,
(Antigone, 355f).

2.


eikon. εἰκὼν, qv. Poemandres 21 and 31, and tractate XI:15. Thus the suggestion is that is 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".

3.

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 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."

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."

**substance.** ὑλή, qv. Poemandres 19, tractate III:1, tractate XI:3.

**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 Bibliothēkē 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 ηὐ 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 (ὑλή) 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.

_emptathy_. 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.
Speake softly. εὐφήμησον. qv tractate XI:22.

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

---

From Perceiverance To Hermes

Tractate XI

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'.
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.

[5] 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.

[6] 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.

[7] 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.

[8] 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 [Νοûς], 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 αἰώνα πύθωμαι, Book 1, 32.5). In Aristotle, αἰών has specific meanings which the English term 'eternity' does not describe. For instance, in Περὶ Ουρανοῦ where he writes: Ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὔτε γέγονεν ὁ πᾶς οὐρανὸς οὔτ'; ἐνδέχεται φθαρῆναι, καθάπερ τινές φασιν αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ἐστιν εἰς καὶ αἰώνιος, ἀρχὴν μὲν καὶ τελευτὴν οὐκ ἔχων τοῦ παντὸς αἰῶνος, ἔχων δὲ καὶ περιέχων ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν ἄπειρον 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 οὔποτε καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος υπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος).

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 αἰῶνος 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 ὅσπερ οὐσία ἐστὶ... 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 δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων ἢ πρώτῃ φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστὶν οὐσία ἢ τῶν ἐχόντων ἀρχὴν κινήσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ἢ αὐτά: ἢ γάρ ὅλη τῷ ταύτῃ δεκτικῇ εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις. καὶ ἢ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύσεων ὑπόκυντων αὐτῇ ἐστὶν, ἐνυπάρχουσα πως ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐντελεχείᾳ. [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 ἡμῶν 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 ὑπό τοῦ αἰώνο. καὶ ἀεὶ γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰώνο.

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, Ψυχὴ, 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 ζῶον) 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: εἰτε
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 ὁ αἰών above.


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 ὄνομα κενόν 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.

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 hiérache 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 ΑEther, the pneuma, 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 νεῖκος, qv. the mention of Empedocles by Isocrates (Antidosis, 15.268) - Ἐμπεδοκλῆς δὲ τέτταρα, καὶ νεῖκος καὶ φιλίαν ἐν αὐτοῖς - and fragments such as 31, B35 and 31, B115 (Diels-Kranz: Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker) with νεῖκος implying 'disagreement' and φιλότης something akin to 'fellowship'.

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

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 τὴν 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.

deathless, deathful. qv. Poemandres 14: θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον. 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: ὕστερον γὰρ καὶ ἅμα 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 ἄλόγου.

presence life. ἐμψυχος. 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 ἀθάνατων 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. ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο [...] ζωή, τούτο δὲ ἐστι τὸ καλὸν, τούτο δὲ ἐστι τὸ ἄγαθον, τούτο 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. ἐνωσις. 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. εἰκὼν. Another mystical term requiring contextual interpretation, cf. Poemandres 31, regarding which I wrote in my commentary: "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."

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: οἶον περὶ τῶν τῆς σελήνης παθημάτων καὶ τῶν περὶ τῶν ἥλιου καὶ ἀστρα καὶ περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς 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.

d poly morphous. παντόμορφος. 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.

d incorporeal kind. In respect of ἀσώματος, cf. the comment about Socrates and Plato in Placita Philosophorum by Pseudo-Plutarch: τὸν θεὸν τὴν ὕλην τὴν ἰδέαν. ὁ δὲ θεὸς νοῦς ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου, ὕλη δὲ τὸ ὑποκείμενον πρῶτον γενέσει καὶ φθορά, ἰδέα δ᾽ ουσία 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. Ὠκεανός. That is, a sea beyond the Mediterranean, such as the Atlantic.

Aether. cf. Poemandres 17, ἐκ δὲ αἰθέρος τὸ πνεῦμα ἐλαβὲ, 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 θείον, which is not altogether satisfactory. The MSS have εἰκών. 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 ἐυδαιμονία.

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

22.
speak softly. εὐφήμησον is a formulaic phrase (cf. Tractate XIII:8, ὦ τέκνου, καὶ εὐφήμησον καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐ καταπαύσει τὸ ἔλεος εἰς ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ) suggesting "speak softly" and with reverence.

Περὶ νοὸ κοινοῦ πρὸς Τάτ
To Thoth, Concerning Mutual Perceiveration

Tractate XII

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 Ἀγαθὸς 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 perceiveration 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].

***


[2] "Neque enim est quicquãm aliud praeter mundum quoi 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 Pathei-Mathos*, 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 Ἀγνωστὸς Θεός (the Unknown Theos) and/or to the Ἀγνωστὸς 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.


Translation

[1] Perceiveration, 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. Perceiveration is thus not separated from the quiddity of theos but rather expands forth, as does the light of the Sun, with this perceiveration, 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 perceiverance is their physis.

[2] Where psyche is, there also is perceiveration just as where Life is there also is psyche. But in living beings deprived of logos, psyche is Life empty of perceiverance while perceiveration 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 presenced 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 perceiveration 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 perceiveration 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 perceiveration 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 perceiveration 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 perceiveration; 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 perceiveration 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 perceiveration 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 conceivable things.
We have our being in potentiality, in activity, in Aion, whose perceiverever is noble as is his psyche, and with this as it is, there is nothing separable among what is conceptible. Thus perceiverever, 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 perceiverever - 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 perceivereverance 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 perceivereverance co-operates with the cravings and if the cravings of those deprived of logos are somatic then is not perceivereverance 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 perceivereverance, 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: perceivereveration 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.
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 perceiveration in psyche, of logos in perceiveration, of perceiveration in the theos, and of the theos as the father of those.

For logos is eikon of perceiveration, perceiveration 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, perceiveration. Of perceiveration, theos, with theos encompassing all things and within all things; with perceiveration 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 changement of one corpus to another they always retain the imputrescence of ipseity.

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.

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, Perceiveration, are all deathless, with every living being some combination of them.

[19] Because of perceiveration 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 influencive, 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.

***
Commentary

Title.

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

1. perceiveration. As with my other translations of Corpus Hermeticum texts I translate νοûς 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':

ορᾶς τούτων ώς ἐριστικῶν λόγων κατάγεις ώς οὐκ ἀρα ἔστιν ζητεῖν ἄνθρώπῳ οὔτε ὃ οἶδε οὔτε ὃ μὴ οἶδε; οὔτε γὰρ ἃν ὃ γε οἶδεν ζητοῖ οἶδεν γάρ καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖ τῷ γε τοιούτω ζητήσεως οὔτε ὃ μὴ οἶδεν οὐδὲ γάρ 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 ποιούμενον ὁ ποιητὴς τῆς ἰδίας προτάσεως τῆς ὅτι πάντα φέρει τὰ δεινὰ ἢ ἀνθρωπότης, ἐπιφέρει ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸι οἱ μακάριοι καὶ ὀλβίοι δόξαντες ἀνθρώπων οὐκ ἄμοιροι συμφορῶν καὶ παθῶν γεγόνασιν· ἐξ ἕνος δὲ τοῦ Τάνταλου καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους παραδηλοῖ. τὸν Τάνταλου 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 Græcae*, 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 θυητοὶ, θυητοὶ ἀθάνατοι, ζωτές τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεώτες. (Fragment 62, Diels-Krantz)

The deathless are deathful, the deathful deathless, with one living the other's dying with the other's 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 πατήρ θεός. οὐ γὰρ διίστανται ἀπ' ἀλλήλων· ἐνωσὶς γὰρ τοῦτων ἔστιν ἡ ζωή

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

perceiverness 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 Perceiverness 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 ζωή ἐστι κενὴ τοῦ νοῦ, [in living beings deprived of logos] psyche is Life empty of perceiverness - and the preceding ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἀλόγοις ζώιοις ὁ νοῦς ἡ φύσις ἐστίν, which states that "in living beings deprived of logos perceiverness is their physis." The sense of the Greek therefore seems to suggest that the perceiverness of living beings deprived of logos is a vacuous, empty, one: they perceive but it does not benefit them in the same manner as perceiverness benefits mortals because there is no understanding of, no rational apprehension of, what is perceived.

mixtion. σύνθετος. Mixtion is more appropriate here in such a metaphysical text than either 'composite' or 'compound', meaning as mixtion 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, choler (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, qv. 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 νοῶς, "and were immersive with perceiveration."

3.

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

ότω δὲ καὶ δεῖ φαρμάκων παιωνίων,  
ητοί 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:

Οὐκοὖν καὶ περὶ ὧν ὁ λόγος, ἡ μὲν ἀθεότης κρίσις οὖσα φαύλη τοῦ  
mηδὲν εἶναι μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον εἰς ἀπάθειάν τινα δοκεῖ τῇ  
ἀπιστίᾳ τοῦ θείου 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 perceiveration 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."
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 ύπάρχειν 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 χρησμοίσιν ἱκνεῖθ’ ὥστε πρὸς παίδων θανεῖν."

*Oedipus at Colonus*, 969-970

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

νυξ δ᾽ ἐτεκεν στυγερόν τε Μόρον καὶ Κῆρα μέλαιναν καὶ Θάνατον, τέκε δ᾽ Ὕπνον, ἔτικτε δὲ φῦλον Ὀνείρων (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 εἱμαρτός 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 εἱμαρτὸς ἥκει 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 ἀλλ᾽ οὐ μοιχεῦσαι (not unfaithful in the matter of [sexual] intercourse). Similarly in Aristophanes:

ό δ᾽ ἁλούς 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 Answere: "wedlokke [...] whyche god hym selfe bothe blessed and commaundd in paradyse and whyche holy scrypture commendeth where it sayth that wedlokke is honorable where the bedde is vndefyled wyth auowtry." (ccliii)

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

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:

εὔδοξος μὲν οὖν τὴν ἥδονην τάγαθον ὠμετ᾽ εἶναι διὰ τὸ πάνθ᾽ ὁρὰν ἐφιέμενα αὐτῆς καὶ ἔλλογα καὶ ἄλογα (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, 1. 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 ψημί τάνθρος οὗ ζητεῖς κυρεῖν (Oedipus Tyrannus, 362)

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

κάνταδθ᾽ Άπόλλων οὔτ᾽ ἐκείνου ἢνωσεν
φονέα γενέσθαι πατρὸς οὔτε Λάιον
τὸ δεινὸν οὕφοβεῖτο 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 perceiveration" - 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.
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 Ιερός 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 διφυή 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. θείους 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 pneumal logos, the phaomal 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: ἐτεῆ δὲ ἄτομα καὶ κενὸν. See also Sextus Empiricus: οἱ γὰρ ἀτόμους εἰπόντες ἢ ὁμοιομερείας ἢ ὁγκοὺς ἢ κοινῶς νοητὰ σώματα πάντων τῶν ὄντων κατώρθωσαν πὴ δὲ διέπεσον (Adversus Mathematicos, X, 252).

We have our being in potentiality, in activity, in Aion. Ζωμὲν 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 ἄδικα γενόμενος υπὸ 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 ὡν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς... Perceiveration, as Life and phaos, father of all...

9.  

Numinous. θείος. 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 θείος 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 perceiveration, 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 ἐχαρίσατο τόν τε νοῦν καὶ τὸν λόγον, σότιμα τῇ ἀθανασίαι.

in alliance with the somatic. Reading συγχρηματίζων 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 δρᾶται ἐν τῷ νοεῖν, ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῷ ποιεῖν

nothing is unperceivable, not even the incorporeal, with perceiveration evident through apprehension, theos through creation.
somatic. παθητά. The sense is of being affected by, or subject to, what is somatic. As what follows - καὶ κυρίως αὐτά ἐστι 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 πλῆρη 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.

perceiveration and logos. Omitting - with Patrizi - the following τὸν δὲ προφορικόν λόγον ἔχει as a gloss.

deathlessness. In respect of this unusual English word, qv. 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 alway."

denotata, denotatum. προσηγορία here implies more than 'name'. That is, a terminology; a specialized vocabulary, in this case one related to metaphysics (qv. πλανώμενος τὴν προσηγορία 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 ζώια λόγωι οὐ χρᾷται. 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 χρῄζει.
Χορός:
oίδα.

Οἰδίπους:
φράζε δὴ τί φής.

Χορός:
tὸν ἐναγῆ φίλον μὴποτ’ ἐν αἰτίᾳ σὺν ἀφανεί 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,
φανερώτατον· καὶ γὰρ μία ψυχή καὶ μία ζωή καὶ μία ὕλη. τίς δὲ
όντος; τίς δὲ ἄν ἄλλος εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός; τίνι γὰρ ἄλλωι ἄν καὶ πρέποι
ζωὴν ἐμψυχα ποιεῖν, εἰ μὴ μόνωι τῷ θεῷ; εἰς οὖν θεός καὶ τὸν μὲν
κόσμον ὁμολόγησας ἀεὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἕνα καὶ τὴν σελήνην μίαν
καὶ θειότητα μίαν, αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν θεόν 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-presenced 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. εἰκών, 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 perceiervation as εἰκών 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 αἰών, εἴτε δι’ ἀνάγκην εἴτε πρόνοιαν εἴτε φύσιν καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο οἴεται ἢ οἰήσεται τίς

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

εἰ γὰρ τῶν ἑνάδων διττὸς ὁ ἀριθμὸς, ὡς δέδεικται πρότερον, καὶ αἱ τάγαθοι συγγενής καὶ ὁμοφυής ὁ θεῖος ἀριθμός, ἑνάδες εἰσὶν αὐτοτελεῖς οἱ θεοὶ. (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 ψυχήν ὅτι μηδὲν ζῶον ἐξ ἁπλοῦ σώματος ἀλλὰ κατά τινας λóγους 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 οὖσα οὖν ἀρχή πάντα ἀριθμῶν ἐμπεριέχει, ὑπὸ μηθενός ἐμπεριεχομένη, καὶ πάντα ἀριθμῶν γεννᾶι ὑπὸ μηθενός γεννωμένη ἐτέρου 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. ἑνάδες. A transliteration in common use since the concept of the ἑνάς - the Unity, often equated with μονὰς - is metaphysical and has various interpretations in Plato, Iamblichus, Proclus, and others.

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 η 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 ἱερὸν - with Artemis mentioned again in v.28, Μεγάλη ἡ Ἀρτέμις 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.

nurterer. 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.


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 [...] perceiveration.* 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 αἰών in tractate XI: 3,

    πηγὴ μὲν οὖν πάντων ὁ θεός, οὐσία δὲ ὁ αἰών, ὑλή δὲ ὁ κόσμος, 
    δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰών, ἔργον δὲ τοῦ αἰώνος ὁ κόσμος, γενόμενος 
    σῶματε, καὶ ἀεὶ γυνόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰώνος· διὸ οὐδὲ φθαρήσεται ποτε 
    αἰών γὰρ ὄφηρος ὀσῦ ἀπολεῖται τι τῶν ἐν τῶι κόσμωι, τοῦ κόσμου ὑπὸ 
    τοῦ αἰώνος 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. ἐνέργειαι. 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 actiosity derives from the classical Latin actuusus, with the adjective actuose occurring in a 1677 book by Theophilus Gale: "Ἐνέργεια, 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 actiosity..."

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.
When, father, you in the Exoterica conversed about divinity your language was enigmatic and obscure. There was, from you, no disclosure; instead, you said no one can be rescued before the Palingenesis. Now, following our discussion as we were passing over the mountain I became your supplicant, inquiring into learning the discourse on Palingenesis since that, out of all of them, is the only one unknown to me, with you saying it would be imparted to me when I became separated from the world.

Thus I prepared myself, distancing my ethos from the treachery in the world. Therefore - by explaining it either aloud or in secret - rectify my insufficiencies since you said you would impart Palingenesis to me.

Trismegistus, I am unknowing of what source a mortal is begotten and from what sown.

My son, noetic sapientia is in silence, with the sowing the genuinely noble. Father, that is completely impenetrable. So, of whom dispersed?

Of, my son, the desire of theos.

Father, of what kind then the begotten? For I do not share in such a quidditas and such a perceivération.

Those begotten of theos are other than theos: young but entirely whole, mixion of all abilities.

Father, you speak enigmatically to me, not in the language of a teacher to a pupil.
My son, this emanation is not taught; rather, it is presenced by and when the theos desires.

[3] Father, while you speak of what is impractical and forced, I on my part seek what is straightforward. Was I produced as a foreign son of the paternal emanation? Do not repine me, father: I am a rightful son. Relate - plainly - the way of palingenesis.

My son, what is there to say? All that can be told is this: I saw an unshaped vista, brought-into-being through the generosity of theos, of me setting forth to a deathless body, and now I am not that before because engendered by perceiveration.

This matter is not taught: not through that shaped part through which is seeing. Thus and for me there is no concern for the initial mixturous form. It is not as if I am biochrome and have tactility and definity: I am a stranger to them. You, my son, now observe me with your eyes and directly see my physicality and perceptible form. And yet, my son, I am now not understandable with those eyes.

[4] Father, you have stung the heart, causing no minor distraction, for I cannot now perceive myself.

Would that you, my son, would - while not asleep - go beyond yourself as those who sleepfully dream.

Inform me also of this: who is the essentiator of the Palingenesis?

Through the desire of theos: The Mortal One, child of theos.

[5] Father, what you have now presented has silenced me, with a forsaking of what was previously in my heart <...> since I perceive that your stature and your likeness are still the same.

In that you have been deceived, for the form of the deathful alters every day: changed by the seasons, it grows then withers and so deceives.

[6] What then - Trismegistus - is the actuality?

My son: the imperturbable, the indistinguishable, the un-complexioned, the figureless, the steadfast, the unadorned, the revealed, the self-perceiving, the unwaveringly noble, the unmaterial.

Father, I am completely confused. Just when I considered you were engendering learning in me, the perceptibility of my apprehension was obstructed.

Thus it is, my son. It ascends, as Fire does, and descends, as Earth does, and
flows, as Water does, and is neumæos as is Air. But how can you apprehend through perception what is insubstantial, what is not flowing, what is unmixturous, what is undissolved; that which is only apprehensible through influence and actuosity, requiring someone able to apprehend that bringing-into-being within theos?

[7] Father, am I then deficient?

Not so, my son. Go within: and an arriving. Intend: and an engendering. Let physical perceptibility rest, and divinity will be brought-into-being. Refine yourself, away from the brutish Alastoras of Materies.

Alastoras are within me, then, father?

Not just a few, my son, but many and terrifying.

I do not apprehend them, father.

My son, one Vengeress is Unknowing; the second, Grief. The third, Unrestraint; the fourth, Lascivity. The fifth, Unfairness; the sixth, Coveter. The seventh, Deceit; the eighth, Envy. The ninth, Treachery; the tenth, Wroth. The eleventh, Temerity; the twelfth, Putridity.

In number, these are twelve but below them are numerous others who, my son, compel the inner mortal - bodily incarcerated - to suffer because of perceptibility. But they absent themselves - although not all at once - from those to whom theos is generous, which is what the Way and Logos of Palingenesis consists of.

[8] Henceforward, speak quietly, my son, and keep this secret. For thus may the generosity of theos toward us continue.

Henceforward, my son, be pleased, having refinement through the cræfts of theos to thus comprehend the Logos.

My son, to us: arrivance of Knowledge of Theos. On arrival: Unknowing is banished. My son, to us: arrivance of Knowledge of Delightfulness: on arriving, Grief runs away to those who have the room.


The fourth invoked is Perseverance who is influxious against Lascivity. Which Grade, my son, is the foundation of Ancestral Custom: observe how without any deliberation Unfairness was cast out. My son, we are vindicated since Unfairness has departed.
The sixth influence invoked for us - against Coveter - is community. With that departed, the next invocation: Actualis, and thus - with Actualis presenced - does Deceit run away. Observe, my son, how with Actualis presenced and Envy absent, the noble has been returned. For, following Actualis, there is the noble, together with Life and Phaos.

No more does the retribution of Skotos supervene, for, vanquished, they whirlingly rush away.

[10] Thus, my son, you know the Way of Palingenesis. By the Dekad brought-into-being, geniture of apprehension was produced, banishing those twelve; and by this geniture we are of theos.

Thus whosoever because of that generosity obtains divine geniture, having gone beyond physical perceptibility, discovers that they consist of such, and are pleased.

[11] With a quietude, father, engendered by theos, the seeing is not of the sight from the eyes but that through the noetic actuosity of the cræft. I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water; in Air. I am in living beings, in plants; in the womb, before the womb, after the womb. Everywhere.

But speak to me about how the retributions of Skotos - which are twelve in number - are pushed aside by ten influences. What is that Way, Trismegistus?

[12] My son, this body which we have passed beyond is constituted from the circular Zodiac which is composed of beings, twelve in number and of the same physis, yet polymorphous in appearance so as to lead mortals astray. The difference between them, my son, becomes one when they act <...> Temerity united with Wroth, and indistinguishable.

It is probably correct to say that all of them withdraw when pushed away by those ten influences: that is, by the Dekad. For, my son, the Dekad is an effector of psyche, with Life and Phaos a unity there where the arithmos of the Henad is brought forth from the pneuma. Thus it is reasonable that the Henad contains the Dekad and the Dekad the Henad.


My son, this is the Palingenesis: to no more present the body in three separations, through this disclosure regarding Palingenesis, which I have written about for you alone so as not to be rouners of all these things to the many but instead to whosoever theos himself desires.

[14] Inform me, father, if this body - constituted of such cræfts - is liable to dissipation.
Speak quietly and do not talk of deficiencies or you shall be in error with the eye of your perceiveration disrespectful. The perceptible body of physis is far away from the quidditas of geniture, for one is dissipative, the other is not-dissipative; one is deathful, the other deathless.

Do you not know that you are engendered of theos, as a child of The One, as am I?

[15] Father, my inclination is for the laudation of the song you said you heard from those influences when you reached the Ogdoad.

Just as, my son, Poemandres divined about the Ogdoad. It is noble of you to hasten to leave that dwelling for you are now refined. Poemandres, the perceiveration of authority, did not impart to me anything other than what is written, understanding that I would apprehended the entirety; hearing what I was inclined to, observing the entirety, and entrusting me to presence the beautiful. Thus do all those influences within me chant.

Father, I desire to hear them so that I might apprehend.

[16] Be quiet my son: now hear that most fitting laudation, the song of Palingenesis which I had chosen not to openly divulge except to you at your completion and which is not taught but concealed through silence.

Thus, my son, on your feet in a place open to the air look respectfully to the Southwind as Helios descends, as at the ascending and toward the Eastwind.

Be quiet my son.

Logos Δ. The Esoteric Song

[17] 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 perceiveration accept this fond celebration
From my Arts.

[18] 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 perceiverance.
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: actuosity of those my Arts.
My gratitude, theos: Artisan of my actuosities;
Through me, the Logos is sung for you.
Through me, may Kosmos accept
Such respectful wordful offerings as this.

[19] Such is what the Arts within me loudly call out. They sing of All That Exists;
they accomplish your desire. From you: deliberations; then to you, from All That Exists.

Accept from Kosmos - the Kosmos within us - respectful wordful offerings. Life, recure! Phaos, reveal! Theos, spiritus! For - Breath-Giver, Artisan - it is your Logos that Perceiveration guides.

[20] You are theos. Your mortal loudly calls out: through Fire, through Air,
through Earth, through Water, through Pneuma, through your created beings.

To me, from your Aion, a laudation. And, through your deliberations, I discovered the repose that I seek. Because of your desire, I perceived.
[21] Father, I also have assigned the laudation you spoke of to my Kosmos.

My son, speak of "in the apprehended."

In the apprehended I am able to do, father. For me, through your song and your laudation, a more numinal perceiveration. And yet, there is a desire for me to convey from my own heart a laudation to theos.

My son, do not be incautious.

Father, what I behold in the perceiverance, I say. It is to theos, to you - essentiatior of engenderment - that I, Thoth, convey wordful offerings. Theos, you the Father; you the Kyrios, you the Perceiveration, accept the respectful wordful offerings you desire. For, by your deliberations, all is accomplished.

My son, you convey an agreeable offering to theos, father of all. But you should add "through the Logos."

[22] My thanks to you, father, for your advice regarding the invokation.

My son, I am glad that the actuality has borne good fruit, the unrottable produce. Having learned of this from me, profess silence my son about this wonder, revealing to no one the tradition of the Palingenesias, for otherwise we will be regarded as rouners. Each of us has had a sufficiency of interest: I in speaking, you in listening. Through noesis you have obtained knowledge about yourself and our father

***

**Commentary**

**Title.**

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.

*Thoth.* As in other tractates I translate Τάτ by Thoth, avoiding the conventional *Tat* which, in English, has a colloquial meaning inappropriate here. As to which 'Thoth' is meant, the consensus is that in this and some other tractates it refers to the son (possibly biologically or more probably metaphorically) of Hermes
Trismegistus who himself was named by the Greeks as Thoth, with the Τάτ of some other tractates being a scribal corruption of the name Thoth.

*Esoteric Discourse.* λόγος απόκρυφος. While 'esoteric' is an apt translation in regard to απόκρυφος, 'discourse' is not entirely satisfactory in respect of λόγος since it could be here interpreted to mean 'disclosure' or 'explanation'. However, given what follows in section 1 - πυθομένου τὸν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας λόγον μαθεῖν...παραδιδόναι μοι - 'discourse' seems appropriate.

*Palingenesis.* Rather than ascribe a particular meaning to παλιγγενεσία - such as 'rebirth' or 'regeneration' - I have chosen the English word palingenesis (from the Latin palingenesia) with that term explained by what follows in this particular discourse, qv. vv. 12 and 13.

*Requirement.* The sense of ἐπαγγελία here, given what is discussed in this tractate, is 'requirement' rather than the strident 'command' or what is implied by the rather vague word 'promise'.

1.

*Father.* The Greek ὦ πάτερ - literally 'my father' - is a polite form of address, akin to the English 'sir'. Similarly, ὦ τέκνον - 'my son' - is a polite reply. Given the esoteric nature of the text, a possible interpretation here of ὦ πάτερ would be 'Master', and of ὦ τέκνον 'my pupil'.

*in the Exoterica.* Ἐν τοῖς γενικοῖς. Since the term γενικῶν λόγων occurs in tractate X it is reasonable to assume that γενικός here refers to the same thing although the meaning of the term is moot given that no details are provided in this tractate nor in tractate X, nor in Stobaeus (Excerpts, III, 1 and VI, 1) where the terms also occurs. While most translators have assumed that it refers to 'generic' things or 'generalities' and thus (by adding λόγου) have opted for an expression such as 'General Discourses', and given that a transliteration - such as genikois or genikoi - is awkward, I have in respect of the γενικοὶ opted for exoterica (from the Latin via the Greek τὰ ἐξωτερικά) with the meaning of "exoteric treatises designed for or suitable to the generality of disciples or students," with the plausible suggestion thus being that there are exoteric Hermetic treatises and esoteric Hermetic treatises, with Reitzenstein describing these other treatises as διεξοδικοὶ λόγοι (R.A. Reitzenstein. *Poimandres.* Teubner, Leipzig. 1904. p.118) a distinction he also mentioned in his later work *Die Hellenistischen Mysterien Religionen.*

*passing over the mountain.* I follow the MSS and read μεταβάσεως rather than the emendation καταβάσεως, taking the sense of μεταβάσεως here as "passing over" - walking on and over - the mountain. There seems no need for the emendation - which implies a descent from the mountain - with its possible suggestion of something more symbolic, more religious or mystical, having
occurred, as for example might be implied in the Gospel of John with the juxtaposition of κατέβη and ἀνέβη in chapter one vv.12-13, with Thomas Aquinas writing:

"Sed non vacat a mysterio, quod in Capharnaum descendit, et postmodum Ierosolymam ascendit. Nisi enim descendisset primum, non competisset ei ascendere: quia, ut dicitur Eph. IV, 10, qui descendit, ipse est et qui ascendit." Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura, Caput II, Lectio 1

That he descended to Capernaum and then ascended to Jerusalem is not without its mystery since if he did not first descend he would not have been able to then ascend, for as has been related (Eph. IV, 10) "The one who descended is the same as the one who ascended."

the discourse on palingenesis. The Greek word translated here as 'discourse' is λόγος, as in the title.

imparted to me. παραδίδωμι carries the sense here of 'handing down' - of transmitting, disclosing - some ancestral teaching or wisdom; a disclosing from master to pupil.

separated from the world. In respect of ἀπαλλοτριόω what is implied is not 'alienated' from (which has too many modern connotations) the world (κόσμος), but rather 'separate' - distanced - from the world, from worldly things, as a mystic is often 'otherworldly' and may seem to be - to others, and to themselves - a stranger in the world.

distancing my ethos. Reading ἀπηλλοτρίωσα (with Parthey, et al) not the emendation of Nock (ἀπηνδρείωσα) with φρόνημα here suggestive of one's character and especially of one's "way of thinking", one's weltanschauung: that is, the 'spirit' or ethos which guides one's way of life.

treachery. ἀπάτης. Personified in Hesiod's Theogony as a child of Night (Νύξ) along with "darksome Kir and Death" - Κῆρα μέλαιναν καὶ Θάνατον - and Nemesis, Νέμεσις.

rectify my insufficiencies. τὰ ὑστερήματα ἀναπλήρωσον. An alternative, literal, translation would be "supply what is needed."

since you said you would impart Palingenesis to me. Given the somewhat unusual phrasing here - οἷς ἔφης μοι παλιγγενεσίας παραδοῦναι, which led Nock to add γένεσιν after παλιγγενεσίας - it seems that παλιγγενεσίας is the title given to a particular doctrine or esoteric theory rather than just a term such as 'rebirth'. Hence my capitalization.

what source ... what sown. The metaphysical context - and the reply - suggests that both μήτρας and σπορᾶς are meant metaphorically rather than literally
mortal. As in other tractates I translate ἄνθρωπος as 'mortal' rather than as 'man'. Which here - as in other tractates - suits both the Hellenic context, of mortals contrasted with the immortal theos and the immortal theoi, and the metaphysical context of immortality being possibly attainable by select mortals.

2.

noetic sapientia. For a variety of reasons, I have used the term noetic sapientia to denote σοφία νοερὰ.

i) The metaphysical terms νοῦς νοερός, νοῦς οὐσιώδης, and νοῦς ζωτικός occur in Proclus, qv. Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii, Volume 5, Book 4, 245-247; Procli in Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria, II 733 and IV 887. Interestingly, Proclus associates νοερός with the three 'septenary planets' Mercury, Venus, and the Sun.

Here, σοφία νοερὰ may well suggest a particular hermetic principle which requires contextual interpretation.

ii) As noted in my commentary on Poemandres 29 - where I used the Latin sapientia in respect of σοφία - in some contexts the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical (or esoteric) context given what the English term 'wisdom' now, in common usage and otherwise, often denotes. As in the Poemandres tractate sapientia (for σοφία) requires contextual - a philosophical - interpretation, as Sophia (for σοφία) does in tractate XI where it is there suggestive, as with Aion, Kronos, and Kosmos, of a personified metaphysical principle.

iii) In respect of νοερός, the English word 'intellectual' has too many irrelevant modern connotations, with phrases such as 'intellectual wisdom' and 'the wisdom that understands' - for σοφία νοερὰ - unhelpful regarding suggesting a relevant philosophical meaning. Hence the use of the term 'noetic' which suggests a particular type of apprehension - a perceiveration - whereby certain knowledge and a particular understanding can be ascertained.

Thus, noetic sapientia implies that the knowledge and understanding that is noetically acquired transcends - or at least is different from - that acquired both (a) through observation of and deductions concerning phenomena and (b) through the use of denotatum whereby beings are given 'names' and assigned to abstractive categories with such naming and such categories assumed to provide knowledge and understanding of the physis of those beings. [In respect of physis, qv. the comment on φύσεως μιᾶς in section 12.]

In addition, given what follows - ἐν σιγῇ, 'in silence' - such knowledge and understanding does not require nor depend upon words whether they be spoken
or written or thought. Hence, the 'source' of mortals is in, can be known and understood through, the silence of noetic sapientia.

*genuine*. In respect of ἀληθινός as 'genuine', cf. Poemandres 30, ἀληθινῆ ὀρασία.

*noble*. Regarding ἀγαθός as 'noble/nobility/honour', qv. my commentary on Poemandres 22 and my essays Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum and Cicero On Summum Bonum.

*of whom dispersed*. To express the meaning of the Greek, to avoid gender bias and because of the following παῖς, I have here used the plural rather than the singular, those avoiding expressions such as "I do not share/he does not share" and "he that is begotten of theos." This also has the advantage of avoiding a misapprehension such as "the begotten one will be different, a god, a son of god."

*the desire of theos*. In respect of θέλημα here, qv. v.18, συνάσατε τῷ θελήματί μου πᾶσαι αἱ ἐν ἐμοὶ δυνάμεις.

*quidditas*. οὐσία. As at tractates XI:2 and VI:1, quidditas is a more appropriate translation of οὐσία rather than either 'essence' or 'substance'. Quidditas is post-classical Latin, from whence the English word quiddity, and here as in those tractates should be understood as a philosophical term requiring contextual interpretation. One possible interpretation of quidditas here as at VI:1 is 'the being of that being/entity', with such quidditas often presenced in - and perceived via or as - φύσις (physis).

*such a perceivereation*. I have followed the MSS and translated καὶ τῆς νοητῆς, omitted by Nock et al. In respect of νοητῆς, cf. Plutarch on the views of Krantor of Soli regarding psyche: μιγνύντι τὴν ψυχὴν ἔκ τε τῆς νοητῆς καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ αἰσθητὰ δοξαστῆς φύσεως (De Animae Procreatione in Timaeo, 1).

In respect of νοῦς as perceivereation/perceiverance, qv. my commentary on the Poemandres tractate.

*entirely whole*. τὸ πᾶν ἐν παντί. A literal translation - "the all in all" - does not in its blandness (and the fact that "all in all" is a colloquialism) convey the meaning of the Greek, which considering what follows is suggestive of "entirely whole."

*mixion of all abilities*. ἐκ πασῶν δυνάμεων συνεστώς. Mixion - a variant spelling of mixtion, meaning melded, compounded, combined, composed of - is most suitable for συνεστώς given the metaphysical matters discussed.

*a teacher to a pupil*. ὦ τέκνον and ὦ πάτερ not here literally referring to how a father should converse with his son but rather to a teacher instructing a pupil,
with the pupil expecting the teacher to explain matters clearly rather than by means of riddles.

**emanation.** I incline toward the view that γένος (which is literally, 'kind', species, race, folk, breed) is used here as a technical term which - given what follows, ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναμιμνήσκεται, and the fact that it is not feasible for one mortal to impart knowledge about it to another mortal - here implies a particular 'emanation' of theos; a knowing of which one has to, as Hermes goes on to describe, experience for it to be properly understood. Such 'emanations of theos' are described in the Poemandres tractate where they are symbolized by a septenary system and the two "immortal" (acausal) realms which await for mortals beyond those seven spheres, with knowledge of these emanations being acquired by the ἄνοδος (anados, the upward journey) from the deathful realms to the realms of the deathless.

The term emanation also has the advantage of connotating the literal meaning of γένος since an 'emanation' is derived from a particular kind, breed, or lineage.

**presenced.** The term 'presenced' is from the noun 'presencing' (derived from the Latin praesentia) and means "the action or process of making something manifest and/or present and/or established."

ἀναμιμνήσκω is a very interesting word to use and one which has a variety of meanings depending on context, and thus does not always impute something to do with either 'mind' or with 'memory' as those English terms are now often understood with their implications of those 'things' having some sort of an existence 'somewhere' - in the case of 'memory' as a faculty of the 'mind' - and/or as quantifiable 'things'.

In the world of ancient heroes and warriors, as evoked by Homer, it is simply a 'mentioning' of something:

ὤ φίλ᾽, ἐπεὶ δὴ ταῦτα μ᾽ ἀνέμνησας καὶ ἔειπες, 
φασὶ μνηστήρας σῆς μητέρος εἵνεκα πολλοὺς ἐν μεγάροις ἀέκητι σέθεν κακὰ μηχανάασθαι

My friend - since you have, in speaking to me, mentioned this, There are indeed rumours of many suitors for your mother being in your home Against your will who are plotting to do you harm.

(Homer, The Odyssey, Book III, 321-323)

In Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles it implies a 'seeing again' of things past:

ἀλλ᾽ ἐγὼ σαφῶς ἄγνωτ᾽ ἀναμιμνήσω νυν. ἐὗ γὰρ οἶδ᾽ ὅτι κάτοικεν, ἡμος τῷ Κιθαίρωνος τόπῳ,
ὁ μὲν διπλοῖσι ποιμνίοις, ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἑνί,
ἐπλησίαζον τῷδε τὰνδρὶ τρεῖς ὅλους
ἐξ ἦρος εἰς ἀρκτοῦρον ἑκμήνους χρόνους

But I shall bring light
Upon those things which are now unknown. For well do I know
That he will see again that region of Cithaeron when he
With a double flock and I with one
Were neighbours and comrades for three entire six month
Durations from Spring to Arcturus.

(1131-1137)

In this tractate, the implication of ἀναμιμνήσκω is of theos - literally, given the
definite article, τοῦ θεοῦ, theos - presencing in the mortal (and thus gifting
them with) the required understanding/knowledge of the emanation, just as
theos has gifted mortals with sentience, cf. θεοῦ δωρεᾶς in IV:5, ἐλλόγιμος in
tractate XI:7 and Asclepius 16, "Prouisum cautumque est, quantum
rationabiliter potuisset a summo deo, tunc cum sensu, disciplina, intellegentia
mentes hominum est munere dignatus. Hisce enim rebus, quibus ceteris
antestamus animalibus."

3.

unshaped. ἄπλαστον. A privation of πλάσσω, hence 'without invention,
pretence, form; not manufactured, unadorned, unfashioned, without shape.' Cf.
the irony of Lucian in De Morte Peregrini 10, πηλὸς γὰρ ἄπλαστος ἦν καὶ
οὐδέπω ἐντελὲς ἡμῖν δεδημιούργητο, for he was then formless clay with
that glorious depiction not yet complete.

What is unshaped (form-less) is the vista - the view - seen, with there being no
need, in my view, to impute that Hermes is here speaking of having had a
'vision', mystical, prophetic, or otherwise, given that a 'vision' is not by its
nature of what is 'form-less' but of some-thing or some-things perceived and
which therefore, being seen, have form or forms, qv. the mention of οὐδὲ τῷ
πλαστῷ τοῦτῳ στοιχείῳ and of εἴδος which follow.

through the generosity of theos. εξ ἔλεους θεοῦ. Literally, "from the generosity of
theos." Considering the metaphysical context, I incline toward the view that
ἔλεος here is neither mercy - qv. Oedipus Tyrannus 672, ἐποικίρω στόμα
ἐλευνόν σῶτος δ’ ἐνθ’ ἂν ἠ στυγήσεται - nor 'pity' (cf. Oedipus Tyrannus 180,
νηλέα δὲ γένεθλα πρὸς πέδω θαναταφόρα κεῖται ἀνοίκτως) but rather
'generosity' in the sense of Matthew 12:7, τι ἔστιν Ἐλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσίαν,
"I seek generosity and not sacrifice" with such 'generosity' (of deed and spirit)
not exactly the same as what the word 'compassion' now implies, given the
post-Hellenic and especially the contemporary connotations of the word
'compassion'.
setting forth ... engendered by perceiveration. καὶ ἐμαυτὸν ἐξελήλυθα εἰς ἀθάνατον σῶμα, καὶ εἰμὶ νῦν οὐχ ὁ πρίν, ἀλλ’ ἐγεννήθην ἐν νῷ. This passage is usually interpreted in a way which suggests that Hermes is describing some kind of ancient 'astral travel' where he goes "out of himself" and thence "into" a deathless body, ἀθάνατον σῶμα (in respect of θάνατος and ἀθάνατος as deathful and deathless, qv. my commentary on Poemandres 14 and on vv. 1 and 2 of tractate XI).

However, I take the passage more literally, especially given the phrase εἰμὶ νῦν οὐχ ὁ πρίν, "now I am not the/that before," and the mention of having been produced/engendered/grown by perceiveration. That is, Hermes has "seen" - intuitively perceived, had an insight into - what deathlessness means and implies and is not the person he was before, having acquired (or been given, by theos) the gift of understanding that perceiveration engenders, for as mentioned in tractate IV:4

βάπτισον σεαυτὴν ἡ δυναμένη εἰς τοῦτον τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ πιστεύουσα ὅτι ἀνελεύσηι πρὸς τὸν καταπέμψαντα τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ γνωρίζουσα ἐπὶ τί γέγονας. Ὅσοι μὲν οὖν συνήκαν τοῦ κηρύγματος καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός, οὗτοι μετέσχον τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τέλειοι ἐγένοντο ἄνθρωποι, τὸν νοῦν δεξάμενοι

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

shaped part. A direct contrast with the previous use of πλάσσω in respect of what was seen.

thus and for me there is no concern for the initial mixturous form. διὸ καὶ ἠμέληταί μοι τὸ πρῶτον σύνθετον εἶδος. What there is no concern for is the causal form (εἶδος) of the mortal body, mixturous and formful as it is (in respect of mixturous, qv. the note on mixion in v. 2) and given that such an initial form will, by palingenesis, be changed.

not as if. Reading οὐχ ὅτι with the MSS; literally, "not as though." Cf. John 6:46 οὐχ ὅτι τὸν πατέρα ἑώρακέν τις.

biochrome ... definity. I take κέχρωσμαι καὶ ἀφὴν ἔχω καὶ μέτρον, ἀλλότριος δὲ τούτων εἰμὶ metaphorically, not literally, with (i) κέχρωσμαι implying not colour per se but rather biochromy, the natural or the apparent (observed) colouration of living beings, and (ii) μέτρον suggestive not of "measure" but rather of 'definity' in reference to 'indefinity' (from the noun indefinitude) and thus implying, in this context, 'beyond being definable' by ordinary, causal, means
such as 'measure' and 'weight' and 'determinability' and 'definement'.

_and directly see my physicality and perceptible form._ While various emendations have been suggested for the readings of the MSS here, including δὲ εἰμὶ between ὅ τι δὲ and κατανοεῖς, the general meaning seems clear: to directly see or fix or to concentrate one's eyes, one's gaze on (ἀτενίζω) the outward form (εἶδος) which here is the body, the physical appearance, the physicality of the person.

But, as Hermes goes on to explain - οὐκ ὀφθαλμοῖς τούτοις θεωροῦμαι νῦν - what is so observed by the physical eyes does not provide an understanding - a perception, a seeing - of what he is now as a result of the "unshaped vista" that he, through the generosity of theos, saw of himself "setting forth to a deathless body." In respect of θεωρέω, cf. John 4:19, λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνὴ, Κύριε, θεωρῶ ὅτι προφήτης εἶ σύ, "the woman said to him: Sir, I deem you are a prophet."

4.

_Father, you have stung the heart, plunging me into no minor distraction, for I cannot now perceive myself._ Εἰς μανίαν με οὐκ ὀλίγην καὶ οἴστρησιν φρενῶν ἐνέσεισα, ὦ πάτερ· ἐμαυτὸν γὰρ νῦν οὐχ ὁρῶ.

My translation is quite different from previous ones - such as Copenhaver's "you have driven me quite mad, father, and you have deranged my heart. Now I do not see myself" - for the following reasons.

i) Does μανία, in the context of this particular tractate, equate to what the English terms 'mania' and 'madness' now denote, as for example - in the case of mania - in 'obsessive need or enthusiasm', 'mood disorder', and - in the case of madness - 'mental illness', psychosis, lack of restraint, uncontrollable fury, uncontrollable mental turmoil, or even in the colloquial sense of 'cool' or quirkily interesting?

It is my considered opinion that it does not, but rather denotes what is suggested by Acts 26:24-25 especially given the use there of μαίνομαι,

Ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀπολογουμένου ὁ Φῆστος μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ φησίν Μαίνῃ, Παῦλε· τὰ πολλά σε γράμματα εἰς μανίαν περιτρέπει. ὁ δὲ Παῦλος Οὐ μαίνομαι, φησίν, κράτιστε Φῆστε, ἀλλὰ ἀληθείας καὶ σωφροσύνης ρήματα ἀποφθέγγομαι.

Speaking up for himself, Festus, in a very loud voice, said: "Paul, you are distracted. Your extensive learning has brought you to distraction." But Paul replied: "Noble Festus, I am not beside myself for the words I have spoken are restrained and truthful."
ii) In respect of οἴστρησιν I am rather reminded of the usage of οἴστρημα in Oedipus Tyrannus, 1318,

οἴμοι μάλ᾽ αὖθις: οἷον εἰσέδυ μ᾽ ἄμα κέντρων τε τῶνδ᾽ οἴστρημα καὶ μνήμη κακῶν

as do the stings of those goads, and the recalling of those troubles, pierce me

where the transitive senses of goad include "to cause annoyance or discomfort; to spur someone on, or 'to sting' or to prod someone to provoke them into responding."

Thus, with φρήν taken as a metaphor for the heart, one has the contextually apposite stung the heart, rather than completely out of context phrases such as "mind frenzy" or "mad".

iii) ἐμαυτὸν γὰρ νῦν οὐχ ὁρῶ. Not a literal 'cannot see' but rather 'cannot comprehend who or what I - as a being - am," as a consequence of what Hermes has just said about his own being. Hence, I cannot now perceive myself.

go beyond. In respect of διεξελήλυθας, not here implying to "pass through", or "come out" (of yourself) but "go - or pass - beyond" (yourself) as those sleepfully dreaming often in their dreams travel far beyond where they are sleeping.

essentiator. The entity, person, or divinity, who essentiates; that is, who is the genesis of, who is the essence of, and who gives being to - who 'authors' and who fashions - the Palingenesis. Which 16th century English word expresses the meaning here of the Greek term γενεσιουργός. Cf. δημιουργός - 'artisan' - in Poemandres 24.

The Mortal One, child of theos. Ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ παῖς ἄνθρωπος εἷς, θελήματι θεοῦ. In respect of ἄνθρωπος εἷς, literally, Essentialist Mortal. That is, the primatial, or 'archetypal', human being. In respect of Ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ παῖς, cf. v. 2: τοῦ θελήματος τοῦ θεοῦ...ὁ γεννώμενος νος θεοῦ θεὸς παῖς, with paῖς not restricted to 'son' but implying the child - and hence the children, the youthful - of the theos, with the conventional translation here of 'son of god' imposing a particular meaning on the text and thus inviting as it may unwarranted comparisons with aspects of Christian theology.

5.

silenced. In regard to ἀφασίαν, qv. Euripides, Helen, 548-9,

ὡς δέμας δείξασα σὸν ἐκπληξίν ἡμῖν ἀφασίαν τε προστίθης

I am mortified, silenced, by you imposing such a bodily appearance upon me
in my heart <...> since I perceive. It is possible that Reitzenstein's assumption - in *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*. Teubner, Leipzig, 1927 - of a lacuna here is correct, although it is perhaps more probable to interpret what Thoth has just said - that he perceives the stature and the features of Hermes are still the same - accounts for him "forsaking what was previously in his heart," because he now believes that Hermes was speaking metaphorically in regard to being a stranger to "tactility and definitiness." Which is why, after the reply from Hermes, Thoth goes on to ask τί οὖν ἀληθεῖς ἐστιν (what, then, is the actuality) and then, after the reply from Hermes, says Μέμηνα ὀντως.

**the seasons.** As elsewhere, χρόνος is not some abstract 'time' but rather the duration or durations between certain observable events or changes, often measured by such things as the phases of the moon or by the appearance or disappearance of constellations or certain stars in the night sky. Here, it refers to the seasons of Nature and how, over the seasons, mortals - and crops - grow then wither.

6.

*What then - Trismegistus - is the actuality?* Τί οὖν ἀληθεῖς ἐστιν, ὦ Τρισμέγιστε. In respect of ἀλήθεια I have - as in translations of other Hermetic tractates, such as Poemandres 31 and XI:1 - eschewed the conventional translation of 'truth' (with its implication of some abstract, impersonal, and disputable, meaning) in favour of a contextual interpretation, mindful as I am of John 18:38 - τί ἐστιν ἀλήθεια, Quid est veritas? - which well expresses a Greco-Roman sentiment.

The English term is derived from the classical Latin *actualis* and, in this context, refers to what is real, what has actual being or is a demonstrable fact.

**the un-complexioned...the unmaterial.** There are two ways of construing what follows. As an impersonal list of philosophical attributes - such as formless, colourless - or metaphorically as personal qualities associated with or relevant to the quest for palingenesis, and while most translators have chosen the first option I incline toward the view that, given the personal context - of what Hermes has said, "directly see my physicality," and about how "the form of the deathful alters every day" - they signify personal qualities. These personal qualities, such as τὸ ἀσχημάτιστον and τὸ ἀσώματον are echoed in the *De Imaginibus Oratio* of Iohannes Damascenus (written c. 730 CE) when he enumerates the qualities of God.

Here, and for example,

i) **the un-complexioned.** τὸ ἀχρώματον, qv. ἄχροος, the opposite of εὐχροος, cf. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, Book VIII, 1.41 ὡς εὐχρωώτεροι ὁρῶντο ἕ τε φύκασιν. An alternative to 'un-complexioned' would be 'hueless'.


iii) the unadorned. τὸ γυμνόν. Not literally 'naked' or unclothed, but a metaphor for 'unadorned'.

iv) the revealed. τὸ φαινον. While the literal sense here is problematic - cf. Herodotus, II, 71.1, χαυλιόδοντας φαῖνον, and Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1229, τὰ δ’ αὐτίκ’ εἰς τὸ φῶς φανεῖ, "soon to be exposed to the light" - what seems to be suggested metaphorically is 'the visible', 'the (already) revealed', and thus someone who is conspicuously (luminously) open and honest and has nothing to hide that might, to their detriment, be exposed. Cf. τὸν ἐπιτάξαντα πῦρ φανήσαι in v. 17 and the quotation there from Plato, *Timaeus*, 39b.

v) the self-perceiving. τὸ αὐτῷ καταληπτόν. That is, the self-apprehended, the self-aware, person.

vi) the unwaveringly noble. τὸ ἀναλλοίωτον ἀγαθόν. Qv. τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀγαθόν, ὄμνει in v. 18.

vii) the unmaterial. τὸ ἀσώματον. The personal sense is well-expressed in a 14th century translation of 'De Proprietatibus Rerum' in which the qualities of an angel are explained: “inasmuch as he is farre from the bondage of earthly matter, insomuch he is the more perfect in contemplation of spirituall and unmateriall thinges." (Book I, ii. ii. 60). In respect of the term as applied to God, qv. Iohannes Damascenus, *De Imaginibus Oratio* I: 4. Cf. Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, V, 15, 1-4,

Vetus atque perpetua quaestio inter nobilissimos philosophorum agitata est, corpusne sit vox an incorporeum. Hoc enim vocabulum quidam fixerunt proinde quod Graece dicitur ἀσώματον. Corpus autem est quod aut efficient est aut patiens; id Graece definitur τὸ ἦτοι ποιοῦν ἢ πάσχον. Quam definitionem significare volens, Lucretius poeta ita scripsit: Tangere enim aut tangi, nisi corpus, nulla potest res.

*I am completely confused*. Μέμηνα ὄντως. Just as in v. 4, the context does not support Thoth saying - even rhetorically - something such as "I have gone mad" or "I am really deranged" considering what the English words "mad" and "deranged" now impute. The sense here - given what follows, ἐνεφράχθησαν αἱ αἰσθήσεις τούτου μου τοῦ νοήματος - is rather of being completely confused, befuddled, and thus lost because of what Hermes has just said. Cf. John 10:20, Δαιμόνιον ἔχει καὶ μαίνεται τι αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε - "why listen to him? He bears a
daemon and is not himself" - with its suggestion that not only is the person completely confused but also that it is not him who is speaking (or, more probably, not he who is ranting) but the daemon he carries around and thus is "possessed" by.

_the perceptibility of my apprehension was obstructed. ἐνεφράχθησαν αἱ αἰσθήσεις τούτου μου τοῦ νοήματος. Although the Greek is somewhat obscure, the general sense is that his perception - his understanding - of what he thought Hermes was explaining is now gone, having been obstructed, lost, because of his confusion.

_and flows, as Water does, and is neumæos as is Air. The meaning here of ὑγρός and σύμπνοος are uncertain, with the context, the mention of elemental Fire, Earth, Water, and Air, perhaps indicative of them being technical (esoteric) hermetic terms rather than having their normal (exoteric) meaning of 'moist/wet' and 'breathing together' respectively.

i) In regard to ὑγρός, qv. Poemandres 4, where the context - ἀφάτως τεταραγμένην καὶ καπνὸν ἀποδόσαν - implies flowing, Cf. Aristophanes, Clouds, 314 - ταῦτ ̓ ἄρ ̓ ἐποίουν υγρᾶν Νεφελὰν στρεπταγλᾶν δάιον ὀρμάν - where clouds are described as flowing and in their flowing-moving obscure the brightness (of the day).

ii) In regard to σύμπνοος, qv. Περὶ Εἰμαρμένης attributed to Plutarch - τὸ φύσει διοικεῖσθαι τόνδε τὸν κόσμον σύμπνουν καὶ συμπαθῆ αὐτὸν αὑτῷ ὄντα (574e) - literally meaning that the Kosmos is συμπαθῆ with itself and mutually breathing (σύμπνους), with the implication that it is a wholistic living being. Hence, here - given such a conjectured esoteric meaning as "breathfully connected" - a suitable interpretation of καὶ σύμπνοον ὡς ἀήρ would be and is as breathfully connected as Air, with 'breath' indicative of πνεῦμα as described in Poemandres 5 and XII:18.

However, a better alternative might be to provide a suitable technical term, open to interpretation, to express whatever esoteric meaning of σύμπνοος is conjectured, with my suggestion being neumæos, from the medieval Latin neumæ using the suffix -os derived from the Greek -ός, with one possible interpretation therefore being 'something' possibly pertaining to πνεῦμα', giving thus the translation and is neumæos, as is Air.

_insubstantial. τὸ μὴ σκληρὸν does not imply the literal what "is not hard" but rather the metaphorical what is 'insubstantial', whose form is thus not solid, not firm, but non-substantial and which therefore cannot be correctly known through touch and sight.

_unmixturous. The meaning of ἀσφίγγωτος is unclear since it occurs only here, with suggestions ranging from 'not fastened', 'not bound', 'not tight', and 'loose'. However, I am inclined to accept Scott's emendation of ἀσύνθετον - qv. τὸ
πρῶτον σύνθετον εἶδος (the initial mixturous/composed form) in v. 3 - giving thus unmixturous, not composite.

undissolved. Reading διαλυόμενον with Parthey et al.

actuosity. ἐνέργεια. Qv. tractate XII:21. The English term actuosity 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 or mortals.

that bringing-into-being within theos. τὴν ἐν θεῷ γένεσιν. Cf. Poemandres 26, ἐν θεῷ γίνονται. Both imply a "uniting with theos" to thus 'become-of' what is no longer mortal but rather both deathless and 'of theos'.

7.

Refine yourself. As often in other hermetic tractates - qv. Poemandres 10, 22, and VI:3 - καθαρός signifies not just the literal 'physically clean' but being 'refined' in terms of appearance, behaviour, manners, cleanliness, speech, learning, and thought.

brutish. Given the metaphysical context, and the contrast with καθαρός, ἄλογος implies more than 'irrational' or 'unreasonable'. The sense is of the unrefined, the uncultured, the brutish.

alastoras. Since the Greek word τιμωρία is specific and personal, implying vengeance, retribution, and also a divine punishment, it seems apposite to try and keep, in English, the personal sense even though no specific deeds or deeds are mentioned in the text, but especially because of what follows: Τιμωροῦς γὰρ ἐν ἐμαυτῷ ἔχω, ὦ πάτερ. Hence my interpretation, "the brutish alastoras of Materies," using the English term alastoras - singular, alastor, from the Greek ἀλάστωρ, an avenging deity, and also a person who avenges certain deeds. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 1497-1508.

materies. ὕλη. A variant form of the Latin materia, thus avoiding the English word 'matter' which now has connotations, derived from sciences such as Physics, that are not or may not be relevant here. In addition, the term requires contextual, metaphysical, interpretation, for as used here it may or may not be equivalent to the ὕλη of Poemandres 10, of III:1, καὶ τὰ λοιπά. Hence why I have here chosen 'materies' rather than - as in those other tractates - 'substance'.

unknowing. In respect of ἀγνοεῖω here, 'unknowing' is a more suitable English word than 'ignorance', given its meaning, usage (past - as in the Cloud of
Unknowing - and present) and given the context. Cf. Poemandres 27, ἄγνωσίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, and Poemandres 32, ἐν ἄγνοίᾳ τοῦ γένους.

Vengerisse. A personification here in respect of one of the alastoras, rather than impersonally assumptive words such as 'torment/punishment' which in my opinion do not fully express the ethos of the Greek. Vengerisse is an alternative spelling of Vengeress: a woman who exacts vengeance, who does deeds of retribution; from the Latin vindicare via the Anglo-Norman venger whence the word vengeance. The spelling vengerisse occurs in Chaucer's 1374 translation of De Consolatione Philosophiae.

The personifications which follow - ἄγνοια, ἀκρασία, κ.τ.λ. - designate (i) the particular deed or deeds that the alastor in question has arrived to avenge, and/or (ii) the character trait or traits which has or have drawn that particular alastor to a person in order torment them and exact vengeance, retribution.

In the case of ἄγνοια, the suggestion therefore seems to be that this is wilful unknowing, born out of arrogance.

Unrestraint. ἀκρασία. In relation to a person, the Greek means 'lack of control' and thus implies someone who cannot restrain themselves and thus who is self-indulgent; and it is somewhat unfortunate that some translators have opted here to use the word 'incontinence' given what that English word imputes in medical terms.

Unfairness. In respect of δίκη as fairness, and personified as a goddess, qv. Hesiod, Ἐργα καὶ Ἡμέραι, 213-218,

σὺ δὲ ἄκουε δίκης, μηδὲ ὑβριν ὄφελλε:
ὑβρις γάρ τε κακὴ δειλῶ βροτῶ: οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθὸλὸς
215 δηδίως φερέμεν δύναται, βαρύθει δὲ θ᾽ ὑπ᾽ αὐτῆς
ἔγκυροςας ἄτησιν: ὕβρος δ᾽ ἐτέρησε παρελθεῖν
κρείσσων ἐς τὰ δίκαια: Δίκη δ᾽ ὑπὲρ Ὑβριος ἴσχει
ἐς τέλος ἐξελθοῦσα: παθὼν δὲ τε νήπιος ἐγνως

You should listen to 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.

Putridity. The Greco-Roman sense of κακία is personal, not abstract, imputing rottenness: a rotten, putrid, bad physis (character, nature, disposition). This bad physis is revealed by personal deeds, such as cowardice, malice, corruption, depravity, and hubris.
inner mortal. ἐνδιάθετον ἄνθρω. In respect of ἐνδιάθετος, an alternative to 'inner' would be 'enclosed', with the Greek word occurring in relation to Stoic philosophy where a distinction was sometimes made (qv. Theophilus of Antioch) between λόγος ἐνδιάθετος (the inner or 'esoteric' logos) and λόγος προφορικός (the outer or 'exoteric' logos).

incarcerated. The Greek word used, δεσμωτήριον, is interesting as it does not imply a 'prison' as the word prison is mostly conceived of today, a large building in which people are confined together. Composed as the Greek is from δεσμός (bonds, shackles) and τηρέω (watch, guard) it signifies a place where a person is guarded and shackled, as for example in medieval dungeons. Occurring as the word does in conjunction with σώμα (body) and ἀναγκάζω (compel, using force including torture) the suggestion seems to be of the alastoras tormenting or torturing a person while that person is confined, incarcerated, within their mortal body. Cf. John 3:24, βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν, which implies a forceful 'throwing' or a hurling into a guarded cage, not "cast into prison."

generous. Qv. the comment on ἐξ ἐλέου θεοῦ in v. 3.

which is what the way and logos of Palingenesis consists of. καὶ οὕτω συνίσταται ὁ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας τρόπος καὶ λόγος. Literally, "and thus consists the way and logos of the Palingenesis." Since the meaning of λόγος here is a matter of conjecture, I have transliterated it, although I incline toward the view that here it is used as a metaphysical term as in the Poemandres, as for example in v. 9, λόγῳ ἑτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν, "whose logos brought forth another perceiveration," and as in Cyrilli Epistula Tertia ad Nestorium:

μονογενὴς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος ὁ ἐξ αὐτῆς γεννηθεὶς τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός ὁ ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινὸς θεός ἀληθινὸς τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐκ τοῦ φωτὸς ὁ δὲ οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο τὰ τε ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐν τῆι γῆι only-offspring of the logos of theos, born from the essence [οὐσία] of the father, genuine theos from genuine theos, the phaos from the phaos, by whom all things in heaven and on Earth came into being

8.

Speak quietly...and keep this secret. σιώπησον...καὶ εὐφήμησον. Not a literal 'keep silent and do not say anything' since it is a formulaic phrase, with εὐφήμέω suggestive of 'speak softly/quietly' due to either religions reverence (cf. VIII:5, XIII:8, κ.τ.λ.) or personal politeness/deference, and with σιωπάω suggestive of 'keep secret'.

Henceforward be pleased. The English word 'rejoice' - in respect of χαίρω - is
unsuitable here given the preceding εὐφημέω, and the association of the word with Christian worship past and present where it implies 'exult' and show/feel 'great joy'.

*having refinement through the Cræfts of theos. ἀνακαθαιρό μενος ταῖς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεσιν. Regarding καθαρός as implying 'refinement', qv. the comment on v. 7.*

Cræft - the older spelling, meaning, and pronunciation of craft - is, when so spelled, appropriate in reference to the use of δύναμις in this tractate, implying as it does, in an exoteric context, what the terms strength/power/force denote, while implying in an esoteric context (as often in this tractate) a particular Arte, the application of particular abilities, skills, and knowledge, especially abilities, skills, and knowledge learned in the traditional manner from a master or from a mistress of the Arte or Arts in question. In this esoteric sense, theos is the Master Craftsman, with Palingenesis being a Cræft, an Arte, that can be taught and learned. A Cræft is thus - for an individual - an ability, a capability, while it can also be, in respect of others, influential.

Thus, in this and other tractates the context can suggest alternatives such as 'influence' - qv. v. 9 in respect of the Alastoras, and tractate III:3 - or 'capability', qv. XI:3 and XII:20.

The word cræft also has the advantage of implying the plural, such as in the expression "the Cræft of theos."

*comprehend. Considering the preceding σιώπησον the sense of ἀρθρόω here is not the literal 'articulate' the logos (by means of words spoken) but rather to be able to articulate it interiorly, clearly, and thus comprehend it for oneself.*

*arrivance. In respect of the unusual - but metaphysically appropriate - English word 'arrivance', cf. Luke 19:10, ἦλθεν γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζητῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός, "the arrivance of the Son of Man was to seek and to save what was lost."

*knowledge. γνῶσις. Cf. Poemandres 26, τοῦτο ἐστι τὸ ἀγαθὸν τέλος τοῖς γνώσιν ἐσχηκόσι, and also γνῶσις ἁγία in v. 18 here, where the Greek might usefully be transliterated as gnosis.*

*knowledge of Delightfulness. Cf. v. 18: διὰ σοῦ τὸ νοητὸν φῶς ὑμῶν χαίρω ἐν χαρᾷ νοῦ, through you, a song of apprehended phaos, delighted with delightful perseverance.*

9.

*influxious. Derived from 'influxion' - one of which meanings is 'influence' - and denoting a powerful influence, as in the 17th century book England's Teares For*
The Present Warres by James Howell, "the Moon hath an influxious power."

Grade. βαθμὸς. It is possible that this is a technical - esoteric - term which could also be translated as 'degree' indicative as the term seems to be of some mystical progression by a supplicant or initiate. However, the tractate does not provide any evidence as to what such a progression was from and to, or what the other grades might have been.

Ancestral Custom. δικαιοσύνη. The meaning is not 'righteousness', which imposes abstract theological meanings (mostly derived from the Old and New Testaments) on the text, but rather 'respectful of custom', of dutifully doing one's duty toward both the gods and other mortals. This Hellenic - this personal - meaning derives from understanding δίκη personified as the goddess of both Fairness and of Tradition (Ancestral Custom) with 'fairness' a more apt description of the word δίκη, given that terms such as justice and judgement have acquired, over millennia, abstract (and often legalistic) meanings which are not relevant to either the culture of ancient Hellas or to the Hellenic milieu of the Corpus Hermeticum. The Tradition, the ancestral custom, of ancient Hellas - with the attendant mythology and legends - was recounted by Hesiod in Ἐργα καὶ Ἡμέραι (Works and Days) and in Θεογονία (Theogony).

Qv. δικαιοσύνη μου, τὸ δίκαιον γίνει δι’ ἐμοῦ in v. 18.

vindicated. In respect of ἐδικαιώθημεν (qv. δικαιώω) what is not implied is 'made righteous' or 'made pure' - which are meanings derived from Christian exegesis, cf. ὁ δίκαιος δικαιοσύνην ποιησάτω ἐπὶ, Revelation 22:11 - but rather 'vindicated', justified, and in this case because Unfairness was in absentia, having fled with there thus being no need for any further deliberations.

community. κοινωνέω imputes the sense of 'sharing in common or in partnership', that is, a community of shared interests, which is the opposite of individual covetousness.

With that departed. Referring to the departure of Coveter, the personification here of covetousness.

Actualis. A borrowing from the Latin root to personify 'actuality', qv. the comment in v. 6 on Τί οὖν ἀληθές ἐστιν ὦ Τρισμέγιστε.

the noble has been returned. However τὸ ἀγαθὸν is interpreted - whether as the conventional 'the good', or as I interpret depending on context, 'the noble', 'the highest nobility', 'the honourable' - the literal meaning of ἐπιλήμφηκα here - denoting "τὸ ἀγαθὸν is completed", "τὸ ἀγαθὸν has been fulfilled", "τὸ ἀγαθὸν is full" - is somewhat obscure, especially if one compares it to an apposite context such as John 3:29,

ο ἔχων τὴν υψηλον υψηφίος ἔστιν· ὁ δὲ φίλος τοῦ υψηφίου, ὁ ἔστηκώς
καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ, χαρᾷ χαίρει διὰ τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ νυμφίου. αὕτη οὖν ἡ χαρὰ ἡ ἐμὴ πεπλήρωται

He who has an espousess is the spouse, and the friend of the spouse - who stands by him and listens - is joyous with joy because of his words. Hence, my own joy is complete.

In tractate IV:4, πληρῶ is also apposite,

Καὶ ποῦ αὐτὸν ἱδρύσατο.
Κρατῆρα μέγαν πληρώσας τούτου κατέπεμψε δοὺς κήρυκα καὶ ἅκελευσεν αὐτῶι κηρούξαι ταῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καρδίαις τάδε...

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...

Thus, I am inclined to consider that here the usage is metaphorical, suggestive of τὸ ἀγαθὸν having been completed (i) as in restored, returned to the person before the intervention of "the brutish Alastoras of Materies", who undermined, replaced, or who sought to replace τὸ ἀγαθὸν with such things as Grief, Unrestraint, Lascivity, and Putridity; or (ii) as in, as a gift from theos, completing - refining - the mortal by removing what was detrimental to τὸ ἀγαθὸν and thus to Palingenesis, with this completing - refining - returning them to the necessary state of being, as does the ἄνοδος described in the Poemandres tractate.

phaos. φάος. As with φῶς - qv. Poemandres, κ.τ.λ. - a transliteration since I am inclined to avoid the vague English word 'light' which 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, especially as φάος 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. In addition, as noted in Poemandres 21 and perhaps relevant here,

φῶς καὶ ζωή ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ ἐγένετο ὁ Ἄνθρωπος

phaos and Life are the theos and the father from whence the human came into being

skotos. σκότος. Given the following τιμωρία and what has preceded, I have personified σκότος here (as Hesiod personified Darkness as Erebos) since it is implausible for 'darkness', understood as absence of light, to punish or seek vengeance.
they whirlingly rushed away. I incline toward the view that in respect of ἐκπέτομαι what is meant is not a literal 'flying away' but a metaphor for 'rushing away' or hastily fleeing. Similarly in respect of ῥοίζῳ which suggests a whirling about in confusion as they flee; cf. Poemandres 11, δινῶν ῥοίζῳ, spinning them around.

Thus concludes what is apparently the initiation into the secret mystery of Palingenesis which began in v. 6 with "thus it is, my son. It ascends, as Fire does, and descends, as Earth does..."

10.

the Dekad brought-into-being. τῆς δεκάδος παραγινομένης. Given that δεκάς is a metaphysical term of the Way of Palingenesis as that Way is explained in this tractate, I have used the transliteration Dekad rather than 'decad'.

geniture of apprehension. νοερὰ γένεσις. Literally, a birthing of apprehension, of the ability to apprehend beyond what the alastoras signify in respect of our mortal nature. As in tractates VI and XI, geniture expresses the contextual 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. Here, this 'something else' is the Dekad which produces this particular birthing. In respect of geniture, XI:2 may provide some metaphysical context:

'Ακοῦε, ὦ τέκνο, ὡς ἔχει ὁ θεὸς καὶ τὸ πᾶν. θεός, ὁ αἰών, ὁ κόσμος, ὁ χρόνος, ἡ γένεσις. ὁ θεὸς αἰῶνα ποιεῖ, ὁ αἰών δὲ τὸν κόσμον, ὁ κόσμος δὲ χρόνον, ὁ χρόνος δὲ γένεσιν. τοῦ δὲ θεοῦ ὦσπερ οὐσία ἐστὶ [τὸ ἀγαθόν, τὸ καλὸν, ἡ εὐδαιμονία,] ἡ σοφία; τοῦ δὲ κόσμου ἡ τάξις; τοῦ δὲ χρόνου ἡ μεταβολή; τῆς δὲ γενέσεως ἡ ζωή καὶ ὁ θάνατος

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.

banishing those twelve. The aforementioned alastoras, such as Grief and Lascivity.

by this geniture we are of theos. ἔθεωθημεν τῇ γενέσει. Cf. θεωθῆναι in Poemandres 26. As there, this does not mean or imply mortals become 'divinizied' or 'deified' - "made into gods" - but rather it means θέωσις in the Hellenic, hermetic, sense of being mystically (re)united with theos but still being mortal, human, because there is and cannot be any partaking of, any participation in, the essence, the quidditas - οὐσία - of theos, a sense well
expressed centuries later by Maximus of Constantinople:

τῆς ἐπὶ τῷ θεωθῆναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον μυστικῆς ἐνεργείας λήψεται πέρας κατὰ πάντα τρόπον χωρίς μόνης δηλονότι τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν κατ οὐσίαν ταυτότητος. Quæstiones ad Thalassium de Scriptura Sacra, XXII [Migne, 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

That is, Palingenesis means that mortals become of theos, not that they become theos or theoi. This may well explain the reading of the MSS, ἐθεωρήθημεν, amended by Nock (after Reitzenstein) to ἐθεώθημεν. For it is possible that the hermetic θέωσις implied, in practice, a contemplative type of life; a style of life hinted at in v. 2 - "noetic sapientia is in silence" - and in v. 7 when Hermes says to Thoth, "Go within: and an arriving. Intend: and an engendering. Let physical perceptibility rest, and divinity will be brought-into-being." Cf. Ακλινής γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ in v. 11.

that generosity. The definite article - the generosity - points to the meaning: not ἔλεος per se but rather the generosity of theos who gifts this geniture.

they consist of such. The MSS have συνιστάμενος - Nock, συνιστάμενον - and although some emendations have been proposed, including the addition of νοητῶν (ἐκ νοητῶν) and Reitzenstein suggesting a lacuna between γνωρίζει and ἐκ τούτων, what is referred to seems obvious: they consist of, are composed from, such things that are of - are derived from - theos.

11.

quietude engendered by theos. Ακλινής γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ. With ἀκλινής understood metaphorically, cf. σοφία νοερὰ ἐν σιγῇ in v. 2.

the seeing is not of... In respect of φαντάζομαι, cf. XI:18, κεῖται γὰρ ἄλλως ἐν ἀσωμάτωι φαντασίαι.

through the noetic actuosity of the cræft. τῇ διὰ δυνάμεων νοητικῆ ἐνεργεία. In respect of ‘cræft’, cf. ἀνακαθαιρό μενος ταῖς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεσιν in v. 8. In regard to noetic, qv. the comment on σοφία νοερὰ in v. 2. In respect of actuosity, qv. the comment on ἐνέργεια in v. 6.

The metaphysical content of this statement, important both in respect of what immediately follows - which bears comparison with XI:18-19 (see below) - and in respect of understanding Palingenesis, has been somewhat lost in previous translations such as "with the mental energy that comes through the powers" and "with the energy the Mind gives me through the powers."
What is meant is that there is a specific type of apprehension which is vivifying, which does not depend on what is seen directly by the eyes, and which is a craft, a capability, an ability, an influencing, arising from the generosity of theos and from that quietude engendered by theos. Thoth then goes on to describe what this apprehension involves: ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμὶ, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι...

I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water... Everywhere. ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμὶ, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι...pantachou. Regarding this, and the aforementioned type of apprehension, cf. tractate XI:18-19,

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.

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
What is that Way? As in vv. 7 and 10, an alternative here for τρόπος would be Art.

12.

dwelling. σκῆνος. The Greek word has been variously interpreted, as 'shelter', 'tent', and, in the New Testament, has been understood metaphorically to mean 'tabernacle' in reference to the body (2 Corinthians 5.1, 5.4). Here, what seems to be suggested, as Hermes later explains, is the deathful body as a temporary dwelling place for what is deathless.

passed beyond. διεξέρχομαι. Passed beyond as in the previous "I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water..." and as in the "go beyond yourself as those who sleepfully dream" of v. 4.

zodiac. ζῳοφόρος. Literally, τοῦ ζωοφόρου κύκλου implies "the life-bearing circle", referring to the personifications of the zodiacal constellations with the heavens understood as an abode of various divinities, qv. *Hymn to King Helios Dedicated to Sallust*, Πολὺ δὲ πρὸς οἷς ἔφην πλῆθός ἐστι περὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν θεῶν, οὔς κατενόησαν οἱ τὸν οὐρανὸν μὴ παρέργως μηδὲ ὡσπερ τὰ βοσκήματα θεωροῦντες. τοὺς τρεῖς γὰρ τετραχῆ τέμνων διὰ τῆς τοῦ ζῳοφόρου κύκλου πρὸς ἕκαστον αὐτῶν κοινωνίας τοῦτον αὐθικαὶ τὴν τοῦ ζωοφόρου εἰς δώδεκα θεῶν δυνάμεις διαιρεῖ καὶ μέντοι τούτων ἕκαστον εἰς τρεῖς, ὡστε ποιεῖν ἕξ ἐπὶ τοῖς τριάκοντα. (IV, 148c).

Cf. *De Mundo*, ὧν μέσῳ ὁ ζωιοφόρος καλούμενος κύκλος ἐγκάρσιος διὰ τῶν τροπικῶν διέζωσται. (Bekker, Aristoteles Opera Omnia, I, 392a)

composed of beings, twelve in number. Omitting the redundant ἀριθμῶν.

same physis. φύσεως μιᾶς. As in other tractates I have transliterated φύσις since in the Hermetica physis is a metaphysical principle or attribute whose meaning goes beyond, but can include, what the English terms 'nature' or 'character' - of a thing or person - denote, as the Poemandres tractate makes clear and where physis is, several times, personified, as for example in v. 14,

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.

**polymorphous.** παντόμορφος. Cf. XI:16, ἐπεὶ οὖν ὁ κόσμος παντόμορφος γέγονεν.


effector of psyche. ψυχογόνος. The 16th century English word effector (from the Latin word used by Cicero) is someone or some-thing who or which engenders or produces some-thing. As in other tractates, I have transliterated ψυχή as 'psyche' 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, or a personification - is a question of contextual interpretation. However interpreted, it is an important, a primal, principle in this and other hermetic tractates, and might imply here the original, ancient Greek, sense of 'spark' (or breath) of life; of that 'thing' (or being) which (or who) animates beings making them 'alive'.

with Life and Phaos a unity there where the arithmos of the henad is brought forth from the pneuma. ζωὴ δὲ καὶ φῶς ἡνωμέναι εἰσίν ἔνθα ὁ τῆς ἑνάδος ἀριθμὸς πέφυκε τοῦ πνεύματος. Since this expression is important to understanding the metaphysics described in the tractate it deserves some attention.

i) In respect of Life and Phaos, qv. v. 9.

ii) I have transliterated ἀριθμός here since the context suggests it implies more than the English word 'number' understood as a particular abstraction representing the quantity of 'things'; qv. Aristotle, ἄλλος δέ τις τὸν πρῶτον ἀριθμὸν τῶν τῶν εἰδῶν ἕνα εἶναι, ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ τὸν μαθηματικὸν τὸν αὐτὸν τούτου εἶνα (Metaphysics, Book XIII, 1080b.20). Given such a distinction - and the discussion regarding ἀριθμός and Pythagoras in Book XIII, 1083b.10 et seq, and given the occurrence of ἀριθμός with μονάς in tractate IV,

μονᾶς οὖσα οὖν ἀρχὴ πάντα ἀριθμὸν ἐμπεριέχει, ὑπὸ μηδενὸς ἐμπεριεχόμενη, καὶ πάντα ἀριθμὸν γεννᾶι ὑπὸ μηδενὸς γεννωμένη ἐτέρου ἀριθμοῦ...

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

ἀριθμός is suggestive of a metaphysical (and/or of an esoteric, hermetic) principle or attribute - such as being an effluvium, or an emanation, of theos/monas/The One - whose outward (esoteric) appearance or representation is often assumed to be a particular 'numerical' quantity. As to whether or not what is suggested in the tractate regarding ἀριθμός is indicative of the metaphysics of Pythagoras, or represents a similar but different mystical
tradition, is an interesting question.

In terms of mystical tradition, there is a subtle difference between effluvia and emanations, with emanation often understood in the sense of some-thing proceeding from, or having, a source; as for example in theological use where the source is considered to be theos or some aspect of a divinity or God. Effluvium, however, has (so far as I am aware) no theological connotations and accurately describes a particular perceiveration: a flowing of what-is, sans the assumption of a primal cause, and sans a division or a distinction between 'us' – we mortals – and some-thing else, be this some-thing else theos, God, a divinity, the numinous, or some assumed, ideated, cause, essence, origin, or form. Effluvia presence, manifest - or can presence and manifest in sentient beings such as ourselves, via for example a Way such as Palingenesis - the divine, the numinous.

iii) I have translated ἑνάς as 'henad' - avoiding the prosaic translation 'unit' - given the metaphysical context, the aforementioned comparison with IV:10, the equivalence of ἑνάς and μονάς, and also the following, from tractate XII:15,

ἔν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις συνθέτοις πᾶσι σώμασιν ἀριθμός ἐκάστου ἑστι. χωρίς γάρ ἀριθμοῦ σύστασιν ἢ σύνθεσιν ἢ διάλυσιν ἀδύνατον γενέσθαι· αἱ δὲ ἑνάδες τὸν ἀριθμὸν γεννώσι καὶ αὔξουσι καὶ πάλιν διαλυόμενον εἰς ἑαυτὰς δέχονται, καὶ ἡ ὕλη μία.

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.

iv) As in other tractates, I have transliterated πνεῦμα (as pneuma) since, as with ψυχή - κ.τ.λ. - it is suggestive here of a particular metaphysical (and/or of an esoteric, hermetic) attribute, requiring contextual interpretation consistent with what is currently understood of Greco-Roman mysticism and metaphysics. The usual translation of 'spirit' can impose Christian, modern philosophical and other contemporary, meanings on the text.

13.

All That Exists. τὸ πᾶν. Literally, 'the all', but metaphysically implying 'all that exists', that is, the Universe, the Kosmos. Qv. the Cantio Arcana (Esoteric Song) of vv. 17-18, and also XII:22-23 where the term is synonymous with theos.

τούτῳ ἐστιν ὁ θεός, τὸ πᾶν. ἐν δὲ τῷ παντὶ οὐδὲν ἐστιν ὁ μὴ ἐστιν ὁ θεός· ὃθεν οὔτε μέγεθος οὔτε τόπος οὔτε ποιότης οὔτε σχῆμα οὔτε χρόνος περὶ τὸν θεόν ἑστι· πᾶν γαρ ἐστι, τὸ δὲ πᾶν διὰ πάντων καὶ περὶ πάντα.

this is theos, All That Exists. 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.

When the context merits it, and to avoid awkward phraseology, I have sometimes translated τὸ πᾶν as Kosmos, as at vv. 18 and 19.

*the perceivation*. τῷ νοί. Which perceivation was mentioned in v. 11: "the seeing is not of the sight from the eyes but that through the noetic actiosity of the cræft. I am in the Heavens; on Earth; in Water; in Air..."

In effect, this perceivation is of theos, and thus (i) of perceiving that 'all that exists' - including ourselves - are emanations of theos, or (ii) of perceiving that 'all that exists', including ourselves, are effluvia and thus presence, manifest - or can presence and manifest, via for example the Way of Palingenesis - the divine, the numinous, with theos thus understood as the artisan who crafted ourselves and every-thing else:

Ἐπειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός, οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγῳ, ὡστε οὕτως ὑπολάμβανε ὡς τοῦ παρόντος καὶ ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἐνὸς μόνου, τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα (Tractate IV: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.

Which metaphysical understanding is not only rather lost in conventional translations of ἐμαυτὸν ἐν τῷ νοί such as "I see myself in Mind," but which also introduce an abstraction, an ἰδέα, 'the mind', which detracts from an appreciation of emanations of theos and effluvia of the numinous.

No more to present the body in three separations. τὸ μηκέτι φαντά ζεσθαι εἰς τὸ σῶμα τὸ τριχῇ διαστατόν. Or, less literally, "no more to present the body in three separate ways." And 'no more' because the perceivation is of 'all that exists' as either emanations of theos (the One) or presencings of the divine, the monadic numinous.

i) to present. That is, to present - to show - in a particular manner. In respect of φαντάζομαι, cf. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*.

μηδ᾽ ἐπιλεξθῆς
Ἀγαμεμνώνιαν εἶναι μ᾽ ἄλοχον.
φανταζόμενος δὲ γυνακί τεκροῦ 1500
τοῦδ᾽ ὁ παλαιὸς δριμὺς ἀλάστωρ
Ἀτρέως χαλεποῦ θοινατήρος
tοῦδ᾽ ἀπέτεισεν
τέλεον νεαροῖς ἐπιθύσας.

But do not add to those words that it was me who was the mistress of Agamemnon
Since the wife of this corpse presents herself here
As that most ancient fierce Avenger.
It is Atreus, he of that cruel feast,
Who, in payment for that, has added to his young victims
This adult one.

ii) separations. As noted in my commentary on tractate IV:1, what is not meant by διαστατός is 'dimension', given what the term 'dimension' now imputes scientifically and otherwise. What is expressed in IV:1 may also be relevant here:

τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἀπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν, οὐδὲ ἀλλω λινὶ σώματι ὅμοιον· οὔτε γὰρ πῦρ ἐστιν οὔτε ὕδωρ οὔτε ἀὴρ οὔτε πνεῦμα, ἀλλὰ πάντα ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ.

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.

Thus, to translate τὸ μηκέτι φαντά ζεσθαι εἰς τὸ σῶμα τὸ τριχῇ διαστατόν as something like "no longer to picture the three-dimensional body" is to introduce two fairly recent, and unnecessary, abstractions: that of to picture/visualize - as if in some-thing denoted by the term 'mind' - and that of 'three-dimensions'. Whereas what the Greek expresses is relatively simple and suitable to the milieu of Greco-Roman mysticism: of not seeing, of not representing, the body in three particular ways. What these three separate ways are is open to interpretation, but the context suggests in terms of physicality, of psyche, and of pneuma.

through this disclosure. Although 'disclosure' seems apposite, λόγος could be translated here - as in the title - as 'discourse'.

Between τὸ τριχῇ διαστατόν and διὰ τὸν λόγον, Nock et al indicate a lacuna, although it is possible to make some sense of what is here rather obscure Greek. [An overview of some of the problems here - in the context of the meaning of the following διάβολος - is given by Anna Van den Kerchove, La voie d'Hermès: Pratiques rituelles et traités hermétiques, Brill (Leiden), 2012, pp.100-4]

written about for you alone. Reading ὃν εἰς σὲ μόνον ύπεμνηματισάμην with Reitzenstein et al, and taking ύπεμνηματισάμην to refer to 'writing about' Palingenesis.

rouner: διάβολος. In regard to the Old English word rouner - denoting a person who whispers secrets or who spreads rumours in a secretive, disruptive,
manner - qv. the Prologue of the 14th century *Cloud Of Unknowing*,

Fleschely janglers, opyn preisers and blamers of hemself or of any other, tithing tellers, rouners and tutilers of tales

Also, cf. 2 Timothy 3:3, ἄστοργοι, ἄσπονδοι, διάβολοι, ἄκρατεῖς (unloving, unforgiving, rouners, unrestrained) where mention is made of ἄκρατής, which in this tractate is personified as one of the Alastoras.

I take the following τοῦ παντὸς as referring to keeping the silence - the secrets - as mentioned in v. 22, rather than as referring to the preceding τὸ πᾶν.

*the many*. τοὺς πολλούς. It is possible to take this pejoratively and thus as referring to 'plebal outsiders', to 'the masses', the plebeians.

*but instead to whomsoever theos himself desires*. Reading ἀλλ᾽ εἰς οὓς ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸς θέλει with Reitzenstein. The text is obscure to the point of being corrupt, with various emendations having been proposed, and thus my translation is somewhat conjectural.

14.

*Speak quietly*. Qv. v. 8

*constituted of such cræfts*. Such cræfts as Palingenesis, and thus such abilities as a cræft confers.

*disrespected*. ἀσεβεῖσθαι. Qv. Lysias, Funeral Oration, 2.7,

> Ἀθηναῖοι ἡγησάμενοι ἐκείνους μέν εἴ τι ἠδίκουν, ἀποθανόντας δίκην ἔχειν τὴν μεγίστην τοὺς δὲ κάτω τὰ αὑτῶν οὐ κομίζεσθαι ἱερῶν δὲ μιαινομένων τοὺς ἀνω θεοὺς ἀσεβεῖσθαι

the Athenians considered that if those ones had done harm then their death was the greater punishment, with those in the realms below not being attended to, and - with their consecrated places defiled - the gods above were being disrespected

Also, cf. Poemandres 23,

> τοῖς δὲ ἀνοήτοις καὶ κακοῖς καὶ πονηροῖς καὶ φθονεροῖς καὶ πλεονέκταις καὶ φονεύσι καὶ ἀσεβείσι πόρρωθέν εἰμι

I keep myself distant from the unreasonable, the rotten, the malicious, the jealous, the greedy, the bloodthirsty, the hubriatic

*the quiddity of geniture*. τῆς οὕσιωδοῦς γενέσεως. A metaphysical expression
which, in context, signifies that the essentiality, the realness, of the particular bringing-into-being that is Palingenesis - with its perception of effluvia (or of emanations of theos) and of the mortal being 'all that exists' - is far removed from the physis that ordinary perception associates with the physical body.

*engendered of theos*. θεὸς πέφυκας. That is, reborn through Palingenesis because of theos. The following καὶ τοῦ ἕνος παῖς provides the necessary context. In respect of Palingenesis signifying becoming *of* theos (as a child is of the parent) and not becoming theos or theoi, qv. the comment on v. 6, "by this geniture we are of theos." Cf. φύσει μεν πέφυκας θεός (Josephus Hymnographicus, *Feast of Saint Basilissa*, Migne, Patrologia Graeca, 105, 1120) and δόξης γέμων θεός πέφυκας (Joannes Geometra, *Carmina Varia*, Migne, Patrologia Graeca, 106, 997)

15.

*song*. ὑμνος. 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.

you said you heard from those influences when you reached the Ogdoad. The Ogdoad - ὄγδοος, the eighth - relates to Poemandres 26, τὴν ὀγδαόστικὴν φύσιν, the ogdoadic physis which is beyond the seven spheres, the reaching of which is celebrated in song, ὑμνεῖ σὺν τοῖς οὖσι τὸν πατέρα, which signifies the end of the mortal anados (ἀνοδος) and where the mortal hears 'the influences' - those of The Cræft - who or which are beyond the ogdoad celebrating theos in melodious song, τινων δυνάμεων ὑπὲρ τὴν ὀγδαόστικὴν φύσιν φωνῆι τινι ἡδείαι ὑμνουσῶν τὸν θεόν.

There are several ways of interpreting the text here and what follows. If one accepts the emendation σου (Nock, after Reitzenstein) then Thoth is asking to hear the song Hermes heard when he reached the Ogdoad, while if one reads, with the MSS, μου, then Thoth is asking for the song Hermes said Thoth would hear when Thoth himself reaches the Ogdoad. In addition, τῶν δυνάμεων in association with either σου ἀκοῦσαι or μου ἀκοῦσαι is awkward, implying "heard from The Cræft" - or, in exoteric terms, "from the (those) Powers/Forces /Influences/" - when whomsoever reaches the Ogdoad, and which inclines one to ask, whose or what influences/powers? Those mentioned, for example, in vv. 8-9, such as Delightfulness, Self-Restraint, and Perseverance? If so, are these influences, collectively, The Cræft itself personified and who thus, through the generosity of theos, enable Palingenesis?

On balance, given the reference to Poemandres 26, I am inclined to accept the emendation σου and take 'the influences' as referring to those of The Cræft, some of whom are personified in vv. 8-9, and which 'influences' are those who in Poemandres 26 are "celebrating theos in melodious song."
divined about the Ogdoad. Taking καθώς Ὀγδοάδα ὁ Ποιμάνδρης ἐθέσπισε with τέκνον, not with the preceding ἀκοῦσαι τῶν δυνάμεων.

Poemandres, the perceiverration of authority. Qv. Poemandres 2, εἰμί ὁ Ποιμάνδρης, ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς. As there, the title 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 Poemandres, the authentic perceiverration."

and entrusting me to presence the beautiful. καὶ ἐπέτρεψε μοι ἐκεῖνον ποιεῖν τὰ καλά. While an alternative translation is "and entrusting me to presence the noble," it does not immediately connect to what follows: of beautifully presenting such beautiful things as the esoteric song (υμνωδία κρύπτη, cantio arcana) which Hermes proceeds to teach to Thoth.

16.

except to you at your completion. εἰ μὴ σοὶ ἐπὶ τέλει τοῦ παντός. More literally, "except to you at the ending of the whole." That is, at the ending of the initiation into the secret of Palingenesis.

respectfully. That is, reverentially. The sense of προσκυνέω here does not necessarily imply a 'kneeling down' or some sort of what the Greeks (and the Romans) would undoubtedly have described as a 'barbarian adoration' or prostration as if in worship of Helios or of some-thing. It also does not necessarily imply a type of body-bent bowing, a stooping, toward a particular person (cf. Herodotus, I:119.1, ἅρπαγος μὲν ὡς ἤκουσε ταῦτα, προσκυνήσας καὶ μεγάλα ποιησάμενος ὅτι τε ἁμαρτᾶς οἱ ἐς δέον ἐγεγόνεε καί ὅτι ἐπὶ τύχησι χρηστῆσαι ἐπὶ δείπνου ἐκέκλητο, ἤιε ἐς τὰ οἰκία). What such respect, in this particular case, involved is unknown although the tractate - with its invokations of Self-Restraint, the imperturbable, the unwaveringly noble, of a contemplative silence, and its declamation of "go within" - is suggestive of a simple, unadorned, silent, respect for the numinous and the divine, as might perhaps be manifest in a slight bowing of the head. Cf. John 4:20 where the type of reverence is also unknown,

οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ προσεκύνησαν· καὶ υμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐστίν ὁ τόπος ὧποι προσκυνεῖν δεῖ.

Our ancestors gave reverence on this mountain but you say that the necessary place of reverence is in Jerusalem.

17.
Logos Δ. The MSS at this point have the heading υμνωδία κρύπτη, λόγος Δ. While υμνωδία κρύπτη is understandable - Esoteric Song, Cantio Arcana, Secret Chant - the meaning of λόγος Δ is conjectural, with suggestions including The Fourth Song, The Fourth Formula, and the Fourth Discourse, with the obvious implication that there are, or were, four such hermetic songs, formulae, or discourses, with various suggestions as to those other three, such as Poemandres 31, tractate V:10, and Asclepius 41, all of which are relatively short.

*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,

\[ \text{ἀνάγκη δὲ καὶ ἡ πρόνοια καὶ ἡ φύσις ὄργανά ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου} \]

Necessitas, forseeing, and physis, are implements of Kosmos

*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.* ἄβυσσος. 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.

*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
Sweet water. γλυκύ ὕδωρ. The sweetness of water suitable to drink. Cf. John 4:10, ὕδωρ ζῶν, the 'living water' - that is, the water of life, ὕδωρ ζωῆς.

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, ὁ δὴ νῦν κεκλήκαμεν ἥλιον, ἵνα ὅτι μάλιστα εἰς ἀπάντα 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 ἐγώ ὁ Νοῦς τοῖς ὁσίοις καὶ ἀγαθοῖς καὶ καθαροῖς καὶ ἔλεήμοσι, τοῖς εὐσεβοῖς, 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

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.

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."

18.

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

knowledge. As at Poemandres 26, γνώσις 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 θείον 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.


respectful of custom. δίκαιος. Not 'righteous', which imposes abstract theological meanings (mostly derived from the Old and New Testaments) 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.

Through me, may Kosmos accept... διʻ ἐμοῦ δέξαι τὸ πᾶν λόγῳ. I take this with the following λογικὴν θυσίαν, and τὸ πᾶν as vocative, and poetically combine the unnecessary λόγῳ with λογικὴν. As punctuated by Nock et al it would with λογικὴν θυσίαν literally be something such as "through me accept in speech All That Exists/the Kosmos, an offering spoken," which - in the context of the song and of theos being τὸ πᾶν, All That Exists/the Kosmos - is distinctly odd.

Here, as in v. 19, translating τὸ πᾶν as Kosmos, rather than 'All That Exists' to elucidate the meaning and avoid awkward phraseology.

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 as well as doubling for λόγῳ in the previous line.

19.

I take λογικὴν θυσίαν (respectful wordful offerings) as the end of the named, the metaphysical, 'esoteric song' (υμνωδία κρύπτη) with what follows - lines 214-235, that is, until the interjection by Thoth - a personal evokation, a chant, to theos - τὸ πᾶν - for acceptance of the offering (the singing of the esoteric
song) followed by a personal request to remain enlightened, followed by an epiphenomena which includes sentiments of personal gratitude.

_Life, recure._ σῷζε ζωή. Recure - from the classical Latin recuro - is an interesting, if neglected, English word and is apposite here implying as it does restore (to health), heal, and preserve. As mentioned in Poemandres 17 regarding Life and Phaos,

> ό δὲ άνθρωπος ὥς ζωῆς καὶ φωτός ἐγένετο εἰς ψυχήν καὶ νοῦν, ἐκ μὲν ζωῆς ψυχήν, ἐκ δὲ φωτός νοῦν

Of Life and Phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceiveration; from Life - psyche; from Phaos - perceiveration

_Theos, spiritus._ πνεῦμα θεέ. In respect of πνεῦμα Nock considered it doubtful and noted the suggestion of Keil, πνευμάτιζε, although πνεῦμα θεέ - theos, pneuma (spiritus) - does seem appropriate: theos, 'a breath', a breathing, Pneuma; which breathing imbues beings with life and spirit, with pneuma.

_Breath-Giver, Artisan._ πνευματοφόρε δημιουργέ. Literally, "Pnuema-Bearing, Artisan." The Master Craftsman whose craft is to make - to construct, to create - living beings.

20.

_Because of your desire._ Qv. v. 4, θελήματι θεοῦ.

21.

I follow Festugiere and take τῷ σῷ τὴν εὐλογίαν ταύτην λεγομένην as belonging to Thoth, not Hermes.

_a more numinal perceiveration._ Regarding ἐπιφωτιζω, qv. v. 16, γνώσις ἁγία, φωτισθεὶς ἀπὸ σοῦ and the comment on 'numinal understanding'. As there, what is meant is not some ordinary type of 'illumination' but rather a divinely-inspired or a divinely-given understanding. Here, this understanding has enhanced the perceiveration Thoth has acquired.

_from my heart._ As at v. 4, φρήν as a metaphor for the heart. Which explains the response of Hermes: μὴ ἄσκοπως.

_essential._ Qv. v. 4.

_kyrios._ A transliteration of the Greek, appropriate here given what terms such as 'Lord' and 'Master' now so often denote, and given Poemandres 6,
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.

22.

invokation. εὖχομαι. Not 'pray' - which has too many Christian and other non-Hellenic religious connotations - but invokation, as in appeal to a deity, to call upon, to offer a laudation or an offering. Qv. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 933, ηὔξω θεοίς δείσας ὧδ᾽ ἔρδειν τάδε, did you invoke the gods because you feared doing such things?

the unrottable produce. τὰ ἀθάνατα γενήματα. Literally, "the deathless/immortal produce". Taking ἀθάνατος metaphorically contrasts well with the preceding 'bearing good fruit'.

the tradition. In respect of παράδοσις, cf. παραδιδόναι μοι in v. 1. As there, the suggestion is of a disclosing of some ancestral teaching or wisdom; the disclosing by a teacher or master to a pupil.

rouners. For 'rouner' in respect of διάβολος, qv. v. 13, εἰς ὃν ὑπεμνηματι σάμην ἵνα μὴ ὦμεν διάβολοι τοῦ παντὸς εἰς τοὺς πολλούς.

noesis. A technical, mystical, term, qv. the comment on 'noetic sapientia' in v. 2.
Bibliography


° Turnebus. *Ερμόν τον Τρισμεγήντα Ποιμήνδρης Ασκληπιών Όροι προς Ἀμμώνια Βασίλεα*. Paris 1554

° van den Broek. *From Poimandres to Jacob Bohme*. Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica. 2000


