

HERMETICA

Being English Translations of Hermetic
Discourses and Fragments

by

G. R. S. Mead

Comprising

Corpus Hermeticum I-XIV, XVI-XVIII

The Perfect Sermon (Asclepius)

Hermetic Excerpts from Stobæus



Celephaïs Press

Ulthar - Sarkomand - Inquanok - Leeds

2010

The translations here collected were originally published
in vols. 2 and 3 of Mead's *Thrice-Greatest Hermes:
Studies in Hellenistic Theosophy and Gnosis*,
London & Benares: The Theosophical
Publishing Society, 1906
(many reprints)

This electronic edition produced by Celephaïs Press,
somewhere beyond the Tanarian Hills, and
mani(n)fested in the waking world
in the year 2010 of the
common error.

This work is in the public domain.
Last revised March 2021
(updated bibliography)

CONTENTS

	page
Editor's introduction	v
Bibliography	ix
Corpus Hermeticum	I
I. Poimandres	3
II. [To Asclepius]	12
III. A sacred sermon of Hermes	18
IV. The Cup or Monad	20
V. Though unmanifest God is Most Manifest	24
VI. In God alone is Good and elsewhere nowhere	28
VII. The greatest ill among men is ignorance of God	31
VIII. That no one of existing things doth perish	32
IX. On thought and sense	34
X. The Key	38
XI. Mind to Hermes	46
XII. About the Common Mind	54
XIII. The Secret Sermon on the Mountain	62
XIV. To Asclepius, health of soul	70
XVI. Definitions of Asclepius to Ammon	73
XVII. [Asclepius to the King]	78
XVIII. [The Eonium of Kings]	79
The Perfect Sermon, or Asclepius	84
Hermetic Excerpts from Stobæus	125
I. Of piety and true philosophy	127
II. Of the ineffability of God	132
III. Of truth	133
IV. God, nature and the gods	137
V. Of matter	138
VI. Of time	139
VII. Of bodies everlasting and bodies perishable	140
VIII. Of energy and feeling	142
IX. Of the decans and the stars	147
X. Of the rule of providence, necessity and fate	152
XI. Of justice	154
XII. Of providence and fate	155
XIII. Of the whole economy	156

	page
XIV. Of soul (i)	157
XV. Of soul (ii)	158
XVI. Of soul (iii)	160
XVII. Of soul (iv)	162
XVIII. Of soul (v)	163
XIX. Of soul (vi)	165
XX. The power of choice	167
XXI. Of Isis to Horus	168
XXII. An Apophthegm	168
XXIII. From "Aphroditē"	169
XXIV. A Hymn of the Gods	170
XXV. Korē Kosmou (i)	171
XXVI. Korē Kosmou (ii)	188
XXVII. From the Sermon of Isis to Horus	194

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE writings of "Hermes Trismegistus" were among a variety of things to emerge from the intellectual melting pot which existed across the Eastern Mediterranean in general and in particular in Alexandria from around 300 B.C.E to 300 C.E. While almost certainly written in Greek by various authors unknown, mostly in the latter half of this period, their authorship was traditionally ascribed to the syncretic figure of "Thrice-Greatest Hermes," formed by identifying the Greek Hermes with the Egyptian Thoth, but thought to have been a human sage roughly contemporary with Moses, who invented the hieroglyphic writing system and gave the Egyptians a code of laws. This tradition continued to be believed in through the Middle Ages and Renaissance, although most of these works were lost to Western Europe through the mediæval period, known only in brief quotations or references by early Christian writers such as Augustine of Hippo.

The translations of Hermetic literature here collected were previously published in 1906 as part of a three-volume study by G.R.S. Mead titled *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*, issued by the Theosophical Publishing Society.

That last detail goes some way to explaining why Mead's translations lack academic respectability; criticisms are rarely specific, and the claim by Brian Copenhaver (in the introduction to his translation of the *Hermetica* for Cambridge University Press) that Mead's work "must be watched for theosophical motivations" seems strange when one considers that theosophy (without the capital T) in the literal sense of "divine wisdom" was pretty much what the original authors of these works thought they were about; the general tone and style of the discourses following is more one of revelation-discourse or divinely-inspired authoritative teaching than philosophical argument in the sense generally understood, indeed passages

in some tractates are openly anti-rationalist and contemptuous of what was ordinarily called philosophy at the time. Mead's commentaries, interspersed between the tractates, were indeed written from the point of view of the European and American theosophical schools of the nineteenth century of the common error, and are here omitted, as is most of his apparatus.

Mead's translation was selected for the present edition as being the best of a not particularly great lot, *i.e.* public domain English translations of the Hermetica. John Everard's 1650 edition has had many reprints and was still used in some occultist circles in the nineteenth century (both Hargrave Jennings and W. Wynn Westcott edited reprints) but is of doubtful reliability and is liable to mislead owing to changes in English usage. John Chambers' *The Theological and Philosophical Works of Hermes Trismegistus, Christian Neoplatonist* (1882) is frequently literal to the point of unreadability (C.H. I opens, "Thought in me becoming on a time concerning the Entities") and is also marred by the translator's selecting only the material that supported his thesis; believing in a unitary authorship of C.H. I-XIV and some of the Stobæus excerpts, he dismissed the *Asclepius*, the *Korē Kosmou* and some other material as "false" Hermetica, as if the entire literature was not pseudoepigraphal in any case. Kingsford & Maitland's *Virgin of the World* (1885; comprising C.H. XVI-XVIII, the *Asclepius* and the Stobæus excerpts, produced as a companion to a re-issue of Everard's translation) is on the other hand far too loose. Walter Scott's, published in four volumes 1924-1936 and repeatedly reprinted is regarded as unreliable largely because of liberties taken with the Greek texts (characterised by Copenhagen as "a jungle of excisions, interpolations and transpositions . . . Scott's translation can be regarded only as a translation of Scott, not of the Hermetic authors").

The modern English translations (Salaman *et al.*, Copenhagen and Litva being the only ones of which I am aware) have taken advantage of a critical edition of the Greek and Latin texts by A. D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière first published (with a French translation) 1946-54.

The main difficulty with Mead's rendering is, to be frank, one of style. Mead has attempted to render the texts in the lan-

guage of the King James Bible and a “poetic” prose style which sacrifices the normal rules of English prose word-order, and occasionally readability, for the sake of scansion; contractions (“e’en” for “even,” “’tis” for “it is,” “ne’er” for “never,” &c.), inversions, redundant insertion of words which are neither in the text nor needed for the translation to be intelligible or grammatical, and complete inconsistency with regard to the use of definite articles, are commonplace for no apparent reason other than to maintain a prose rhythm.

A document containing Mead’s translations of CH I-XIII with an introduction by J.M. Greer has been in Internet circulation since the late 1990s (although the introduction appears to belong to an edition which included XIV, XVI-XVII and the *Asclepius*). The following collection comprises all the *Corpus Hermeticum* texts, the *Asclepius* and the Stobæus excerpts.

What has been left out.

The following extant “theoretical”¹ Hermetica are not included in the present collection.

- (i) *Fragmenta Hermetica*. Brief quotations in Greek and Latin from otherwise lost works found in writers of late antiquity through to the Middle Ages, including Tertullian (fl. ca 200-216 C.E.), Lactantius (fl. early 4th cent. C.E.), and Cyril of Alexandria (fl. early 5th cent. C.E.). Vol. III of *Thrice Greatest Hermes* included 28 of these; vol. IV of Nock and Festiguère’s 1946-54 edition of the Hermetica had 36. While probably genuine—many of these authors also quote from identifiable works—when read in isolation they add little to our knowledge of the subject, and may in some instances have been misquoted, or quoted out of context, for polemical purposes.
- (ii) *Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius*. A tract in ten chapters which survives in an Armenian translation (dated to the sixth century C.E.) and a fragmentary Greek MS. The Armenian version was first turned up in the 1950s, the Greek some decades later; there is no public domain English translation. One passage also appears in one of the Stobæus excerpts.
- (iii) *Nag Hammadi Hermetica*. Nag Hammadi Codex VI includes, besides the famous *Thunder: Perfect Mind* and a garbled excerpt from Plato’s *Republic*, two variant excerpts from the *Asclepius* (§§21-29 and the concluding prayer from §41), a brief scribal note and a previously unknown tract now called *The Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth*, all in Coptic translation. There is no public domain English translation.

¹ For reasons indicated above, I prefer this term to “philosophical” for distinguishing Hermetic texts treating of cosmogony, theology, metaphysics, God, the soul, the possibility of salvation / rebirth, &c., &c., &c. from “technical” works ascribed to Hermes treating of astrology, alchemy and magic.

- (iv) *Vienna Fragments*. Two Hermetic fragments found on separate papyri in a Vienna museum (Papyri Vindobonense Gracæ 29456 r^o & 29828 r^o); first described by Jean-Pierre Mahé in 1984. There is no public domain English translation.
- (v) *Oxford Fragments*. Fragments from otherwise unknown works on a MS. preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford; Greek text first published in 1991. There is no public domain English translation.

Also, as noted above, Mead's commentaries and the bulk of his textual notes have also been omitted.

Ellipses (. . .) are used mainly by Mead to indicate lacunæ in the source texts; square brackets, words interpolated for the sake of making more coherent English sentences, or in some instances purely for the sake of scansion or other considerations of style. While punctuation from the original is retained, many redundant paragraph breaks have been removed; Mead in many places started a new paragraph with practically every sentence.

Footnotes in square brackets are due to the present editor, though in many cases adapted or paraphrased from Mead's notes. Those not in square brackets are verbatim or only slightly adapted from Mead's notes.

Fra. Tripudians Stella
Leeds, England
March 2010 e.v.
(revised March 2021)

Since the above was written, Cambridge University Press published *Hermetica II: The Excerpts of Stobaeus, Papyrus Fragments and Ancient Testimonies in an English Translation with notes and Introduction* by M. David Litwa (2018). This includes, as the title suggests, the Stobæus excerpts, Vienna and Oxford fragments, and an extended collection of fragments and testimonies from writers of late antiquity. I do not currently have access to this beyond the Google Books preview.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Betz**, Hans Dieter (ed.): *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, including the Demotic Spells*. University of Chicago Press, 1986, 1992.
- Chambers**, John (ed. / trans.): *The Theological and Philosophical Works of Hermes Trismegistus, Christian Neoplatonist*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882; reprinted Kila, MT: Kessinger, 2003 (as *Divine Pymander and Other Writings of Hermes Trismegistus*).
- Copenhaver**, Brian (trans.): *Hermetica: the Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a new English translation*. Cambridge University Press, 1992, many reprints.
- Everard**, John (trans.): *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus, in XVII books*. London: printed by R. White for T. Brewster and G. Moule, 1650, reprinted 1657 and ca. 1850; reprinted with an introduction by Hargrave Jennings, Bath: Robert Fryar and London: George Redway, 1884; this edition reprinted San Diego: Wizard's Bookshelf, 1985, 2000. Reprinted with an introduction by W. Wynn Westcott, London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1894 ("Collectanea Hermetica" series, no. 2; included in subsequent collected reprints of that series).
- Fowden**, Garth: *The Egyptian Hermes: a Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*. Cambridge: University Press, 1986; corrected reprint Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Kingsford**, Anna Bonus and **Maitland**, Edward (trans.): *The Virgin of the World of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus*. Bath: Robert Fryar & London: George Redway, 1885; reprinted Minneapolis: Wizard's Bookshelf, 1977 and Kila, Montana: Kessinger, 1996, 1997.
- Layton**, Bentley (trans. / ed.): *The Gnostic Scriptures*. St. Albans: SCM Press, 1987, 1995.
- Litwa**, M, David (trans.): *Hermetica II: the Excerpts of Stobæus, Papyrus Fragments, and Ancient Testimonies in an English Translation*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Mead**, G.R.S.: *Thrice Greatest Hermes: Studies in Hellenistic Philosophy and Gnosis* (3 vols.). London and Benares: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1906; reprinted London: John M. Watkins, 1949, 1964. Vol. I: Prolegomena. Vol. II: Sermons. Vol. III: Excerpts and Fragments. Reprinted in one vol. York Beach, Maine: Weiser, 1992, 2001.
- Middle Liddell**—**Liddell**, Henry George & **Scott**, Robert: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, founded upon the seventh edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1889, many reprints.
- NHC**—Nag Hammadi Codices; see Robinson (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Library in English*.
- Nock**, Arthur Darby & **Festugière**, A.-J. (ed. / trans.): *Corpus Hermeticum* (4 vols.). Paris: 1946-54, third edition 1972-3. Tome I: Poimandres, Traités I-XII. Tome II: Traités XIII-XVIII, Asclepius. Tome III: Fragments extraits de Stobée I-XXII. Tome IV: Fragments extraits de Stobée (XXIII-XXIX), Fragments divers.

- Parthey**, Gustavus (ed.): *Hermes Trismegisti Poemander*. Berlin: 1854.
- Patrizi**, Francesco: *Nova de Universis Philosophia*. Ferrara, 1591, second edition Venice, 1593. (The writer's name Latinised as Franciscus Patricius.)
- PGM*—Papyri Græcæ Magicæ; see Betz (ed.), *Greek Magical Papyri*.
- Robinson**, J.M. (ed.): *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978, 1988; paperback reprint, HarperCollins, 1990.
- Salaman**, Clement (trans.): *Asclepius: a secret discourse of Hermes Trismegistus*. London: Gerald Duckworth, 2007.
- Salaman**, Clement, **van Oyen**, Dorine and **Mahé**, Jean-Paul (trans): *The Way of Hermes: new translations of the "Corpus Hermeticum" and "Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius"* Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions and London: Duckworth, 1999, reprinted 2001.
- Scott**, Walter: *Hermetica: the ancient Greek and Latin writings which contain religious or philosophic teachings ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus* (4 vols.). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924-36; reprinted London: Dawsons, 1968 and Kila, Montana: Kessinger, 1995-2001. Vol. 1: texts and translations; vol. 2: notes on the *Corpus Hermeticum*; vol. 3: notes on the *Asclepius* and Stobæus excerpts; vol. 4: "Testimonia," *i.e.* quotations of and references to Hermes and Hermetic writings in ancient and mediæval writers, an appendix and indices added by a later editor after Scott's death.
- Yates**, Frances Amelia: *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964; reprinted Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

CORPUS
HERMETICUM

[Editor's note]

The *Corpus Hermeticum* is the best known collection of “theoretical” (gnostic) Hermetica. The oldest known MSS. are of Byzantine origin and were brought to Western Europe after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The most complete of these contain seventeen tracts, although textual evidence suggests that at least one *logos* between those now denoted C.H. I and C.H. II is missing, along with part of C.H. XVII and possibly another tract before that; in other words, several pages were lost or removed from the prototype before it was copied. The MSS. which came into the possession of Lorenzo di Medici and were used as the basis for Marsilio Ficino’s translation into Latin finish with C.H. XIV. Following Ficino’s edition, the collection has been frequently cited as the *Pimander* or some variant spelling thereof, which strictly speaking only applies to the first tract.

In a 1574 edition of the Greek text of the *Corpus*, C.H. XIV was followed by a fifteenth tract nailed together by an editor out of three Hermetic excerpts from the anthology of Stobæus and the entry on Hermes Trismegistus in the *Suda* (a Byzantine encyclopædia of ca. 1000 C.E., cited by Mead following the error of a 12th-century writer who mistook the title for the author as the *Lexicon* of “Suidas”), which was in turn followed by the “Definitions of Asclepius to King Ammon,” now C.H. XVI. Later editions dropped C.H. XV as spurious while retaining the numbering of XVI-XVIII.

CH. I: Hermes Trismegistus: Pœmandres¹

1. It chanced once upon a time my mind was meditating on the things that are, my thought was raised to a great height, the senses of my body being held back—just as men who are weighed down with sleep after a fill of food, or from fatigue of body. Methought a Being more than vast, in size beyond all bounds, called out my name and saith: What wouldst thou hear and see, and what hast thou in mind to learn and know?

2. And I do say: Who art thou?

He saith: I am Man-Shepherd, Mind of all-masterhood; I know what thou desirest and I'm with thee everywhere.

3. [And] I reply: I long to learn the things that are, and comprehend their nature, and know God. This is, I said, what I desire to hear.

He answered back to me: Hold in thy mind all thou wouldst know, and I will teach thee.

4. E'en with these words His aspect changed, and straightway, in the twinkling of an eye, all things were opened to me, and I see a Vision limitless, all things turned into Light,—sweet, joyous [Light]. And I became transported as I gazed. But in a little while Darkness came settling down on part [of it], awesome and gloomy, coiling in sinuous folds, so that methought it like unto a snake. And then the Darkness changed into some sort of a Moist Nature, tossed about beyond all power of words, belching out smoke as from a fire, and groaning forth a wailing sound that beggars all description. [And] after that an outcry inarticulate came forth from it, as though it were a Voice of Fire.

¹ [Mead follows the widely accepted derivation of the name Παιμανοδότης and includes the gloss “shepherd of men” as part of his title. A derivation from a Coptic phrase roughly corresponding to the epithet “mind of sovereignty” has also been suggested; see Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, note to title of C.H. I. In any case, in C.H. XI, the only other place in *C.H.* where Hermes is the recipient of a revelation-discourse rather than a mystagogue instructing students, the divine figure delivering the revelation is simply called “Mind” (νοῦς). In the text of the discourse the narrator is unnamed; the name Hermes Trismegistus (in the genitive case) appears only as a superscription to the title.]

5. [Thereon] out of the Light . . . a Holy Word (*logos*)¹ descended upon that Nature. And upwards to the height from the Moist Nature leaped forth pure Fire; light was it, swift and active too. The Air, too, being light, followed after the Fire; from out the Earth-and-Water rising up to Fire so that it seemed to hang therefrom. But Earth-and-Water stayed so mingled each with other, that Earth from Water no one could discern. Yet were they moved to hear by reason of the Spirit-Word (*logos*) pervading them.

6. Then saith to me Man-Shepherd: Didst understand this Vision what it means?

Nay; that *shall* I know, I said.

That Light, He said, am I, thy God, Mind, prior to Moist Nature which appeared from Darkness; the Light-Word (*logos*) [that appeared] from Mind is Son of God.

What then?—say I.

Know that what sees in thee and hears is the Lord's Word (*logos*); but Mind is Father-God. Not separate are they the one from other; just in their union [rather] is it Life consists.

Thanks be to Thee, I said.

So, understand the Light [He answered], and make friends with it.

7. And speaking thus He gazed for long into my eyes: so that I trembled at the look of Him. But when He raised His head, I see in Mind the Light, [but] now in Powers no man could number, and Cosmos a grown beyond all bounds, and that the Fire was compassed round about by a most mighty Power, and [now] subdued had come unto a stand. And when I saw these things I understood by reason of Man-Shepherd's Word (*logos*).

8. But as I was in great astonishment, He saith to me again: Thou didst behold in Mind the Archetypal Form whose being is before beginning without end. Thus spake to me Man-Shepherd.

And I say: Whence then have Nature's elements their being?

¹ [The Greek term *λογος* is used frequently in the *Corpus* and has many possible English renderings; Mead translates it variously according to context and his own somewhat messed-up sense of style, but to indicate that it is the same word in the original, gives it in brackets after the translation.]

To this He answer gives: From Will of God. [Nature] received the Word (*logos*), and gazing on the Cosmos Beautiful did copy it, making herself into a cosmos, by means of her own elements and by the births of souls.¹

9. And God-the-Mind, being male and female both, as Light and Life subsisting, brought forth another Mind to give things form, who, God as he was of Fire and Spirit: formed Seven Rulers who enclose the cosmos that the sense perceives. Men call their ruling Fate.

10. Straightway from out the downward elements God's Reason (*logos*) leaped up to Nature's pure formation, and was at-oned² with the Formative Mind; for it was co-essential with it. And Nature's downward elements were thus left reason-less, so as to be pure matter.

11. Then the Formative Mind ([at-oned] with Reason), he who surrounds the spheres and spins them with his whirl, set turning his formations, and let them turn from a beginning boundless unto an endless end. For that the circulation of these [spheres] begins where it doth end, as Mind doth will. And from the downward elements Nature brought forth lives reason-less; for He did not extend the Reason (*logos*) [to them]. The Air brought forth things winged; the Water things that swim, and Earth-and-Water one from another parted, as Mind willed. And from her bosom Earth produced what lives she had, four-footed things and reptiles, beasts wild and tame.

12. But All-Father Mind, being Life and Light, did bring forth Man co-equal to Himself, with whom He fell in love, as being His own child; for he was beautiful beyond compare, the Image of his Sire. In very truth, God fell in love with His own Form; and on him did bestow all of His own formations.

13. And when he gazed upon what the Enformer had created in the Father, [Man] too wished to enform; and [so] assent was given him by the Father. Changing his state to the formative sphere, in that he was to have his whole authority, he gazed

¹ [§§9-15 continue the utterance of Poimandres.]

² [Here and elsewhere, "united" would be better. Modern usage of the English verb "atone" hardly carries the idea of "unite," even if this is its etymology.]

upon his Brother's creatures. They fell in love with him, and gave him each a share of his own ordering. And after that he had well-learned their essence and had become a sharer in their nature, he had a mind to break right through the Boundary of their spheres, and to subdue the might of that which pressed upon the Fire.

14. So he who hath the whole authority o'er [all] the mortals in the cosmos and o'er its lives irrational, bent his face downwards through the Harmony: breaking right through its strength, and showed to downward Nature God's fair Form. And when she saw that Form of beauty which can never satiate, and him who [now] possessed within himself each single energy of [all seven] Rulers as well as God's [own] Form, she smiled with love; for 'twas as though she'd seen the image of Man's fairest form upon her Water, his shadow on her Earth. He in his turn beholding the form like to himself, existing in her, in her Water, loved it and willed to live in it; and with the will came act, and [so] he vivified the form devoid of reason. And Nature took the object of her love and wound herself completely round him, and they were intermingled, for they were lovers.

15. And this is why beyond all creatures on the earth man is twofold; mortal because of body, but because of the essential Man immortal. Though deathless and possessed of sway o'er all, yet doth he suffer as a mortal death, subject to Fate. Thus though above the Harmony, within the Harmony he hath become a slave. Though male-female: as from a Father male-female, and though he's sleepless from a sleepless [Sire], yet is he overcome [by sleep].

16. Thereon [I say: Teach on],¹ O Mind of me, for I myself as well am amorous of the Word (*logos*).

The Shepherd said: This is the mystery kept hid until this day. Nature embraced by Man brought forth a wonder, oh so wonderful. For as he had the nature of the Concord of the Seven, who, as I said to thee, [were made] of Fire and Spirit — Nature delayed not, but immediately brought forth seven "men," in correspondence with the natures of the Seven, male-female and moving in the air.

¹ [There is a lacuna in the text which Mead has conjecturally filled in.]

Thereon [I said]: O Shepherd, . . .;¹ for now I'm filled with great desire and long to hear; do not run off.²

The Shepherd said: Keep silence, for not as yet have I unrolled for thee the first discourse (*logos*).

Lo! I am still, I said.

17. In such wise then, as I have said,³ the generation of these seven came to pass. Earth was as woman, her Water filled with longing; ripeness she took from Fire, spirit from ather. Nature thus brought forth frames to suit the form of Man. And Man from Life and Light changed into soul and mind,—from Life to soul, from Light to mind. And thus continued all the sense-world's parts until the period of their end and new beginnings.

18. Now listen to the rest of the discourse (*logos*) which thou dost long to hear. The period being ended, the bond that bound them all was loosened by God's Will. For all the animals being male-female, at the same time with man were loosed apart; some became partly male, some in like fashion [partly] female. And straightway God spake by His Holy Word (*logos*): "Increase ye in increasing, and multiply in multitude, ye creatures and creations all; and man that hath Mind in him, let him learn to know that he himself is deathless, and that the cause of death is love, though Love is all."

19. When He said this, His Forethought did by means of Fate and Harmony effect their couplings and their generations founded. And so all things were multiplied according to their kind. And he who thus hath learned to know himself, hath reached that Good which doth transcend abundance; but he who through a love that leads astray, expends his love upon his body,—he stays in Darkness wandering, and suffering through his senses things of Death.

20. What is the so great fault, said I, the ignorant commit, that they should be deprived of deathlessness?

Thou seem'st, he said, O thou, not to have given heed to what thou heardest. Did not I bid thee *think*?

¹ [Lacuna.]

² [A rather literal translation; "do not digress" or "do not go too fast" might be more appropriate in the context.]

³ [Poimandres is thus the speaker again here, until the end of § 19.]

Yea do I think, and I remember, and therefore give Thee thanks.

If thou didst think [thereon], [said He], tell me: Why do they merit death who are in Death?

It is because the gloomy Darkness is the root and base of the material frame; from it came the Moist Nature; from this the body in the sense-world was composed; and from this body Death doth the Water drain.

21. Right was thy thought, O thou! But how doth “he who knows himself, go unto Him,” as God’s Word (*logos*) hath declared?

And I reply: the Father of the universals doth consist of Light and Life, and from Him Man was born.

Thou sayest well, [thus] speaking. Light and Life is Father-God, and from Him Man was born. If then thou learnest that thou art thyself of Life and Light, and that thou [only] *happen’st* to be out of them, thou shalt return again to Life. Thus did Man-Shepherd speak.

But tell me further, Mind of me, I cried, *how* shall I come to Life again . . . for God doth say: “The man who hath Mind in him, let him learn to know that he himself [is deathless].”

22. Have not all men then Mind?

Thou sayest well, O thou, thus speaking. I, Mind, myself am present with holy men and good, the pure and merciful, men who live piously. [To such] my presence doth become an aid, and straightway they gain gnosis of all things, and win the Father’s love by their pure lives, and give Him thanks, invoking on Him blessings, and chanting hymns, intent on Him with ardent love. And ere they give the body up unto its proper death, they turn them with disgust from its sensations, from knowledge of what things they operate. Nay, it is I, the Mind, that will not let the operations which befall the body, work to their [natural] end. For being door-keeper I’ll close up [all] the entrances, and cut the mental actions off which base and evil energies induce.

23. But to the Mind-less ones, the wicked and depraved, the envious and covetous, and those who murder do and love impiety, I am far off, yielding my place to the Avenging

Daimon, who sharpening the fire, tormenteth him and addeth fire to fie upon him, and rusheth on him through his senses, thus rendering him the readier for transgressions of the law, so that he meets with greater torment; nor doth he ever cease to have desire for appetites inordinate, insatiably striving in the dark.

24. Well hast thou taught me all, as I desired, O Mind. And now, pray, tell me further of the nature of the Way Above as now it is [for me].

To this Man-Shepherd said: When thy material body is to be dissolved, first thou surrenderest the body by itself unto the work of change, and thus the form thou hadst doth vanish, and thou surrenderest thy way of life: void of its energy, unto the Daimon. The body's senses next pass back into their sources, becoming separate, and resurrect as energies; and passion and desires withdraw unto that nature which is void of reason.

25. And thus it is that man doth speed his way thereafter upwards through the Harmony. To the first zone he gives the Energy of Growth and Waning; unto the second [zone], Device of Evils [now] de-energized; unto the third, the Guile of the Desires de-energized; unto the fourth, his Domineering Arrogance, [also] de-energized; unto the fifth, unholy Daring and the Rashness of Audacity, de-energized; unto the sixth, Striving for Wealth by evil means, deprived of its aggrandisement; and to the seventh zone, Ensnaring Falsehood, de-energized.

26. And then, with all the energizings of the Harmony stript from him, clothed in his proper Power, he cometh to that Nature which belongs unto the Eighth,¹ and there with those-that-are hymneth the Father. They who are there welcome his coming there with joy; and he, made like to them that sojourn there, doth further hear the Powers who are above the Nature that belongs unto the Eighth, singing their songs of praise to God in language of their own. And then they, in a band, go to the Father home; of their own selves they make surrender of themselves to Powers, and [thus] becoming Powers they are in God. This the good end for those who have gained Gnosis—to

¹ [Compare NHC VI, 6, "The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth."]

be made one with God. Why shouldst thou then delay? Must it not be, since thou hast all received, that thou shouldst to the worthy point the way, in order that through thee the race of mortal kind may by [thy] God be saved?

27. This when He'd said, Man-Shepherd mingled with the Powers. But I, with thanks and blessings unto the Father of the universal [Powers], was freed, full of the power He had poured into me, and full of what He'd taught me of the nature of the All and of the loftiest Vision. And I began to preach to men the Beauty of Devotion and of Gnosis: O ye people, earth-born folk, ye who have given yourselves to drunkenness and sleep and ignorance of God, be sober now, cease from your surfeit, cease to be glamoured by irrational sleep !

28. And when they heard, they came with one accord. Whereon I say: Ye earth-born folk, why have ye given up yourselves to Death, while yet ye have the power of sharing Deathlessness? Repent, O ye, who walk with Error arm in arm and make of Ignorance the sharer of your board; get ye from out the light of Darkness, and take your part in Deathlessness, forsake Destruction!

29. And some of them with jests upon their lips departed [from me], abandoning themselves unto the Way of Death; others entreated to be taught, casting themselves before my feet. But I made them arise, and I became a leader of the Race towards home, teaching the words (*logoi*), how and in what way they shall be saved. I sowed in them the words (*logoi*) of wisdom; of Deathless Water were they given to drink. And when even was come and all sun's beams began to set, I bade them all give thanks to God. And when they had brought to an end the giving of their thanks, each man returned to his own resting place.

30. But I recorded in my heart Man-Shepherd's benefaction, and with my every hope fulfilled more than rejoiced. For body's sleep became the soul's awakening, and closing of the eyes—true vision, pregnant with Good my silence, and the utterance of my word (*logos*) begetting of good things. All this befell me from my Mind, that is Man-Shepherd, Word (*logos*) of all

masterhood, by whom being God-inspired I came unto the Plain of Truth. Wherefore with all my soul and strength thanksgiving give I unto Father-God.

31. Holy art Thou, O God, the universals' Father.

Holy art Thou, O God, whose Will perfects itself by means of its own Powers.

Holy art Thou, O God, who willeth to be known and art known by Thine own.

Holy art Thou, who didst by Word (*logos*) make to consist the things that are.

Holy art Thou, of whom All-nature hath been made an Image.

Holy art Thou, whose Form Nature hath never made.

Holy art Thou, more powerful than all power.

Holy art Thou, transcending all pre-eminence.

Holy Thou art, Thou better than all praise.

Accept my reason's offerings pure, from soul and heart for aye stretched up to Thee, O Thou unutterable, unspeakable, Whose Name naught but the Silence can express.

32. Give ear to me who pray that I may ne'er of Gnosis fail, [Gnosis] which is our common being's nature; and fill me with Thy Power, and with this Grace [of Thine], that I may give the Light to those in ignorance of the Race, my Brethren, and Thy Sons. For this cause I believe, and I bear witness; I go to Life and Light. Blessed art Thou, O Father. Thy Man would holy be as Thou art holy, e'en as Thou gavest him Thy full authority [to be].

C.H. II: To Asclepius¹

1. *Hermes*. All that is moved, Asclepius, is it not moved *in* something and *by* something?

Asclepius. Assuredly.

Her. And must not that in which it's moved be greater than the moved?

Asc. It must.

Her. Mover, again, has greater power than the moved?

Asc. It has, of course.

Her. The nature, furthermore, of that in which it's moved must be quite other from the nature of the moved?

Asc. It must, completely.

2. *Her*. Is not, again, this cosmos vast, [so vast] that than it there exists no body greater?

Asc. Assuredly.

Her. And massive too, for it is crammed with multitudes of other frames, nay rather all the other bodies that there are?

Asc. It is.

Her. And yet cosmos is a body?

Asc. It is a body.

Her. And one that's moved?

3. *Asc*. Assuredly.

Her. Of what size, then, must be the space² in which it's moved; and of what kind [must be] the nature [of that space]? Must it not be far vaster [than the cosmos], in order that it may be able to find room for its continued course, so that the moved may not be cramped for want of room and lose its motion?

Asc. Something, Thrice-greatest one, it needs must be, immensely vast

¹ [The title is Mead's. In the earliest known MS., C.H. I is followed by a title: "Hermes to Tat: General Sermon" which clearly does not belong to this discourse, a dialogue in which Asclepius is the interlocutor; several pages including the title and possibly opening of the present work thus apparently went missing from the prototype MS. of the *Corpus*. The bulk of this discourse also appears in the anthology of Stobæus; the Stobæus excerpt begins at the same point as that in the C.H. MSS.]

² ["Space" throughout renders the Greek *τοπος*; Copenhagen has 'place.']

4. *Her.* And of what nature? Must it not be, Asclepius, of just the contrary? And is not contrary to body bodiless?

Asc. Agreed.

Her. Space, then, is bodiless. But bodiless must either be some godlike thing or God [Himself]. And by "some godlike thing" I mean no more the generable but the ingenerable.

5. If, then, space be some godlike thing, it is substantial; but if 'tis God [Himself], it transcends substance. But it is to be thought of otherwise [than God], and in this way. God is first "thinkable" for us, not for Himself, for that the thing that's thought doth fall beneath the thinker's sense. God then can not be "thinkable" unto Himself, in that He's thought of by Himself as being nothing else than what He thinks. but He is "something else" for us, and so He's thought of by us.

6. If space is, therefore, to be thought, [it should] not, [then, be thought as] God, but space. If God is also to be thought, [He should] not [be conceived] as space, but energy that can contain [all space]. Further, all that is moved is moved not in the moved but in the stable. And that which moves [another] is of course stationary, for 'tis impossible that it should move with it.

Asc. How is it, then, that things down here, Thrice-greatest one, are moved *with* those that are [already] moved? For thou hast said the errant spheres were moved by the inerrant one.

Her. This is not, O Asclepius, a moving *with*, but one *against*; they are not moved *with* one another, but one *against* the other. I is this contrariety which turneth the resistance of their motion into rest. For that resistance is the rest of motion.

7. Hence, too, the errant spheres, being moved contrarily to the inerrant one, are moved by one another by mutual contrariety, [and also] by the stable one through contrariety itself. And this can otherwise not be. The Bears up there, which neither set nor rise,¹ think'st thou they rest or move?

Asc. They move, Thrice-greatest one.

Her. And what their motion, my Asclepius?

Asc. Motion that turns for ever round the same.

¹ [Probably the constellations *Ursa Major* and *Ursa Minor*.]

Her. But revolution—motion round same—is fixed by rest. For “round-the-same” doth stop “beyond-same.” “Beyond-same” then, being stopped, if it be steadied in “round-same”—the contrary stands firm, being rendered ever stable by its contrariety.

8. Of this I'll give thee here on earth an instance, which the eye can see. Regard the animals down here,—a man, for instance, swimming! The water moves, yet the resistance of his hands and feet give him stability, so that he is not borne along with it, nor sunk thereby.

Asc. Thou hast, Thrice-greatest one, adduced a most clear instance.

Her. All motion, then, is caused in station and by station. The motion, therefore, of the cosmos (and of every other hylic animal) will not be caused by things exterior to the cosmos, but by things interior [outward] to the exterior—such [things] as soul, or spirit, or some such other thing incorporal. 'Tis not its body that doth move the living thing in it; nay, not even the whole [body of the universe a lesser] body e'en though there be no life in it.

9. *Asc.* What meanest thou by this, Thrice-greatest one? Is it not bodies, then, that move the stock and stone and all the other things inanimate?

Her. By no means, O Asclepius. The something-in-the-body, the that-which-moves the thing inanimate, this surely's not a body, for that it moves the two of them—both body of the lifter and the lifted? So that a thing that's lifeless will not move a lifeless thing. That which doth move [another thing] is animate, in that it is the mover. Thou seest, then, how heavy laden is the soul, for it alone doth lift two bodies. That things, moreover, moved are moved *in* something as well as moved by something is clear.

10. *Asc.* Yea, O Thrice-greatest one, things moved must needs be moved in something void.

Her. Thou sayest well, O [my] Asclepius! For naught of things that are is void. Alone the “is-not” 's void [and] stranger to subsistence. For that which is subsistent can never change to void.

Asc. Are there, then, O Thrice-greatest one, no such things as an empty cask, for instance, and an empty jar, a cup and vat, and other things like unto them ?

Her. Alack, Asclepius, for thy far-wandering from the truth! Think'st thou that things most full and most replete are void?

11. *Asc.* How meanest thou, Thrice-greatest one?

Her. Is not air body?

Asc. It is.

Her. And doth this body not pervade all things, and so, pervading, fill them? And "body"; doth body not consist from blending of the "four"? Full, then, of air are all thou callest void; and if of air, then of the "four." Further, of this the converse follows, that all thou callest full are void—of air; for that they have their space filled out with other bodies, and, therefore, are not able to receive the air therein. These, then, which thou dost say are void, they should be hollow named, not void; for they not only are, but they are full of air and spirit.

12. *Asc.* Thy argument (*logos*), Thrice-greatest one, is not to be gainsaid; air is a body. Further, it is this body which doth pervade all things, and so, pervading, fill them. What are we, then, to call that space in which the all doth move?

Her. The Bodiless, Asclepius.

Asc. What, then, is Bodiless?

Her. 'Tis Mind and Reason (*logos*), whole out of whole, all self-embracing, free from all body, from all error free, unsensible to body and untouchable, self stayed in self, containing all, preserving those that are, whose rays, to use a likeness, are Good, Truth, Light beyond light, the Archetype of soul.

Asc. What, then, is God?

13. *Her.* Not any one of these is He; for He it is that causeth them to be, both all and each and every thing of all that are. Nor hath He left a thing beside that is-not; but they are all from things-that-are and not from things-that-are-not. For that the things-that-are-not have naturally no power of being anything, but rather have the nature of the inability-to-be. And, conversely, the things-that-are have not the nature of some time not-being.

14. *Asc.* What say'st thou ever, then, God is?

Her. God, therefore, is not Mind, but Cause that the Mind is; God is not Spirit, but Cause that Spirit is; God is not Light, but Cause that the Light is. Hence should one honour God with these two names [the Good and Father]—names which pertain to Him alone and no one else. For no one of the other so-called gods, no one of men, or daimones, can be in any measure Good, but God alone; and He is Good alone and nothing else. The rest of things are separable all from the Good's nature; for [all the rest] are soul and body, which have no space that can contain the Good.

15. For that as mighty is the Greatness of the Good as is the Being of all things that are—both bodies and things bodiless, things sensible and intelligible things. Call not thou, therefore, aught else Good, for thou would'st impious be; nor anything at all at any time call God but Good alone, for so thou would'st again be impious.

16. Though, then, the Good is spoken of by all, it is not understood by all, what thing it is. Not only, then, is God not understood by all, but both unto the gods and some of men they out of ignorance do give the name of Good, though they can never either be or become Good. For they are very different from God, while Good can never be distinguished from Him, for that God is the same as Good. The rest of the immortal ones are natheless honoured with the name of God, and spoken of as gods; but God is Good not out of courtesy but out of nature. For that God's nature and the Good is one; one is the kind of both, from which all other kinds [proceed]. The Good is He who gives all things and naught receives. God, then, doth give all things and receive naught. God, then, is Good, and Good is God.

17. The other name of God is Father, again because He is the that-which-maketh all. The part of father is to make. Wherefore child-making is a very great and a most pious thing in life for them who think aright, and to leave life on earth without a child a very great misfortune and impiety; and he who hath no child is punished by the daimons after death. And this the punishment: that that man's soul who hath no child, shall be condemned unto a body with neither man's nor woman's

nature, a thing accurst beneath the sun. Wherefore, Asclepius, let not your sympathies be with the man who hath no child, but rather pity his mishap, knowing what punishment abides for him. Let all that has been said, then, be to thee, Asclepius, an introduction to the gnosis of the nature of all things.¹

¹ [This final paragraph seems somewhat at odds with the highly ascetic tone of other passages in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (e.g., parts of I, most of IV, the first half or so of XII, much of XIII) and has indeed been suggested (Zielinski (1905), cited by Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, note to C.H. II.17) as being a polemic against world-denying Platonic asceticism. Mead in his commentary points out that in Hinduism, adopting the ascetic life of a religious recluse or wanderer would only normally be acceptable for one who has already lived the life of a "householder" and raised children to adulthood.

More generally, this tension has been taken by some commentators as indicating not simply diversity of authorship but the existence of rival Hermetic schools characterised as "optimist" on the one hand and "pessimist" or "dualist" on the other. If, though, these works were indeed the production of a Mystery-Cult which recognised successive grades of initiation or stage of gnōsis, it is possible that the difference of attitude to the mani(n)fested kosmos rather changed according to what was felt appropriate to each stage, with "optimist" *logoi* targetted at those less advanced students who were only beginning to separate themselves from the world and the "dualist" ones for those deemed closer to final liberation (Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, cited by Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, Introduction xxxix); Mead holds a similar position in some respects (e.g. in his commentary on C.H. VI) but argues in the opposite direction, that the doctrine of hating the body &c. is more generally found in the *logoi* addressed to Tat, who represents the *less* advanced student (see C.H. XIII:2-3 and XIV:1) whereas the more advanced Asclepius gets the more positive world-affirming sermons (though V, one of the more "optimistic" tracts according to Festugière (cited by Copenhaver, note on C.H. V:3) is among the Tat-discourses, and VI, addressed to Asclepius, tends towards dualism); and those where Hermes, rather than addressing a student is receiving revelations direct from divine figures, include the mixed C.H. I and the generally optimistic C.H. XI.]

C.H. III: A Sacred Sermon of Hermes

1. THE glory of all things is God, Godhead and Godly Nature. Source of the things that are is God, who is both Mind and Nature,—yea Matter, the Wisdom that reveals all things. Source [too] is Godhead,—yea Nature, Energy, Necessity, and End, and Making-new-again. Darkness that knew no bounds was in Abyss, and Water [too] and subtle Breath intelligent; these were by Power of God in Chaos. Then Holy Light arose; and there collected 'neath Dry Space from out Moist Essence Elements; all all the Gods do separate things out from fecund Nature.

2. All things being undefined and yet unwrought, the light things were assigned unto the height, the heavy ones had their foundations laid down underneath the moist part of Dry Space, the universal things being bounded off by Fire and hanged in Breath to keep them up. And Heaven was seen in seven circles; its Gods were visible in forms of stars with all their signs; while Nature had her members made articulate together with the Gods in her. And [Heaven's] periphery revolved in cyclic course, borne on by Breath of God.

3. And every God by his own proper power brought forth what was appointed him. Thus there arose four-footed beasts, and creeping things, and those that in the water dwell, and things with wings, and everything that beareth seed, and grass, and shoot of every flower, all having in themselves seed of again-becoming.¹ And they selected out the births of men for gnosis of the works of God and attestation of the energy of Nature; the multitude of men for lordship over all beneath the Heaven and gnosis of its blessings, that they might increase in increasing and multiply in multitude, and every soul infleshed by revolution of the Cyclic Gods, for observation of the marvels of the Heaven and Heaven's Gods' revolution, and of the works of

¹ [παλιγγενεσις; used frequently in C.H. XIII whose main theme is a mystical "rebirth," but nowhere else in the *Corpus*; it is probably meant in a different sense here, especially since this tract is on the face of it represents a far less pessimist and dualist gnōsis than XIII.]

God and energy of Nature, for tokens of its blessings, for gnosis of the power of God, that they might know the fates that follow good and evil [deeds] and learn the cunning work of all good arts.

4. [Thus] there begins their living and their growing wise, according to the fate appointed by the revolution of the Cyclic Gods, and their deceasing for this end. And there shall be memorials mighty of their handiworks upon the earth, leaving dim trace behind when cycles are renewed. For every birth of flesh ensouled, and of the fruit of seed, and every handiwork, though it decay, shall of necessity renew itself, both by the renovation of the Gods and by the turning-round of Nature's rhythmic wheel. For that whereas the Godhead is Nature's evermaking-new-again the cosmic mixture, Nature herself is also co-established in that Godhead.

C.H. IV: The Cup¹ or Monad

Hermes to Tat

1. *Hermes*. With Reason (*logos*), not with hands, did the World-maker make the universal World; so that thou thus shouldst think of Him as everywhere and ever-being, the Author of all things, and One and Only, who by His Will all beings hath created. This Body of Him is a thing no man can touch, or see, or measure, a Body inextensible, like to no other frame. 'Tis neither Fire nor Water, Air nor Breath; yet all of them come from it. Now being Good He willed to consecrate this [Body] to Himself alone, and set its Earth in order and adorn it.

2. So down [to Earth] He sent the Cosmos of this Frame Divine,—man, a life that cannot die, and yet a life that dies. And o'er [all other] lives and over Cosmos [too], did man excel by reason of the Reason (*logos*) and the Mind. For contemplator of God's works did man become; he marvelled and did strive to know their Author.

3. Reason (*logos*) indeed, O Tat, among all men hath He distributed, but Mind not yet; not that He grudgeth any, for grudging cometh not from Him, but hath its place below, within the souls of men who have no Mind.²

Tat. Why then did God, O father, not on all bestow a share of Mind?

Her. He willed, my son, to have it set up in the midst for souls, just as it were a prize.

4. *Tat*. And where hath He had it set up?

Her. He filled a mighty Cup with it, and sent it down, joining a Herald [to it], to whom He gave command to make this proclamation to the hearts of men: Baptize³ thyself with this Cup's baptism, what heart can do so, thou that hast faith thou canst ascend to Him that hath sent down the Cup, thou that dost know for what thou didst come into being! As many

¹ [Κρατήρ is perhaps better rendered "mixing bowl."]

² [This appears to refer to the doctrine of C.H. I 22-23.]

³ [The Greek literally means "immerse."]

then as understood the Herald's tidings and doused themselves in Mind, became partakers in the Gnosis; and when they had "received the Mind" they were made "perfect men." But they who do not understand the tidings, these, since they possess the aid of Reason (*logos*) [only] and not Mind, are ignorant wherefor they have come into being and whereby.

5. The senses of such men are like irrational creatures; and as their [whole] make-up is in their feelings and their impulses, they fail in all appreciation of those things which really are worth contemplation. These centre all their thought upon the pleasures of the body and its appetites, in the belief that for its sake man hath come into being. But they who have received some portion of God's gifts—these, Tat, if we judge by their deeds, have from Death's bonds won their release; for they embrace in their own Mind all things, things on the earth, things in the heaven, and things above the heaven,—if there be aught. And having raised themselves so far they sight the Good; and having sighted It, they look upon their sojourn here as a mischance; and in disdain of all, both things in body and the bodiless, they speed their way unto that One and Only One.

6. This is, O Tat, the Gnosis of the Mind, Vision of things Divine; God-knowledge is it, for the Cup is God's.

Tat. Father, I, too, would be baptized.

Her. Unless thou first shalt hate thy Body, son, thou canst not love thy Self. But if thou lov'st thy Self thou shalt have Mind, and having Mind thou shalt share in the Gnosis.

Tat. Rather, what dost thou mean?

Her. It is not possible, my son, to give thyself to both,—I mean to things that perish and to things divine. For seeing that existing things are twain, Body and Bodiless, in which the perishing and the divine are understood, the man who hath the will to choose is left the choice of one or other; for it can never be the twain should meet. And in those souls to whom the choice is left, the waning of the one causes the other's growth to show itself.

7. Now the choosing of the Better not only makes a lot most fair for him who makes the choice, seeing it makes the man a God, but also shows his piety to God. Whereas the [choosing] of the

Worse, although it doth destroy the “man,” it only doth disturb God’s harmony to this extent, that as processions pass by in the middle of the way, without being able to do anything but take the road from others, so do such men move in procession through the world led by their bodies’ pleasures.

8. This being so, O Tat, what comes from God hath been and will be ours; but that which is dependent on ourselves, let this press onward and have no delay; for ’tis not God, ’tis we who are the cause of evil things, preferring them to good. Thou see’st, son, how many are the bodies through which we have to pass, how many are the choirs of daimones, how vast the system of the star-courses [through which our Path doth lie], to hasten to the One and Only God. For to the Good there is no other shore; It hath no bounds; It is without an end, and for Itself It is without beginning, too, though unto us it *seemeth* to have one—the Gnosis.

9. Therefore to It Gnosis is no beginning; rather is it [that Gnosis doth afford] to us the first beginning of *Its* being *known*. Let us lay hold, therefore, of the beginning, and quickly speed through all [we have to pass]. ’Tis very hard, to leave the things we have grown used to, which meet our gaze on every side, and turn ourselves back to the Old Old [Path]. Appearances delight us, whereas things which appear not make their believing hard. Now evils are the more apparent things, whereas the Good can never show Itself unto the eyes, for It hath neither form nor figure. Therefore the Good is like Itself alone, and unlike all things else; for ’tis impossible that That which hath no body should make Itself apparent to a body.

10. The “Like’s” superiority to the “Unlike” and the “Unlike’s” inferiority unto the “Like” consists in this:

The Oneness¹ being Source and Root of all, is in all things as Root and Source. Without [this] Source is naught; whereas the Source [Itself] is from naught but Itself, since It is Source of all

¹ [Μονάς, the “monad” of the title. This paragraph appears to begin a new subject and it seems likely that the preceding sentence refers back to the passage before and not forward to the discussion of the Monad, a concept derived from Pythagoreanism.]

the rest. It is Itself Its Source, since It may have no other Source. The Oneness then being Source, containeth every number, but is contained by none; engendereth every number, but is engendered by no other one.

11. Now all that is engendered is imperfect, it is divisible, to increase subject and to decrease; but with the Perfect [One] none of these things doth hold. Now that which is increasable increases from the Oneness, but succumbs through its own febleness when it no longer can contain the One. And now, O Tat, God's Image hath been sketched for thee, as far as it can be; and if thou wilt attentively dwell on it and observe it with thy heart's eyes, believe me, son, thou'lt find the Path that leads above; nay, that Image shall become thy Guide itself, because the Sight [Divine] hath this peculiar [charm], it holdeth fast and draweth unto it those who succeed in opening their eyes, just as, they say, the magnet [draweth] iron.

C.H. V: Though Unmanifest God is Most Manifest

Hermes to his son Tat

1. I WILL recount for thee this sermon (*logos*) too, O Tat, that thou may'st cease to be without the mysteries of the God beyond all name. And mark thou well how That which to the many seems unmanifest, will grow most manifest for thee. Now were It manifest, It would not *be*. For all that is made manifest is subject to *becoming*, for it hath been *made* manifest. But the Unmanifest for ever *is*, for It doth not desire to be made manifest. It ever is, and maketh manifest all other things. Being Himself unmanifest, as ever being and ever making-maniest, Himself is not made manifest. God is not made Himself; by thinking-manifest, He thinketh all things manifest. Now, "thinking-manifest" deals with all things made alone, for thinking-manifest is nothing else than making.

2. He, then, alone who is not made, 'tis clear, is both beyond all power of thinking-manifest, and is unmanifest. And as He thinketh all things manifest, He manifests through all things and in all, and most of all in whatsoever things He wills to manifest. Do thou, then, Tat, my son, pray first unto our Lord and Father, the One-and-Only One, from whom the One doth come, to show His mercy unto thee, in order that thou mayest have the power to catch a thought of this so mighty God, one single beam of Him to shine into thy thinking. For thought alone "sees" the Unmanifest, in that it is itself unmanifest. If, then, thou hast the power, He will, Tat, manifest to thy mind's eyes. The Lord begrudgeth not Himself to anything, but manifests Himself through the whole world. Thou hast the power of taking thought, of seeing it and grasping it in thy own "hands," and gazing face to face upon God's Image. But if what is within thee even is unmanifest to thee, how, then, shall He Himself who is within thy self be manifest for thee by means of [outer] eyes?

3. But if thou wouldst “see” Him, bethink thee of the sun, bethink thee of moon's course, bethink thee of the order of the stars. Who is the One who watcheth o'er that order? For every order hath its boundaries marked out by place and number. The sun's the greatest god of gods in heaven; to whom all of the heavenly gods give place as unto king and master. And he, this so-great one, he greater than the earth and sea, endures to have above him circling smaller stars than him. Out of respect to Whom, or out of fear of Whom, my son, [doth he do this]? Nor like nor equal is the course each of these stars describes in heaven. Who [then] is He who marketh out the manner of their course and its extent?

4. The Bear up there that turneth round itself, and carries round the whole cosmos with it—Who is the owner of this instrument? Who He who hath set round the sea its bounds? Who He who hath set on its seat the earth? For, Tat, there is someone who is the Maker and the Lord of all these things. It could not be that number, place and measure could be kept without someone to make them. No order whatsoever could be made by that which lacketh place and lacketh measure; nay, even this is not without a lord, my son. For if the orderless lacks something, in that it is not lord of order's path, it also is beneath a lord—the one who hath not yet ordained it order.

5. Would it were possible for thee to get thee wings, and soar into the air, and, poised midway 'tween earth and heaven, behold the earth's solidity, the sea's fluidity (the flowings of its streams), the spaciousness of air, fire's swiftness, [and] the coursing of the stars, the swiftness of heaven's circuit round them [all]! Most blessed sight were it, my son, to see all these beneath one sway—the motionless in motion, and the unmanifest made manifest; whereby is made this order of the cosmos and the cosmos which we see of order.

6. If thou would'st see Him too through things that suffer death, both on the earth and in the deep; think of a man's being fashioned in the womb, my son, and strictly scrutinize the art of Him who fashions him, and learn who fashioneth this fair and godly image of the Man. Who [then] is He who traceth out the circles of the eyes; who He who boreth out the nostrils and

the ears; who He who openeth [the portal of] the mouth; who He who doth stretch out and tie the nerves; who He who channels out the veins; who He who hardeneth the bones; who He who covereth the flesh with skin; who He who separates the fingers and the joints; who He who widens out a treading for the feet; who He who diggeth out the ducts; who He who spreadeth out the spleen; who He who shapeth heart like to a pyramid; who He who setteth ribs together; who He who wideneth the liver out; who He who maketh lungs like to a sponge; who He who maketh belly stretch so much; who He who doth make prominent the parts most honourable, so that they may be seen, while hiding out of sight those of least honour?

7. Behold how many arts [employed] on one material, how many labours on one single sketch; and all exceeding fair, and all in perfect measure, yet all diversified! Who made them all? What mother, or what sire, save God alone, unmanifest, who hath made all things by His Will?

8. And no one saith a statue or a picture comes to be without a sculptor or [without] a painter; doth [then] such workmanship as this exist without a Worker? What depth of blindness, what deep impiety, what depth of ignorance! See, [then] thou ne'er, son Tat, deprivest works of Worker! Nay, rather is He greater than all names, so great is He, the Father of them all. For verily He is the Only One; and this His work, to be a father.

9. So, if thou forcest me somewhat too bold, to speak, His being is conceiving of all things and making [them]. And as without its maker it is impossible that anything should be, so ever is He not unless He ever makes all things, in heaven, in air, in earth, in deep, in all of cosmos, in every part that is and that is not of everything. For there is naught in all the world that is not He. He is Himself, both things that are and things that are not. The things that are He hath made manifest, He keepeth things that are not in Himself.

10. He is the God beyond all name; He the unmanifest, He the most manifest; He whom the mind [alone] can contemplate, He visible unto the eyes [as well]; He is the one of no body, the one of many bodies, nay, rather He of every body. Naught is there

which He is not. For all are He and He is all. And for this cause hath He all names, in that they are one Father's. And for this cause hath He Himself no name, in that He's Father of [them] all. *Who*, then, may sing Thee praise of Thee, or [praise] to Thee? *Whither*, again, am I to turn my eyes to sing Thy praise; above, below, within, without? There is no way, no place [is there] about Thee, nor any other thing of things that are. All [are] in Thee; all [are] from Thee, O Thou who givest all and takest naught, for Thou hast all and naught is there Thou hast not.

11. And *when*, O Father, shall I hymn Thee? For none can seize Thy hour or time. *For what*, again, shall I sing hymn? For things that Thou hast made, or things Thou hast not? For things Thou hast made manifest, or things Thou hast concealed? *How*, further, shall I hymn Thee? As being of myself? As having something of mine own? As being other? For that Thou art whatever I may be; Thou art whatever I may do ; Thou art whatever I may speak. For Thou art all, and there is nothing else which Thou art not. Thou art all that which doth exist, and Thou art what doth not exist,—Mind when Thou thinkest, and Father when Thou makest, and God when Thou dost energize, and Good and Maker of all things

(For that the subtler part of matter is the air, of air the soul, of soul the mind, and of mind God.)¹

¹ [This sentence is repeated from C.H. XII:14 and is probably a scribal gloss or comment that got appended to the text in error.]

C.H. VI: In God Alone is Good and Elsewhere Nowhere

1. GOOD, O Asclepius, is in none else save God alone; nay, rather, Good is God Himself eternally. If it be so, [Good] must be essence, from every kind of motion and becoming free (though naught is free from It), possessed of stable energy around Itself, never too little, nor too much, an ever-full supply. [Though] one, yet [is It] source of all; for what supplieth all is Good. When I, moreover, say [supplieth] *altogether* [all], it is *for ever* Good. But this belongs to no one else save God alone. For He stands not in need of any thing, so that desiring it He should be bad; nor can a single thing of things that are be lost to Him, on losing which He should be pained; for pain is part of bad. Nor is there aught superior to Him, that He should be subdued by it; nor any peer to Him to do Him wrong, or [so that] He should fall in love on its account; nor aught that gives no ear to Him, whereat He should grow angry; nor wiser aught, for Him to envy.

2. Now as all these are non-existent in His being, what is there left but Good alone? For just as naught of bad is to be found in such transcendent Being, so too in no one of the rest will Good be found. For in them all are all the other things—both in the little and the great, both in each severally and in this living one that's greater than them all and mightiest [of them]. For things subject to birth abound in passions, birth in itself being passible. But where there's passion, nowhere is there Good; and where is Good, nowhere a single passion. For where is day, nowhere is night; and where is night, day is nowhere. Wherefore in genesis the Good can never be, but only be in the ingenerate. But seeing that the sharing in all things hath been bestowed on matter, so doth it share in Good. In this way is the Cosmos good; that, in so far as it doth make all things, as far as making goes it's Good, but in all other things it is not Good. For it's both passible and subject unto motion, and maker of things passible.

3. Whereas in man by greater or by less of bad is good determined. For what is not too bad down here, is good; and good down here is the least part of bad. It cannot, therefore, be that good down here should be quite clean of bad, for down here good is fouled with bad; and being fouled, it stays no longer good, and staying not it changes into bad. In God alone, is, therefore, Good, or rather Good is God Himself. So then, Asclepius, the *name* alone of Good is found in men, the thing itself nowhere [in them], for this can never be. For no material body doth contain It,—a thing bound on all sides by bad, by labours, pains, desires and passions, by error and by foolish thoughts. And greatest ill of all, Asclepius, is that each of these things that have been said above, is thought down here to be the greatest good. And what is still an even greater ill, is belly-lust, the error that doth lead the band of all the other ills—the thing that makes us turn down here from Good.

4. And I, for my own part, give thanks to God, that He hath cast it in my mind about the Gnosis of the Good, that it can never be It should be in the world. For that the world is “fullness”¹ of the bad, but God of Good, and Good of God. The excellencies of the Beautiful are round the very essence [of the Good]; nay, they do seem too pure, too unalloyed; perchance ’tis they that are themselves Its essences. For one may dare to say, Asclepius,—if essence, sooth, He have—God’s essence is the Beautiful; the Beautiful is further also Good. There is no Good that can be got from objects in the world. For all the things that fall beneath the eye are image—things and pictures as it were; while those that do not meet [the eye are the realities], especially the [essence] of the Beautiful and Good.² Just as the eye cannot see God, so can it not behold the Beautiful and Good. For that they are integral parts of God, wedded to Him alone, inseparate familiars, most beloved, with whom God is Himself in love, or they with God.

5. If thou canst God conceive, thou shalt conceive the Beautiful and God, transcending Light, made lighter than the Light by God. That Beauty is beyond compare, inimitate that Good, e’en

¹ [πληρωμα; a technical term in some Gnostic systems.]

² [Mead has conjecturally restored a lacuna in the text.]

as God is Himself. As, then, thou dost conceive of God, conceive the Beautiful and Good. For they cannot be joined with aught of other things that live, since they can never be divorced from God. Seek'st thou for God, thou seekest for the Beautiful. One is the Path that leadeth unto It—Devotion joined with Gnosis.

6. And thus it is that they who do not know and do not tread Devotion's Path, do dare to call man beautiful and good, though he have ne'er e'en in his visions seen a whit that's Good, but is enwrapped with every kind of bad, and thinks the bad is good, and thus doth make unceasing use of it, and even feareth that it should be ta'en from him, so straining every nerve not only to preserve but even to increase it. Such are the things that men call good and beautiful, Asclepius,—things which we cannot flee or hate; for hardest thing of all is that we've need of them and cannot live without them.

C.H. VII: The Greatest Ill among Men is Ignorance of God¹

1. WHITHER stumble ye, sots, who have sopped up the wine of ignorance unmixed, and can so far not carry it that ye already even spew it forth? Stay ye, be sober, gaze upwards with the [true] eyes of the heart! And if ye cannot all, yet ye at least who can! For that the ill of ignorance doth pour o'er all the earth and overwhelm the soul that's battened down within the body, preventing it from fetching port within Salvation's harbours.

2. Be then not carried off by the fierce flood, but using the shore-current, ye who can, make for Salvation's port, and, harbouring there, seek ye for one to take you by the hand and lead you unto Gnosis' gates. Where shines clear Light, of every darkness clean; where not a single soul is drunk, but sober all they gaze with their hearts' eyes on Him who willeth to be seen. No ear can hear Him, nor can eye see Him, nor tongue speak of Him, but [only] mind and heart. But first thou must tear off from thee the cloak which thou dost wear,—the web of ignorance, the ground of bad, corruption's chain, the carapace of darkness, the living death, sensation's corpse, the tomb thou carriest with thee, the robber in thy house, who through the things he loveth, hateth thee, and through the things he hateth, bears thee malice.

3. Such is the hateful cloak thou wearest,—that throttles thee [and holds thee] down to it, in order that thou may'st not gaze above, and, having seen the Beauty of the Truth, and Good that dwells therein, detest the bad of it; having found out the plot that it hath schemed against thee, by making void of sense those seeming things which men think senses. For that it hath with mass of matter blocked them up and crammed them full of loathsome lust, so that thou may'st not hear about the things that thou should'st hear, nor see the things that thou should'st see.

¹ [This diatribe has no internal statement of authorship or addressee.]

C.H. VIII: That no one of Existing Things doth Perish, but Men in Error Speak of their Changes as Destructions and as Deaths

[Hermes to Tat.]¹

1. [*Hermes.*] Concerning Soul and Body, son, we now must speak; in what way Soul is deathless, and whence comes the activity in composing and dissolving Body. For there's no *death* for aught of things [that are]; the thought [this] word conveys, is either void of fact, or [simply] by the knocking off a syllable what is called "death," doth stand for "deathless." For death is of destruction, and nothing in the Cosmos is destroyed. For if Cosmos is second God, a life that cannot die, it cannot be that any part of this immortal life should die. All things in Cosmos are part of Cosmos, and most of all is man, the rational animal.

2. For truly first of all, eternal and transcending birth, is God the universals' Maker. Second is he "after His image," Cosmos, brought into being by Him, sustained and fed by Him, made deathless, as by his own Sire, living for aye, as ever free from death. Now that which ever-liveth, differs from the Eternal; for He hath not been brought to being by another, and even if He have been brought to being, He hath not been brought into being by Himself, but ever is brought into being. For the Eternal, in that It is eternal, is the all. The Father is Himself eternal of Himself, but Cosmos hath become eternal and immortal by the Father.

3. And of the matter stored beneath it, the Father made of it a universal body, and packing it together made it spherical—wrapping it round the life—[a sphere] which is immortal in itself, and that doth make materiality eternal. But He, the Father, full-filled with His ideas, did sow the lives into the

¹ [An interpolation by Mead. The interlocutor is not named in the text or original title; but the speaker addresses him as 'son' which elsewhere in C.H. is restricted to Tat.]

sphere, and shut them in as in a cave, willing to order forth the life with every kind of living. So He with deathlessness enclosed the universal body, that matter might not wish to separate itself from body's composition, and so dissolve into its own [original] unorder. For matter, son, when it was yet incorporate, was in unorder. And it doth still retain down here this [nature of unorder] enveloping the rest of the small lives—that increase-and-decrease which men call death.

4. It is round earthly lives that this unorder doth exist. For that the bodies of the heavenly ones preserve one order allotted to them from the Father as their rule; and it is by the restoration of each one [of them] this order is preserved indissolute. The "restoration" then of bodies on the earth is [thus their] composition, whereas their dissolution restores them to those bodies which can never be dissolved, that is to say, which know no death. Privation, thus, of sense is brought about, not loss of bodies.

5. Now the third life—Man, after the image of the Cosmos made, [and] having mind, after the Father's will, beyond all earthly lives—not only doth have feeling with the second God, but also hath conception of the first; for of the one 'tis sensible as of a body, while of the other it conceives as bodiless and the Good Mind.

[*Tat.*] Doth then this life not perish?

[*Her.*] Hush, son! and understand what God, what Cosmos [is], what is a life that cannot die, and what a life subject to dissolution. Yea, understand the Cosmos is by God and in God; but Man by Cosmos and in Cosmos. The source and limit and the constitution of all things is God.

C.H. IX: On Thought and Sense

That the Beautiful and Good is in God only
and Elsewhere Nowhere.¹

1. I GAVE the Perfect Sermon (*logos*), yesterday, Asclepius;² today I think it right, as sequel thereunto, to go through point by point the Sermon about Sense. Now sense and thought do seem to differ, in that the former has to do with matter, the latter has to do with substance. But unto me both seem to be at-one and not to differ—in men I mean. In other lives sense is at-oned with nature, but in men thought. Now mind doth differ just as much from thought as God doth from divinity. For that divinity by God doth come to be, and by mind thought, the sister of the word (*logos*) and instruments of one another. For neither doth the word (*logos*) find utterance without thought, nor is thought manifested without word.

2. So sense and thought both flow together into man, as though they were entwined with one another. For neither without sensing can one think, nor without thinking sense. But it is possible [they say] to think a thing apart from sense, as those who fancy sights in dreams. But unto me it seems that both of these activities occur in dream-sight, and sense doth pass out of the sleeping to the waking state. For man is separated into soul and body, and only when the two sides of his sense agree together, does utterance of its thought conceived by mind take place.

3. For it is mind that doth conceive all thoughts—good thoughts when it receives the seeds from God, their contraries when [it receiveth them] from one of the daimonials; no part of Cosmos being free of daimon, who stealthily doth creep into the daimon who's illumined by God's Light: and sow in him the seed of its own energy. And mind conceives the seed thus sown, adultery,

¹ [This apparent sub-title has nothing to do with the contents of this *logos* and is a slightly modified version of the title of C.H. VI. (also addressed to Asclepius). Possibly it was originally a scribal note, cross-referencing to that tract, which was turned into part of the title of the present sermon by the error of a later copyist.]

² [*Logos teleios* is the probable original title of the long discourse more commonly known as the *Asclepius*.]

murder, parricide, [and] sacrilege, impiety, [and] strangling, casting down precipices, and all such other deeds as are the work of evil daimones.

4. The seeds of God, 'tis true, are few, but vast and fair, and good-virtue and self-control, devotion. Devotion is God-gnosis; and he who knoweth God, being filled with all good things, thinks godly thoughts and not thoughts like the many [think]. For this cause they who Gnostic are, please not the many, nor the many them. They are thought mad and laughed at; they're hated and despised, and sometimes even put to death. For we did say that bad must needs dwell here on earth, where 'tis in its own place. Its place is earth, and not Cosmos, as some will sometimes say with impious tongue. But he who is a devotee of God, will bear with all—once he has sensed the Gnosis. For such an one all things, e'en though they be for others bad, are for him good; deliberately he doth refer them all unto the Gnosis. And, thing most marvellous, 'tis he alone who maketh bad things good.

5. But I return once more to the Discourse (*logos*) on Sense. That sense doth share with thought in man, doth constitute him man. But 'tis not [every] man, as I have said, who benefits by thought; for this man is material, that other one substantial. For the material man, as I have said, [consorting] with the bad, doth have his seed of thought from daimons; while the substantial men [consorting] with the Good, are saved by God. Now God is Maker of all things, and in His making, He maketh all [at last] like to Himself; but they, while they're becoming good by exercise of their activity, are unproductive things. It is the working of the Cosmic Course that maketh their becomings what they are, befouling some of them with bad and others of them making clean with good. For Cosmos, too, Asclepius, possesseth sense-and-thought peculiar to itself, not like to that of man; 'tis not so manifold, but as it were a better and a simpler one.

6. The single sense-and-thought of Cosmos is to make all things, and make them back into itself again, as Organ of the Will of God, so organised that it, receiving all the seeds into

itself from God, and keeping them within itself, may make all manifest, and [then] dissolving them, make them all new again; and thus, like a Good Gardener of Life, things that have been dissolved, it taketh to itself, and giveth them renewal once again. There is no thing to which it gives not life; but taking all unto itself it makes them live, and is at the same time the Place of Life and its Creator.

7. Now bodies matter [-made] are in diversity. Some are of earth, of water some, some are of air, and some of fire. But they are all composed; some are more [composite], and some are simpler. The heavier ones are more [composed], the lighter less so. It is the speed of Cosmos' Course that works the manifoldness of the kinds of births. For being a most swift Breath, it doth bestow their qualities on bodies together with the One Pleroma—that of Life.

8. God, then, is Sire of Cosmos; Cosmos, of [all] in Cosmos. And Cosmos is God's Son; but things in Cosmos are by Cosmos. And properly hath it been called Cosmos [Order]; for that it orders all with their diversity of birth, with its not leaving aught without its life, with the unweariedness of its activity, the speed of its necessity, the composition of its elements, and order of its creatures. The same, then, of necessity and of propriety should have the name of Order. The sense-and-thought, then, of all lives doth come into them from without, inbreathed by what contains [them all]; whereas Cosmos receives them once for all together with its coming into being, and keeps them as a gift from God.

9. But God is not, as some suppose, beyond the reach of sense-and-thought. It is through superstition men thus impiously speak. For all the things that are, Asclepius, all are in God, are brought by God to be, and do depend on Him—both things that act through bodies, and things that through soul-substance make [other things] to move, and things that make things live by means of spirit, and things that take unto themselves the things that are worn out. And rightly so; nay, I would rather say, He doth not have these things; but I speak forth the truth, He is them all Himself. He doth not get them from without, but gives them out [from Him]. This is God's sense-and-thought, ever to

move all things. And never time shall be when e'en a whit of things that are shall cease; and when I say "a whit of things that are," I mean a whit of God. For things that are, God hath; nor aught [is there] without Him, nor [is] He without aught.

10. These things should seem to thee, Asclepius, if thou dost understand them, true; but if thou dost not understand, things not to be believed. To understand is to believe, to not believe is not to understand. My word (*logos*) doth go before [thee] to the truth. But mighty is the mind, and when it hath been led by word up to a certain point, it hath the power to come before [thee] to the truth. And having thought o'er all these things, and found them consonant with those which have already been translated by the reason, it hath [e'en now] believed, and found its rest in that Fair Faith. To those, then, who by God[*'s* good aid] do understand the things that have been said [by us] above, they're credible; but unto those who understand them not, incredible. Let so much, then, suffice on thought-and-sense.

C.H. X: The Key

Of Thrice-Greatest Hermes

1. *Hermes*. My yesterday's discourse (*logos*) I did devote to thee, Asclepius, and so 'tis [only] right I should devote to-day's to Tat; and this the more because 'tis the abridgement of the General Sermons (*Logoi*) which he has had addressed to him. "God, Father and the Good," then, Tat, hath the same nature, or more exactly, *energy*. For *nature* is a predicate of growth, and used of things that change, both mobile and immobile, that is to say, both human and divine, each one of which He *willeth* into being. But *energy* consists in something else, as we have shown in treating of the rest, both things divine and human things; which thing we ought to have in mind when treating of the Good.

2. God's energy is then His Will; further His essence is to will the being of all things. For what is "God and Father and the Good" but the to be of all that are not yet? Nay, subsistence a self of everything that is;—this, then, is God, this Father, this the Good; to Him is added naught of all the rest. And though the Cosmos, that is to say the Sun, is also sire himself to them that share in him; yet so far is he not the cause of good unto the lives, he is not even of their living. So that e'en if he be a sire, he is entirely so by the compulsion of the Good's Good-will, apart from which nor being nor becoming could e'er be.

3. Again, the parent is the children's cause, both on the father's and the mother's side, only by *sharing in* the Good's desire [that doth pour] through the Sun. It is the Good which doeth the creating. And such a power can be possessed by no one else than Him alone who *taketh* naught, but *wills* all things to be; I will not, Tat, say *makes*. For that the maker is defective for long periods (in which he sometimes makes, and sometimes doth not make) both in the quality and in the quantity [of what he makes]; in that he sometimes maketh them so many and such like, and sometimes the reverse. But "God and Father and the Good" is [cause] for all to be. So are at least these things for who can see.

4. For It doth will to be, and It is both Itself and most of all by reason of Itself. Indeed all other things beside are just because of It; for the distinctive feature of the Good is “that it should be known.” Such is the Good, O Tat.

Tat. Thou hast, O father, filled us so full of this so good and fairest Sight, that thereby my mind’s eye hath now become for me almost a thing to worship. For that the Vision of the Good doth not, like the sun’s beam, fire-like blaze on the eyes and make them close; nay, on the contrary, it shineth forth and maketh to increase the seeing of the eye, as far as e’er a man hath the capacity to hold the inflow of the radiance that the mind alone can see. Not only does it come more swiftly down to us, but it does us no harm, and is instinct with all immortal life.

5. They who are able to drink in a somewhat more than others of this Sight, oftentimes from out the body fall asleep into this fairest Spectacle, as was the case with Uranus and Cronus, our forebears. May this be our lot too, O father mine!

Her. Yea, may it be, my son! But as it is, we are not yet strung to the Vision, and not as yet have we the power our mind’s eye to unfold and gaze upon the Beauty of the Good-Beauty that naught can e’er corrupt or any comprehend. For [only] then wilt thou upon It gaze when thou canst say no word concerning It. For Gnosis of the Good is holy silence and a giving holiday to every sense.

6. For neither can he who perceiveth It, perceive aught else; nor he who gazeth on It, gaze on aught else; nor hear aught else, nor stir his body any way. Staying his body’s every sense and every motion he stayeth still. And shining then all round his mind, It shines through his whole soul, and draws it out of body, transforming all of him to essence. For it is possible, my son, that a man’s soul should be made like to God, e’en while it still is in a body, if it doth contemplate the Beauty of the Good.

7. *Tat.* Made like to God! what dost thou, father, mean?

Her. Of every soul apart are transformations, son.

Tat. That meanest thou? Apart!

Her. Didst thou not, in the General Sermons, hear that from One Soul—the All-soul—come all these souls which are made to revolve in all the cosmos, as though divided off? Of these souls,

then, it is that there are many changes, some to a happier lot and some to [just] the contrary of this. Thus some that were once creeping things change into things that in the water dwell, the souls of water things change to earth-dwellers, those that live on the earth change into things with wings, and souls that live in air change into men, while human souls reach the first step of deathlessness changed into daimones. And so they circle to the choir of the Inerrant Gods; for of the Gods there are two choirs, the one Inerrant, and the other Errant. And this is the most perfect glory of the soul.

8. But if a soul on entering in the body of a man persisteth in its vice, it neither tasteth deathlessness nor shareth in the Good; but speeding back again it turns into the path that leads to creeping things. This is the sentence of the vicious soul. And the soul's vice is ignorance. For that the soul who hath no knowledge of the things that are, or knowledge of their nature, or of Good, is blinded by the body's passions and tossed about. This wretched soul, not knowing what she is, becomes the slave of bodies of strange form in sorry plight, bearing the body as a load; not as the ruler, but the ruled. This [ignorance] is the soul's vice.

9. But on the other hand the virtue of the soul is Gnosis. For he who knows, he good and pious is, and still while on the earth divine.

Tat. But who is such an one, O father mine?

Her. He who doth not say much or lend his ear to much. For he who spendeth time in arguing and hearing arguments, doth shadow fight. For "God, the Father and the Good," is not to be obtained by speech or hearing. And yet though this is so, there are in all the *beings* senses, in that they cannot without senses *be*. But Gnosis is far different from sense. For sense is brought about by that which hath the mastery o'er us, while Gnosis is the end of science,¹ and science is God's gift.

10. All science is incorporal, the instrument it uses being the mind, just as the mind employs the body. Both then come into bodies, [I mean] both things that are cognizable by mind alone

¹ [ἐπιστημης. Copenhaver has "learning."]

and things material. For all things must consist out of antithesis and contrariety; and this can otherwise not be.

Tat. Who then is this material God of whom thou speakest?

Her. Cosmos is *beautiful*, but is not *good*—for that it is material and freely passible; and though it is the first of all things passible, yet 'is it in the second rank of being and wanting in itself. And though it never hath itself its birth in time, but ever is, yet is its being in becoming, becoming for all time the genesis of qualities and quantities; for it is mobile and all material motion's genesis.¹

11. It is intelligible rest that moves material motion in this way: since Cosmos is a sphere—that is to say, a head. And naught of head above's material, as naught of feet below's intelligible, but all material. And head itself moved in a sphere-like way—that is to say, as head should move, is mind. All then that are united to the "tissue" of this "head" (in which is soul) are in their nature free from death,—just as when body hath been made in soul, are things that have more soul than body. Whereas those things which are at greater distance from this "tissue"—there, where are things which have a greater share of body than of soul—are by their nature subject unto death. The whole, however, is a life; so that the universe consists of both the hylic and of the intelligible.

12. Again, the Cosmos is the first of living things, while man is second after it, though first of things subject to death. Man hath the same ensouling power in him as all the rest of living things; yet is he not only not good, but even evil, for that he's subject unto death. For though the Cosmos also is not good in that it suffers motion, it is not evil, in that it is not subject unto death. But man, in that he's subject both to motion and to death, is evil.

13. Now then the principles of man are thiswise vehicled: mind in the reason (*logos*), the reason in the soul, soul in the spirit, [and] spirit in the body. Spirit pervading [body] by means of veins and arteries and blood, bestows upon the living creature motion, and as it were doth bear it in a way. For this cause

¹ [Or "becoming."]

some do think the soul is blood, in that they do mistake its nature, not knowing that [at death] it is the spirit that must first withdraw into the soul, whereon the blood congeals and veins and arteries are emptied, and then the living creature is withdrawn; and this is body's death.

14. Now from One Source all things depend; while Source [dependeth] from the One and Only [One]. Source is, moreover, moved to become Source again; whereas the One standeth perpetually and is not moved. Three then are they: "God, the Father and the Good," Cosmos and man. God doth contain Cosmos; Cosmos [containeth] man. Cosmos is e'er God's Son, man as it were Cosmos's child.

15. Not that, however, God ignoreth man; nay, right well doth He know him, and willeth to be known. This is the sole salvation for a man-God's Gnosis. This is the Way Up to the Mount.¹ By Him alone the soul becometh good, not whiles is good, whiles evil, but [good] out of necessity.

Tat. What dost thou mean, Thrice-greatest one ?

Her. Behold an infant's soul, my son, that is not yet cut off because its body is still small and not as yet come unto its full bulk.

Tat. How?

Her. A thing of beauty altogether is [such a soul] to see, not yet befouled by body's passions, still all but hanging from the Cosmic Soul! But when the body grows in bulk and draweth down the soul into its mass, then doth the soul cut off itself and bring upon itself forgetfulness, and no more shareth in the Beautiful and Good. And this forgetfulness becometh vice.

16. It is the same for them who go out from the body. For when the soul withdraws into itself, the spirit doth contract itself within the blood, and soul within the spirit. And then the mind, stript of its wrappings, and naturally divine, taking unto itself a fiery body, doth traverse every space, after abandoning the soul unto its judgment and whatever chastisement it hath deserved.

Tat. What dost thou, father, mean by this? The mind is parted from the soul and soul from spirit? Whereas thou said'st the soul was the mind's vesture, and the soul's the spirit.

¹ *lit.*, to Olympus.

17. *Her.* The hearer, son, should think with him who speaks and breathe with him; nay, he should have a hearing subtler than the voice of him who speaks. It is, son, in a body made of earth that this arrangement of the vestures comes to pass. For in a body made of earth it is impossible the mind should take its seat itself by its own self in nakedness. For neither is it possible on the one hand the earthy body should contain such immortality, nor on the other that so great a virtue should endure a body passible in such close contact with it. It taketh, then, the soul for as it were an envelope. And soul itself, being too a thing divine, doth use the spirit as *its* envelope, while spirit doth pervade the living creature.

18. When then the mind doth free itself from the earth-body, it straightway putteth on its proper robe of fire, with which it could not dwell in an earth-body. For earth doth not bear fire; for it is all set in a blaze even by a small spark. And for this cause is water poured round earth, to be a guard and wall, to keep the blazing of the fire away. But mind, the swiftest thing of all divine out-thinkings, and swifter than all elements, hath for its body fire. For mind being builder¹ doth use the fire as tool for the construction of all things—the Mind of all [for the construction] of all things, but that of man only for things on earth. Stript of its fire the mind on earth cannot make things divine, for it is human in its dispensation.

19. The soul in man, however,—not every soul, but one that pious is—is a daimonic something and divine. And such a soul when from the body freed, if it have fought the fight of piety—the fight of piety is to know God and to do wrong to no man—such soul becomes entirely mind. Whereas the impious soul remains in its own essence, chastised by its own self, and seeking for an earthy body where to enter, if only it be human. For that no other body can contain a human soul; nor is it right that any human soul should fall into the body of a thing that doth possess no reason. For that the law of God is this: to guard the human soul from such tremendous outrage.²

¹ δημιουργός.

² [This appears to contradict §§7-8, which can be read as teaching the ascent and descent of soul through levels of being including the human.]

20. *Tat.* How father, then, is a man's soul chastised?

Her. What greater chastisement of any human soul can there be, son, than lack of piety? What fire has so fierce flame as lack of piety? What ravenous beast so mauls the body as lack of piety the very soul? Dost thou not see what hosts of ills the impious soul doth bear? It shrieks and screams: I burn; I am ablaze; I know not what to cry or do; ah, wretched me, I am devoured by all the ills that compass me about; alack, poor me, I neither see nor hear! Such are the cries wrung from a soul chastised; not, as the many think, and thou, son, dost suppose, that a [man's] soul, passing from body, is changed into a beast. Such is a very grave mistake, for that the way a soul doth suffer chastisement is this:

21. When mind becomes a daimon, the law requires that it should take a fiery body to execute the services of God; and entering in the soul most impious it scourgeth it with whips made of its sins. And then the impious soul, scourged with its sins, is plunged in murders, outrage, blasphemy, in violence of all kinds, and all the other things whereby mankind is wronged. But on the pious soul the mind doth mount and guide it to the Gnosis' Light. And such a soul doth never tire in songs of praise [to God] and pouring blessing on all men, and doing good in word and deed to all, in imitation of its Sire.

22. Wherefore, my son, thou shouldst give praise to God and pray that thou mayst have thy mind Good [Mind]. It is, then, to a better state the soul doth pass; it cannot to a worse. Further there is an intercourse of souls; thee of the gods have intercourse with those of men, and those of men with souls of creatures which possess no reason. The higher, further, have in charge the lower; the gods look after men, men after animals irrational, while God hath charge of all; for He is higher than them all and all are less than He. Cosmos is subject, then, to God, man to the Cosmos, and irrationals to man. But God is o'er them all, and God contains them all. God's rays, to use a figure, are His energies; the Cosmos's are natures; the arts and sciences are man's. The energies act through the Cosmos, thence through the nature-rays of Cosmos upon man; the nature-rays [act] through the elements; man [acteth] through the sciences and arts.

23. This is the dispensation of the universe, depending from the nature of the One, pervading [all things] through the Mind, than which is naught diviner or of greater energy; and naught a greater means for the at-oning men to gods and gods to men. He, [Mind,] is the Good Daimon. Blessed the soul that is most filled with Him, and wretched is the soul that's empty of the Mind.

Tat. Father, what dost thou mean, again?

Her. Dost think then, son, that every soul hath the Good [Mind]? For 'tis of Him we speak, not of the mind in service of which we just were speaking, the mind sent down for [the soul's] chastisement.

24. For soul without the mind "can neither speak nor act."¹ For oftentimes the mind doth leave the soul, and at that time the soul nor sees nor understands, but is just like a thing that hath no reason. Such is the power of mind. Yet doth it not endure a sluggish soul, but leaveth such a soul tied to the body and bound tight down by it. Such soul, my son, doth not have Mind; and therefore such an one should not be called a *man*. For that man is a thing-of-life divine; man is not measured with the rest of lives of things upon the earth, but with the lives above in heaven, who are called gods. Nay more, if we must boldly speak the truth, the true "man" is e'en higher than the gods, or at the [very] least the gods and men are every whit in power each with the other equal.

25. For no one of the gods in heaven shall come down on the earth, o'er-stepping heaven's limit; whereas man doth mount up to heaven and measure it; he knows what things of it are high, what things are low, and learns precisely all things else besides. And greater thing than all; without e'en quitting earth, he doth ascend above. So vast a sweep doth he possess of ecstasy. For this cause can a man dare say that man on earth is god subject to death, while god in heaven is man from death immune. Wherefore the dispensation of all things is brought about *by means of* these, the twain—Cosmos and Man—but *by* the One.

¹ [A quotation from the *Elegies* of the poet Theognis of Megera (fl. 6th century B.C.E.).]

C.H. XI: Mind unto Hermes¹

1. *Mind.* Master this sermon (*logos*),² then, Thrice-greatest Hermes, and bear in mind the spoken words; and as it hath come unto Me to speak, I will no more delay.

Hermes. As many men say many things, and these diverse, about the All and Good, I have not learned the truth. Make it, then, clear to me, O Master mine! For I can trust the explanation of these things, which comes from Thee alone.

2. *Mind.* Hear [then], My son, how standeth god and All. God; Æon;³ Cosmos; Time; Becoming. God maketh Æon; Æon, Cosmos; Cosmos, Time; and Time, Becoming. The Good,—the Beautiful, Wisdom, Blessedness,—is essence, as it were, of God; of Æon, Sameness; of Cosmos, Order; of Time, Change; and of Becoming, Life and Death. The energies of God are Mind and Soul; of Æon, lastingness, and deathlessness; of Cosmos, restoration and the opposite thereof; of Time, increase and decrease; and of Becoming, quality. Æon is, then, in God; Cosmos, in Æon; in Cosmos, Time; in Time, Becoming. Æon stands firm round God; Cosmos is moved in Æon; Time hath its limits in the Cosmos; Becoming doth become in Time.

3. The source, therefore, of all is God; their essence, Æon; their matter, Cosmos. God's power is Æon; Æon's work is Cosmos—which never *hath* become, yet ever *doth* become by Æon. Therefore will Cosmos never be destroyed, for Æon's indestructible; nor doth a whit of things in Cosmos perish, for Cosmos is enwrapped by Æon round on every side.

Her. But God's Wisdom—what is that?

¹ [This discourse shares with C.H. I the form of a revelation-discourse where Hermes receives teaching from a divine figure. The *Nous* of C.H. XI may be intended to be identical with Poimandres in C.H. I, who is addressed by the narrator twice as "my mind."]

² Or 'thy reason.' [Copenhaver: "Mark my words." Nock and Festugière moved this sentence to after the first speech of Hermes to *Nous*.]

³ [*Αἰών*, "eternity," apparently treated by Mead as a proper name of a divine being or hypostasis and connected with the elaborate systems of Æons found in accounts of Christian Gnostic doctrines. The word occurs 27 times in C.H. XI and three times in the rest of the *Corpus*.]

Mind. The Good and Beautiful, and Blessedness, and Virtue's all, and Æon. Æon, then, ordereth [Cosmos], imparting deathlessness and lastingness to matter.

4. For its becoming doth depend on Æon, as Æon doth on God. Now Genesis¹ and Time, in Heaven and on the Earth, are of two natures. In Heaven they are unchangeable and indestructible, but on the Earth they're subject unto change and to destruction. Further, the Æon's soul is God; the Cosmos' soul is Æon; the Earth's soul, Heaven. And God's in Mind; and Mind, in Soul; and Soul, in Matter; and all of them through Æon. But all this Body: in which are all the bodies, is full of Soul; and Soul is full of Mind, and [Mind] of God. It fills it from within, and from without encircles it, making the All to live. Without, this vast and perfect Life [encircles] Cosmos; within, it fills [it with] all lives; above, in Heaven, continuing in sameness; below, on Earth, changing becoming.

5. And Æon doth preserve this [Cosmos], or by Necessity, or by Foreknowledge, or by Nature, or by whatever else a man supposes or shall suppose. And all is this, —God energizing. The Energy of God is Power that naught can e'er surpass, a Power with which no one can make comparison of any human thing at all, or any thing divine. Wherefore, O Hermes, never think that aught of things above or things below is like to God, for thou wilt fall from truth. For naught is like to That which hath no like, and is Alone and One. And do not ever think that any other can possibly possess His power; for what apart from Him is there of life, and deathlessness and change of quality? For what else should He make? God's not inactive: since all things [then] would lack activity; for all are full of God. But neither in the Cosmos anywhere, nor in aught else, is there inaction. For that "inaction" is a name that cannot be applied to either what doth make or what is made.

6. But all things must be made; both ever made, and also in accordance with the influence of every space. For He who makes, is in them all; not stablished in some one of them, nor making one thing only, but making all. For being Power, He

¹ [Could also be translated "becoming," here and elsewhere.]

energiseth in the things He makes and is not independent of them,—although the things He makes are subject to Him. Now gaze through Me upon the Cosmos that's now subject to thy sight; regard its Beauty carefully—Body in pure perfection, though one than which there's no more ancient one, ever in prime of life, and ever-young, nay, rather, in even fuller and yet fuller prime!

7. Behold, again, the seven subject Worlds; ordered by Æon's order: and with their varied course full-filling Æon! [See how] all things [are] full of light, and nowhere [is there] fire; for 'tis the love and blending of the contraries and the dissimilars that doth give birth to light down shining by the energy of God, the Father of all good, the Leader of all order, and Ruler of the seven world-orderings! [Behold] the Moon, forerunner of them all, the instrument of nature, and the transmuter of its lower matter! [Look at] the Earth set in the midst of All, foundation of the Cosmos Beautiful, feeder and nurse of things on Earth! And contemplate the multitude of deathless lives, how great it is, and that of lives subject to death; and midway, between both, immortal [lives] and mortal, [see thou] the circling Moon.

8. And all are full of Soul, and all are moved by it, each in its proper way; some round the Heaven, others around the Earth; [see] how the right [move] not unto left, nor yet the left unto the right; nor the above below, nor the below above. And that all these are subject unto Genesis, My dearest Hermes, thou hast no longer need to learn of Me. For that they bodies are, have souls, and they are moved. But 'tis impossible for them to come together into one without some one to bring them [all] together. It must, then, be that such a one as this must be some one who's wholly One.

9. For as the many motions of them [all] are different, and as their bodies are not like, yet has one speed been ordered for them all, it is impossible that there should be two or more makers for them. For that one single order is not kept among "the many"; but rivalry will follow of the weaker with the stronger, and they will strive. And if the maker of the lives that suffer change and death, should be another, he would desire to make the deathless ones as well; just as the maker of

the deathless ones, [to make the lives] that suffer death. But come! if there be two:—if Matter's one, and Soul is one, in whose hands would there be the distribution a for the making? Again, if both of them have some of it, in whose hands may there be the greater part?

10. But thus conceive it, then; that every living body doth consist of soul and matter, whether [that body be] of an immortal, or a mortal, or an irrational [life]. For that all living bodies are ensouled; whereas, upon the other hand, those that live not, are matter by itself. And, in like fashion, Soul when in its self is, after its own maker, cause of life; but *the* cause of all life is He who makes the things that cannot die.

Her. How, then, is it that, first, lives subject unto death are other than the deathless ones? And, next, how is it that that Life which knows no death, and maketh deathlessness, doth not make animals immortal?

11. *Mind.* First, that there is some one who does these things, is clear; and, next, that He is also One, is very manifest. For, also, Soul is one, and Life is one, and Matter one.

Her. But who is He ?

Mind. Who may it other be than the One God? Whom else should it beseem to put Soul into lives but God alone? One, then, is God. It would indeed be most ridiculous, if when thou dost confess the Cosmos to be one, Sun one, Moon one, and Godhead 1 one, thou shouldst wish God Himself to be some one or other of a number !

12. All things, therefore, He makes, in many [ways]. And what great thing is it for God to make life, soul, and deathlessness, and change, when thou [thyself] dost do so many things? For thou dost see, and speak, and hear, and smell, and taste, and touch, and walk, and think, and breathe. And it is not one man who smells, s second one who speaks, a third who touches, another one who smells, another one who walks, another one who thinks, and [yet] another one who breathes. But *one* is he who doth all these. And yet no one of these could be apart from God. For just as, shouldst thou cease from these, thou wouldst no longer be a living thing, so also, should God cease from them (a thing not law to say), no longer is He God.

13. For if it hath been shown that no thing can [inactive]¹ be, how much less God? For if there's aught He doth not make (if it be law to say), He is imperfect. But if He is not only not inactive, but perfect [God], then He doth make all things. Give thou thyself to Me, My Hermes, for a little while: and thou shalt understand more easily how that God's work is one, in order that all things may be—that are being made, or once have been, or that are going to be made. And *this* is, My beloved, Life; this is the Beautiful; this is the Good ; this, God.

14. And if thou wouldst in practice understand [this work], behold what taketh place with thee desiring to beget. Yet this is not like unto that, for He doth not enjoy. For that indeed He hath no other one to share in what He works, for working by Himself, He ever is at work, Himself being what He doth. For did He separate Himself from it, all things would [then] collapse, and all must die, Life ceasing. But if all things are lives, and also Life is one; then, one is God. And, furthermore, if all are lives, both those in Heaven and those on Earth, and One Life in them all is made to be by God, and God is it—then, all are made by God. Life is the making—one of Mind and Soul; accordingly Death is not the destruction of those that are at-oned, but the dissolving of their union.

15. Æon, moreover, is God's image; Cosmos [is] Æon's; the Sun, of Cosmos; and Man, [the image] of the Sun. The people call change death, because the body is dissolved, and life, when it's dissolved, withdraws to the unmanifest. But in this sermon (*logos*), Hermes, my beloved, as thou dost hear, I say the Cosmos also suffers change,—for that a part of it each day is made to be in the unmanifest,—yet it is ne'er dissolved. These are the passions of the Cosmos—revolvings and concealments; revolving is conversion and concealment renovation.

16. The Cosmos is all-formed,—not having forms external to itself, but changing them itself within itself. Since, then,

¹ [Mead did not place this word in square brackets, but footnoted it as his interpolation since a word has apparently dropped out of the text, observing that earlier editions had conjectured “apart from God.” Copenhaver, following amendments proposed by Nock & Festiguère, has “... that you cannot be without making something ...”]

Cosmos is made to be all-formed, what may its maker be? For that, on the one hand, He should not be void of all form; and, on the other hand, if He's all-formed, He will be like the Cosmos. Whereas, again, has He a single form, He will thereby be less than Cosmos. What, then, say we He is?—that we may not bring round our sermon (*logos*) into doubt; for naught that mind conceives of God is doubtful. He, then, hath one *idea*, which is His own alone, which doth not fall beneath the sight, being bodiless, and [yet] by means of bodies manifesteth all [ideas]. And marvel not that there's a bodiless idea.

17. For it is like the form of reason (*logos*)¹ and mountain-tops in pictures. For they appear to stand out strongly from the rest, but really are quite smooth and flat. And now consider what is said more boldly, but more truly! Just as man cannot live apart from Life, so neither can God live without [His] doing good. For this is as it were the life and motion as it were of God—to move all things and make them live.

18. Now some of the things said should bear a sense peculiar to themselves. So understand, for instance, what I'm going to say. All are in God, [but] not as lying in a place. For place is both a body and immovable, and things that lie do not have motion. Now things lie one way in the bodiless, another way in being made manifest. Think, [then,] of Him who doth contain them all; and think, that than the bodiless naught is more comprehensive, or swifter, or more potent, but it is the most comprehensive, the swiftest, and most potent of them all.

19. And, thus, think from thyself, and bid thy soul go unto any land;² and there more quickly than thy bidding will it be. And bid it journey oceanwards; and there, again, immediately 'twill be, not as if passing on from place to place, but as if being there. And bid it also mount to heaven; and it will need no wings, nor will aught hinder it, nor fire of sun, nor æther, nor vortex-swirl: nor bodies of the other stars; but, cutting through them all, it

¹ Or points of the sermon. [“structure of a word”—Copenhaver.]

² [Patrizi's 1591 edition, followed by Parthey in 1854 and Nock & Festugière in 1946, amended *εἰς ἐν δε και το εἰς Ἰνδικην*, “to India.” While not adopting this alteration for his translation, Mead uses it as fuel for some speculations at the end of his commentary.]

will soar up to the last Body [of them all]. And shouldst thou will to break through this as well, and contemplate what is beyond—if there be aught beyond the Cosmos; it is permitted thee.¹

20. Behold what power, what swiftness, thou dost have! And canst thou do all of these things, and God not [do them]? Then, in this way know God; as having all thine in Himself as thoughts, the whole Cosmos itself. If, then, thou dost not make thyself like unto God, thou canst not know Him. For like is knowable to like [alone]. Make, [then,] thyself to grow to the same stature as the Greatness which transcends all measure; leap forth from every body; transcend all Time; become Eternity;² and [thus] shalt thou know God. Conceiving nothing is impossible unto thyself, think thyself deathless and able to know all,—all arts, all sciences, the way of every life. Become more lofty than all height, and lower than all depth. Collect into thyself all senses of [all] creatures,—of fire, [and] water, dry and moist. Think that thou art at the same time in every place,—in earth, in sea, in sky; not yet begotten, in the womb, young, old, [and] dead, in after-death conditions. And if thou knowest all these things at once,—times, places, doings, qualities, and quantities; thou canst know God.

21. But if thou lockest up thy soul within thy body, and dost debase it, saying: I nothing know; I nothing can; I fear the sea; I cannot scale the sky; I know not who I was, who I shall be;—what is there [then] between [thy] God and thee? For thou canst know naught of things beautiful and good so long as thou dost love thy body and art bad. The greatest bad there is, is not to know God's Good;³ but to be able to know [Good], and will, and hope, is a Straight Way, the Good's own [Path], both leading there and easy. If thou but sett'st thy foot thereon, 'twill meet thee everywhere, 'twill everywhere be seen, both where and when thou dost expect it not,—waking, sleeping, sailing,

¹ [However, you may have to make a few SAN checks.]

² [*αἰών*. It is unclear why Mead here actually translated the word, since the statement recalls the cosmogony of §§2-4 where *Aiōn* is the immediate production of God. Well, actually, it was probably because he needed an extra syllable or two to make it scan.]

³ [*τὸ θεῖον*, *lit.* "the divine." Compare also title of C.H. VII.]

journeying, by night, by day, speaking, [and] saying naught. For there is naught that is not image of the Good.

22. *Her.* Is God unseen?

Mind. Hush! Who is more manifest than He? For this one reason hath He made all things, that through them all thou mayest see Him. This is the Good of God, this [is] His Virtue,—that He may be made manifest through all. For naught's *unseen*, even of things that are without a body. Mind sees itself in thinking, God in making. So far these things have been made manifest to thee, Thrice-greatest one! Reflect on all the rest in the same way within thyself, and thou shalt not be led astray.

C.H. XII: About the Common Mind

Hermes to Tat

1. *Hermes*. The Mind, O Tat, is of God's very essence—(if such a thing as *essence* of God there be)—and what *that* is, it and it only knows precisely. The Mind, then, is not separated off from God's essentiality, but is united unto it, as light to sun. This Mind in men is God, and for this cause some of mankind are gods, and their humanity is nigh unto divinity. For the Good Daimon said: "Gods are immortal men, and men are mortal gods."

2. But in irrational lives Mind is their *nature*. For where is Soul, there too is Mind; just as where Life, there is there also Soul. But in irrational lives their soul is life devoid of mind; for Mind is the in-worker of the souls of men for good;—He works on them for their own good. In lives irrational He doth cooperate with each one's nature; but in the souls of men He counteracteth them. For every soul, when it becomes embodied, is instantly depraved by pleasure and by pain. For in a compound body, just like juices, pain and pleasure seethe, and into them the soul, on entering in, is plunged.

3. O'er whatsoever souls the Mind doth, then, preside, to these it showeth its own light, by acting counter to their prepossessions, just as a good physician doth upon the body prepossessed by sickness, pain inflict, burning or lancing it for sake of health. In just the selfsame way the Mind inflicteth pain upon the soul, to rescue it from pleasure, whence comes its every ill. The great ill of the soul is godlessness; then followeth fancy for all evil things and nothing good. So, then, Mind counteracting it doth work good on the soul, as the physician health upon the body.

4. But whatsoever human souls have not the Mind as pilot, they share in the same fate as souls of lives irrational. For [Mind] becomes co-worker with them, giving full play to the desires towards which [such souls] are borne,—[desires] that from the rush of lust strain after the irrational; [so that such human

souls,] just like irrational animals, cease not irrationally to rage and lust, nor ever are they satiate of ills. For passions and irrational desires are ills exceeding great; and over these God hath set up the Mind to play the part of judge and executioner.

5. *Tat.* In that case, father mine, the teaching (*logos*) as to Fate,¹ which previously thou didst explain to me, risks to be over-set. For that if it be absolutely fated for a man to fornicate, or commit sacrilege, or do some other evil deed, why is he punished,—when he hath done the deed from Fate's necessity?

Her. All works, my son, are Fate's; and without Fate naught of things corporal—or good, or ill—can come to pass. But it is fated too, that he who doeth ill, shall suffer. And for this cause he doth it—that he may suffer what he suffereth, because he did it.

6. But for the moment, [Tat,] let be the teaching (*logos*) as to vice and Fate, for we have spoken of these things in other [of our sermons]; but now our teaching (*logos*) is about the Mind:—what Mind can do, and how it is [so] different,—in men being such and such, and in irrational lives [so] changed; and [then] again that in irrational lives it is not of a beneficial nature, while that in men it quencheth out the wrathful and the lustful elements. Of men, again, we must class some as led by reason, and others as unreasoning.

7. But all men are subject to Fate, and genesis and change, for these are the beginning and the end of Fate. And though all men do suffer fated things, those led by reason (those whom we said the Mind doth guide) do not endure like suffering with the rest; but, since they've freed themselves from viciousness, not being bad, they do not suffer bad.

Tat. How meanest thou again, my father? Is not the fornicator bad; the murderer bad; and [so with] all the rest?

Her. [I meant not that;] but that the Mind-led man, my son, though not a fornicator, will suffer just as though he had committed fornication, and though he be no murderer, as though he had committed murder. The quality of change he

¹ [ἐπιμαρμενη]. This appears eight times in Latinised form as a technical term in the *Logos Teleios* but is infrequently used in the other Greek treatises of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. The reference may be to a lost discourse.]

can no more escape than that of genesis. But it is possible for one who hath the Mind, to free himself from vice.

8. Wherefore I've ever heard, my son, Good Daimon also say—(and had He set it down in written words, He would have greatly helped the race of men;¹ for He alone, my son, doth truly, as the First-born God, gazing upon all things, give voice to words (*logoi*) divine)—yea, once I heard Him say:

“All things are one, and most of all the bodies which the mind alone perceives. Our life is owing to [God's] Energy and Power and Æon. His Mind is Good, so is His Soul as well. And this being so, intelligible things know naught of separation. So, then, Mind, being Ruler of all things, and being Soul of God, can do whate'er it wills.”

9. So do thou understand, and carry back this word (*logos*) unto the question thou didst ask before,—I mean about Mind's Fate. For if thou dost with accuracy, son, eliminate [all] captious arguments (*logoi*), thou wilt discover that of very truth the Mind, the Soul of God, doth rule o'er all—o'er Fate, and Law, and all things else; and nothing is impossible to it,—neither o'er Fate to set a human soul, nor under Fate to set [a soul] neglectful of what comes to pass. Let this so far suffice from the Good Daimon's most good [words].

Tat. Yea, [words] divinely spoken, father mine, truly and helpfully. But further still explain me this.

10. Thou said'st that Mind in lives irrational worked in them as [their] nature, co-working with their impulses. But impulses of lives irrational, as I do think, are passions. Now if the Mind co-worketh with [these] impulses, and if the impulses of [lives] irrational be passions, then is Mind also passion, taking its colour from the passions.

Her. Well put, my son! Thou questionest right nobly, and it is just that I as well should answer [nobly].

11. All things incorporal when in a body are subject unto passion, and in the proper sense they are [themselves] all

¹ [This passage seems to suggest the existence of an oral tradition in the “Poimandres-community” or however else we designate the school or sect that produced these tracts, a suggestion apparently rejected by XIII:15.]

passions. For every thing that moves [another] is incorporeal; while every thing that's moved is body. Incorporeals are further moved by Mind, and movement's passion. Both, then, are subject unto passion—both mover and the moved, the former being ruler and the latter ruled. But when a man hath freed himself from body, then is he also freed from passion. But, more precisely, son, naught is impassible, but all are passible. Yet passion differeth from passibility; for that the one is active, while the other's passive. Incorporeals moreover act upon themselves, for either they are motionless or they are moved; but whichsoe'er it be, it's passion. But bodies are invariably acted on, and therefore are they passible. Do not, then, let terms trouble thee; action and passion are both the selfsame thing. To use the fairer sounding term, however, does no harm.

12. *Tat.* Most clearly hast thou, father mine, set forth the teaching (*logos*).

Her. Consider this as well, my son; that these two things God hath bestowed on man beyond all mortal lives—both mind and speech (*logos*) equal to immortality. He hath the mind for knowing God and uttered speech (*logos*) for eulogy of Him. And if one useth these for what he ought, he'll differ not a whit from the immortals? Nay, rather, on departing from the body, he will be guided by the twain unto the Choir of Gods and Blessed Ones.

13. *Tat.* Why, father mine!—do not the other lives make use of speech (*logos*)?

Her. Nay, son; but use of voice; speech is far different from voice. For speech is general among all men, while voice doth differ in each class of living thing.

Tat. But with men also, father mine, according to each race, speech differs.

Her. Yea, son, but man is one; so also speech is one and is interpreted, and it is found the same in Egypt, and in Persia, and in Greece. Thou seemest, son, to be in ignorance of Reason's (*logos*)¹ worth and greatness. For that the Blessed God, Good Daimon, hath declared:

¹ [The Greek appears to be playing with multiple meanings of *λογος*; Copenhaver has "speech" here, "reasoned speech" in the next paragraph.]

“Soul is in Body, Mind in Soul; but Reason (*logos*) is in Mind, and Mind in God; and God is Father of [all] these.”

14. The Reason, then, is the Mind’s image, and Mind God’s [image]; while Body is [the image] of the Form; and Form [the image] of the Soul. The subtlest part of Matter is, then, Air; of Air, Soul; of Soul, Mind; and of Mind, God. And God surroundeth all and permeateth all; while Mind surroundeth Soul, Soul Air, Air Matter. Necessity and Providence and Nature are instruments of Cosmos and of Matter’s ordering; while of intelligible things each is Essence, and Sameness is their Essence. But of the Bodies of the Cosmos each is many; for through possessing Sameness, [these] composed Bodies, though they do change from one into another of themselves, do natheless ever keep the incorruption of their Sameness.

15. Whereas in all the rest of composed bodies, of each there is a certain number; for without number structure cannot be, or composition, or decomposition. Now it is units that give birth to number and increase it, and, being decomposed, are taken back again into themselves. Matter is one; and this whole Cosmos—the mighty God and image of the mightier One, both with Him unified, and the conserver of the Will and Order of the Father—is filled full of Life.¹ Naught is there in it throughout the whole of Æon, the Father’s [everlasting] Re-establishment,—nor of the whole, nor of its parts,—which doth not live. For not a single thing that’s dead, hath been, or is, or shall be in [this] Cosmos. For that the Father willed it should have Life as long as it should be. Wherefore it needs must be a God.

16. How, then, O son, could there be in the God, the image of the Father: in the plenitude of Life-dead things? For that death is corruption, and corruption is destruction. How then could any part of that which knoweth no corruption be corrupted, or any whit of him the God destroyed?

Tat. Do they not, then, my father, die—the lives in it, that are its parts?

Her. Hush, son!—led into error by the term in use for what takes place. They do not die, my son, but are dissolved as com-

¹ [*lit.*, is a plenitude (*πληρωμα*) of life.]

pound bodies. Now dissolution is not death, but dissolution of a compound; it is dissolved not so that it may be destroyed, but that it may become renewed. For what is the activity of life? Is it not motion? What then in Cosmos is there that hath no motion? Naught is there, son!

17. *Tat.* Doth not Earth even, father, seem to thee to have no motion?

Her. Nay, son; but rather that she is the only thing which, though in very rapid motion, is also stable. For how would it not be a thing to laugh at, that the Nurse of all should have no motion, when she engenders and brings forth all things? For 'tis impossible that without motion one who doth engender, should do so. That thou shouldst ask if the fourth part is not inert, is most ridiculous; for that the body which doth have no motion, gives sign of nothing but inertia.

18. Know, therefore, generally, my son, that all that is in Cosmos is being moved for decrease or for increase. Now that which is kept moving, also lives; but there is no necessity that that which lives, should be all same. For being simultaneous, the Cosmos, as a whole, is not subject to change, my son, but all its parts are subject unto it; yet naught [of it] is subject to corruption, or destroyed. It is the terms employed that confuse men. For 'tis not genesis that constituteth life, but 'tis sensation; it is not change that constituteth death, but 'tis forgetfulness. Since, then, these things are so, they are immortal all,—Matter, [and] Life, [and] Spirit, Mind [and] Soul, of which whatever liveth, is composed.

19. Whatever then doth live, oweth its immortality unto the Mind, and most of all doth man, he who is both recipient of God, and coessential with Him. For with this life alone doth God consort; by visions in the night, by tokens in the day, and by all things doth He foretell the future unto him,—by birds, by inward parts, by wind, by tree. Wherefore doth man lay claim to know things past, things present and to come.

20. Observe this, too, my son; that each one of the other lives inhabiteth one portion of the Cosmos,—aquatic creatures water, terrene earth, and aery creatures air; while man doth

use all these,—earth, water, air, [and] fire; he seeth heaven, too, and doth contact it with [his] sense. But God surroundeth all, and permeateth all, for He is energy and power; and it is nothing difficult, my son, to conceive God.

21. But if thou wouldst Him also contemplate, behold the ordering of the Cosmos, and [see] the orderly behaviour of its ordering; behold thou the Necessity of things made manifest, and [see] the Providence of things become and things becoming; behold how Matter is all-full of Life; [behold] this so great God in movement, with all the good and noble [ones]—gods, daimones and men!

Tat. But these are purely energies, O father mine!

Her. If, then, they're purely energies, my son,—by whom, then, are they energized except by God? Or art thou ignorant, that just as Heaven, Earth, Water, Air, are parts of Cosmos, in just the selfsame way God's parts are Life and Immortality, [and] Energy, and Spirit, and Necessity, and Providence, and Nature, Soul, and Mind, and the Duration of all these that is called God? And there is naught of things that have become, or are becoming, in which God is not.

22. *Tat.* Is He in Matter, father, then ?

Her. Matter, my son, is separate from God, in order that thou may'st attribute unto it the quality of space. But what thing else than mass think'st thou it is, if it's not energized? Whereas if it be energized, by whom is it made so? For energies, we said, are parts of God. By whom are, then, all lives enlivened? By whom are things immortal made immortal? By whom changed things made changeable? And whether thou dost speak of Matter, or of Body, or of Essence, know that these too are energies of God; and that materiality is Matter's energy, that corporality is Bodies' energy, and that essentiality doth constitute the energy of Essence; and this is God-the All.

23. And in the All is naught that is not God. Wherefore nor size, nor space, nor quality, nor form, nor time, surroundeth God; for He is All, and All surroundeth all, and permeateth all. Unto this Reason (*logos*), son, thy adoration and thy worship pay. There is one way alone to worship God; [it is] not to be bad.

C.H. XIII:
The Secret Sermon on the Mountain
Concerning Rebirth and the Promise of Silence
of Thrice-greatest Hermes unto Tat his Son

1. *Tat.* [Now] in the General Sermons,¹ father, thou didst speak in riddles most unclear, conversing on Divinity; and when thou saidst no man could e'er be saved before Rebirth, thy meaning thou didst hide. Further, when I became thy Suppliant, in Wending up the Mount, after thou hadst conversed with me, and when I longed to learn the Sermon (*Logos*) on Rebirth (for this beyond all other things is just the thing I know not), thou saidst, that thou wouldst give it me—"when thou shalt have become a stranger to the world." Wherefore I got me ready and made the thought in me a stranger to the world-illusion. And now do thou fill up the things that fall short in me with what thou saidst would give me the tradition of Rebirth, setting it forth in speech or in the secret way. I know not, O Thrice-greatest one, from out what matter and what womb Man comes to birth, or of what seed.

2. *Hermes.* Wisdom that understands in silence [such is the matter and the womb from out which Man is born], and the True Good the seed.

Tat. Who is the sower, father? For I am altogether at a loss.

Her. It is the Will of God, my son.

Tat. And of what kind is he that is begotten, father? For I have no share of that essence in me, which doth transcend the senses. The one that is begot will be another one from God, God's Son?

Her. All in all, out of all powers composed.

Tat. Thou tellest me a riddle, father, and dost not speak as father unto son.

Her. This Race, my son, is never taught; but when He willeth it, its memory is restored by God.

¹ [The "General Sermons" (*genikoi logoi*) addressed to Tat have already been mentioned (X:1, 7); it is likely that the lost tract following C.H. I in the proto-type MS. was one of them.]

3. *Tat.* Thou sayest things impossible, O father, things that are forced. Hence answers would I have direct unto these things. Am I a son strange to my father's race? Keep it not, father, back from me. I am a true-born son; explain to me the manner of Rebirth.

Her. What may I say, my son? I can but tell thee *this*. Whene'er I see within myself the Simple Vision brought to birth out of God's mercy: I have passed through myself into a Body that can never die. And now I am not what I was before; but I am born in Mind. The way to do this is not taught, and it cannot be seen by the compounded element by means of which thou seest. Yea, I have had my former composed form dismembered for me. I am no longer touched, yet have I touch; I have dimension too; and [yet] am I a stranger to them now. Thou seest me with eyes, my son; but what I am thou dost not understand [even] with fullest strain of body and of sight.

4. *Tat.* Into fierce frenzy and mind-fury hast thou plunged me, father, for now no longer do I see myself.

Her. I would, my son, that thou hadst e'en passed right through thyself, as they who dream in sleep yet sleepless.

Tat. Tell me this too! Who is the author of Rebirth?

Her. The Son of God, the One Man, by God's Will.

5. *Tat.* Now hast thou brought me, father, unto pure stupefaction. Arrested from the senses which I had before, . . .; for [now] I see thy Greatness identical with thy distinctive form.

Her. Even in this thou art untrue; the mortal form doth change with every day. 'Tis turned by time to growth and waning, as being an untrue thing.

6. *Tat.* What then is true, Thrice-greatest One?

Her. That which is never troubled, son, which cannot be defined; that which no colour hath, nor any figure, which is not turned, which hath no garment, which giveth light; that which is comprehensible unto itself [alone], which doth not suffer change; that which no body can contain.

Tat. In very truth I lose my reason, father. Just when I thought to be made wise by thee, I find the senses of this mind of mine blocked up.

Her. Thus is it, son: That which is upward borne like fire, yet is borne down like earth, that which is moist like water, yet blows like air, how shalt thou this perceive with sense—the that which is not solid nor yet moist, which naught can bind or loose, of which in power and energy alone can man have any notion,—and even then it wants a man who can perceive the Way of Birth in God?

7. *Tat.* I am incapable of this, O father, then?

Her. Nay, God forbid, my son! Withdraw into thyself, and it will come; will, and it comes to pass; throw out of work the body's senses, and thy Divinity shall come to birth; purge from thyself the brutish torments-things of matter.

Tat. I have tormentors then in me, O father?

Her. Ay, no few, my son; nay, fearful ones and manifold.

Tat. I do not know them, father.

Her. Torment the first is this Not-knowing, son; the second one is Grief; the third, Intemperance; the fourth, Concupiscence; the fifth, Unrighteousness; the sixth is Avarice; the seventh, Error; the eighth is Envy; the ninth, Guile; the tenth is Anger; eleventh, Rashness; the twelfth is Malice. These are in number twelve; but under them are many more, my son; and creeping through the prison of the body they force the man that's placed within to suffer in his senses. But they depart (although not all at once) from him who hath been taken pity on by God; and this it is which constitutes the manner of Rebirth. And . . . the Reason (*logos*).¹

8. And now, my son, be still and solemn silence keep! Thus shall the mercy that flows on us from God not cease. Henceforth rejoice, O son, for by the Powers of God thou art being purified for the articulation of the Reason (*logos*). Gnosis of God hath come to us, and when this comes, my son, Not-knowing is cast out. Gnosis of Joy hath come to us, and on its coming, son, Sorrow will flee away to them who give it room. The Power that follows Joy do I invoke, thy Self-control. O Power most sweet! Let us most gladly bid it welcome, son! How with its coming doth it chase Intemperance away!

¹ [It is unclear if there is a lacuna in the text here. Copenhaver merges these last words with the previous sentence: "... this is the basis of rebirth, the means and method."]

9. Now fourth, on Continnence I call, the Power against Desire.¹ This step, my son, is Righteousness' firm seat. For without judgment see how she hath chased Unrighteousness away. We are made righteous, son, by the departure of Unrighteousness. Power sixth I call to us,—that against Avarice, Sharing-with-all. And now that Avarice is gone, I call on Truth. And Error flees, and Truth is with us. See how [the measure of] the Good is full, my son, upon Truth's coming. For Envy hath gone from us; and unto Truth is joined the Good as well, with Life and Light. And now no more doth any torment of the Darkness venture nigh, but vanquished [all] have fled with whirring wings.

10. Thou knowest [now], my son, the manner of Rebirth. And when the Ten is come, my son, that driveth out the Twelve, the Birth in understanding is complete, and by this Birth we are made into Gods. Who then doth by His mercy gain this Birth in God, abandoning the body's senses, knows himself [to be of Light and Life]² and that he doth consist of these, and [thus] is filled with Bliss.

11. *Tat.* By God made steadfast, father, no longer with the sight my eyes afford I look on things, but with the energy the Mind doth give me through the Powers. In heaven am I, in earth, in water, air; I am in animals, in plants; I'm in the womb, before the womb, after the womb; I'm everywhere! But further tell me this: How are the torments of the Darkness, when they are twelve in number, driven out by the ten Powers? What is the way of it, Thrice-greatest one?

12. *Her.* This dwelling-place³ through which we have just passed, my son, is constituted from the circle of the types-of-life,⁴ this being composed of elements, twelve in number, but of one nature, an omniform idea. For man's delusion there are

¹ [Mead conjectures that there is text missing at this point.]

² [An interpolation by Mead to parallel C.H. I:21, which comes before another description of the overcoming of or purification from various vices. Copenhagen has "recognizes himself as constituted of the intelligibles."]

³ [σκηνος, *lit.* 'tent,' used figuratively N.T. and earlier for the body as dwelling-place of the soul.]

⁴ [*i.e.*, the Zodiacal circle. Mead obfuscates the implied astrological doctrine by over-literal translation, probably deliberately.]

disunions in them, son, while in their action they are one. Not only can we never part Rashness from Wrath; they cannot even be distinguished. According to right reason (*logos*), then, they naturally withdraw once and for all, in as much as they are chased out by no less than ten powers, that is, the Ten. For, son, the Ten is that which giveth birth to souls. And Life and Light are unified there, where the One hath being from the Spirit. According then to reason (*logos*) the One contains the Ten, the Ten the One.

13. *Tat.* Father, I see the All, I see myself in Mind.

Her. This is, my son, Rebirth—no more to look on things from body's view-point (a thing three ways in space extended), . . . though this Sermon (*logos*) on Rebirth, on which I did not comment;—in order that we may not be calumniators of the All unto the multitude, to whom indeed the God Himself doth will we should not.

14. *Tat.* Tell me, O father: This Body which is made up of the Powers, is it at any time dissolved?

Her. Hush, [son]! Speak not of things impossible, else wilt thou sin and thy Mind's eye be quenched. The natural body which our sense perceives is far removed from this essential birth. The first must be dissolved, the last can never be; the first must die, the last death cannot touch. Dost thou not know thou hast been born a God, Son of the One, even as I myself?

15. *Tat.* I would, O father, hear the Praisegiving with hymn which thou didst say thou hearest then when thou wert at the Eight [the Ogdoad] of Powers.

Her. Just as the Shepherd¹ did foretell [I should], my son, [when I came to] the Eight.² Well dost thou haste to "strike thy tent," for thou hast been made pure. The Shepherd, Mind of all

¹ [*i.e.*, Poimandres, the divine figure of C.H. I.]

² [A reference to C.H. I:26 where after being purified of seven vices the soul enters the eighth sphere—the sphere beyond the planets and thus free of their baneful influence. There is though a dual meaning of "Ogdoad"; in some Gnostic systems such as that attributed to Ptolmey (a disciple of Valentinus) by Irenæus, the first productions of the parent of the entirety formed a group of eight powers (see IrPt in Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*). The prototype was possibly the company of eight gods in the Hermopolitan creation myth, also alluded to in the Hermetic "Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth" in NHC VI.]

masterhood, hath not passed on to me more than hath been writ down, for full well did He know that I should of myself be able to learn all, and hear what I should wish, and see all things. He left to me the making of fair things; wherefore the Powers within me, e'en as they are in all: break into song.

16. *Tat.* Father, I wish to hear; I long to know these things.

Her. Be still, my son ; hear the Praise-giving now that keeps [the soul] in tune, Hymn of Re-birth—a hymn I would not have thought fit so readily to tell, had'st thou not reached the end of all. Wherefore this is not taught, but is kept hid in silence. Thus then, my son, stand in a place uncovered to the sky, facing the southern wind, about the sinking of the setting sun, and make thy worship; so in like manner too when he doth rise, with face to the east wind.¹ Now, son, be still!

THE SECRET HYMNODY

17. Let every nature of the World receive the utterance of my hymn! Open thou Earth! Let every bolt of the Abyss be drawn for me. Stir not, ye Trees! I am about to hymn creation's Lord, both All and One. Ye Heavens open, and ye Winds stay still; [and] let God's deathless Sphere receive my word (*logos*)! For I will sing the praise of Him who founded all; who fixed the Earth, and hung up Heaven, and gave command that Ocean should afford sweet water [to the Earth], to both those parts that are inhabited and those that are not, for the support and use of every man; who made the Fire to shine for gods and me for every act. Let us together all give praise to Him, sublime above the Heavens, of every nature Lord! 'Tis He who is the Eye of Mind; may He accept the praise of these my Powers!

18. Ye Powers that are within me, hymn the One and All; sing with my Will, Powers all that are within me! O blessed Gnosis, by thee illumined, hymning through thee the Light that mind alone can see, I joy in Joy of Mind. Sing with me praises all ye Powers! Sing praise, my Self-control; sing thou through me, my Righteousness, the praises of the Righteous; sing thou, my Sharing-all, the praises of the All; through me sing, Truth, Truth's praises! Sing thou, O Good, the Good! O Life and Light,

¹ [Compare *Asc.* 41 for these directions.]

from us to you our praises flow! Father, I give Thee thanks, to Thee Thou Energy of all my Powers; I give Thee thanks, O God, Thou Power of all my Energies!

19. Thy Reason (*logos*) sings through me Thy praises. Take back through me the All into [Thy] Reason—[my] reasonable oblation! Thus cry the Powers in me. They sing Thy praise, Thou All; they do Thy Will. *From* Thee Thy Will; *to* Thee the All. Receive from all their reasonable oblation.¹ The All that is in us, O Life, preserve; O Light illumine it; O God in-spirit it. It is Thy Mind that plays the Shepherd to Thy Word, O Thou Creator, Bestower of the Spirit [upon all].

20. [For] Thou art God; Thy Man thus cries to Thee through Fire, through Air, through Earth, through Water, [and] through Spirit, through Thy creatures. 'Tis from Thy Æon² I have found Praise-giving; and in Thy Will: the object of my search, have I found rest.

Tat. By thy good pleasure have I *seen* this Praise-giving being *sung*, O father; I have set it in my Cosmos too.³

Her. Say in the Cosmos that thy mind alone can see, my son.

Tat. Yea, father, in the Cosmos that the mind alone can see; for I have been made able by thy Hymn, and by thy Praise-giving my mind hath been illumined. But further I myself as well would from my natural mind send praise-giving to God.

21. *Her.* But not unheedfully, my son.

Tat. Ay. What I behold in mind, that do I say. To thee, thou Parent of my Bringing into Birth, as unto God I, Tat, send reasonable offerings. O God and Father, thou art the Lord, thou art the Mind. Receive from me oblations reasonable as thou would'st wish; for by thy Will all things have been perfected.⁴

¹ [Copenhaver has "speech offerings" here and below; compare *Asc.* 41.]

² [An analogy has been suggested (see Copenhaver, apparatus *ad loc.*) with part of the "ascent" of the so-called Mithras Liturgy (PGM IV. 487-536) where the theurgist ascends through various elements to Aiōn.]

³ [Copenhaver, following an amendment proposed by Festugière, has "... I have found the rest I seek; I have seen, as you wished it" as the end of the hymn, and "This praise that you have told, father, I have also established in my cosmos" as Tat's response.]

⁴ [The Greek, *παντα τελειται*, could have the specific connotation of the completion or 'perfection' of a Mystery-initiation.]

Her. Send thou oblation, son, acceptable to God, the Sire of all; but add, my son, too, “through the Word” (*logos*).

Tat. I give thee, father, thanks for showing me to sing such hymns.

22. *Her.* Happy am I, my son, that thou hast brought the good fruits forth of Truth, products that cannot die. And now that thou hast learnt this lesson from me, make promise to keep silence on thy virtue, and to no soul, my son, make known the handing on to thee the manner of Rebirth, that we may not be thought to be calumniators. And now we both of us have given heed sufficiently, both I the speaker and the hearer thou. In Mind hast thou become a Knower of thyself and of our [common] Sire.

C.H. XIV:
Thrice-Greatest Hermes to Asclepius
Unto Asclepius Good Heath of Soul!¹

1. SINCE in thy absence my son Tat desired to learn the nature of the things that are, and would not let me hold it over, as [natural to] a younger son fresh come to gnosis of the [teachings] on each single point,—I was compelled to tell [him] more, in order that the contemplation [of them] might be the easier for him to follow. I would, then, choosing out the chiefest heads of what was said, write them in brief to thee, explaining them more mystic-ly, as unto one of greater age and one well versed in Nature.

2. If all things manifest have been and are being made, and made things are not made by their own selves but by another; [if] made things are the many,—nay more, are all things manifest and all things different and not alike; and things that are being made are being made by other [than themselves];—there is some one who makes these things; and He cannot be made, but is more ancient than the things that can. For things that can be made, I say, are made by other [than themselves]; but of the things that owe their being to their being made, it is impossible that anything should be more ancient than them all, save only That which is not able to be made.

3. So He is both Supreme, and One, and Only, the truly wise in all, as having naught more ancient [than Himself]. For He doth rule o'er both the number, size and difference of things that are being made, and o'er the continuity of their making [too]. Again, things makeable are seeable; but He cannot be seen. For for this cause He maketh,—that He may not be able to be seen. He, therefore, ever maketh; and therefore can He ne'er be Been. To comprehend Him thus is meet; and comprehending, [it is meet] to marvel; and marvelling, to count oneself as blessed, as having learnt to know one's Sire.

¹ [The form is epistolary rather than the more usual dialogue / sermon.]

4. For what is sweeter than one's own true Sire? Who, then, is He; and how shall we learn how to know Him? Is it not right to dedicate to Him done the name of God, or that of Maker, or of Father, or rather [all] the three;—God for His Power, and Maker for His Energy, and Father for His Good? Now Power doth differ from the things which are being made; while Energy consisteth in all things being made. Wherefore we ought to put away verbosity and foolish talk, and understand these two—the made and Maker. For that of them there is no middle [term]; there is no third.

5. Wherefore in all that thou conceivest, in all thou hearest, these two recall to mind; and think all things are they, reckoning as doubtful naught, nor of the things above, nor of the things below, neither of things divine, nor things that suffer change or things that are in obscuration. For all things are [these] twain, Maker and made, and 'tis impossible that one should be without the other; for neither is it possible that "Maker" should exist without the "made," for each of them is one and the same thing. Wherefore 'tis no more possible for one from other to be parted, than self from self.

6. Now if the Maker is naught else but That which makes, Alone, Simple, Uncompound, it needs must do this [making] to Itself,—to Which its Maker's making is "its being made." And as to all that's being made,—it cannot be [so made] by being made by its own self; but it must needs be made by being made by other. Without the "Maker" "made" is neither made nor is; for that the one without the other doth lose its proper nature by deprivation of that other. If, then, all things have been admitted to be two,—the "that which is being made" and "that which makes,"—[all then] are one in union of these,—the "that which leadeth" and the "that which followeth." The making God is "that which leadeth"; the "that which is being made," whate'er it be, the "that which followeth."

7. And do not thou be chary of things made because of their variety, from fear of attribution of a low estate and lack of glory unto God. For that His Glory's one,—to make all things; and this is as it were God's Body,—the making [of them]. But by the Maker's self naught is there thought or bad or base. These

things are passions which accompany the making process, as rust doth brass and filth doth body; but neither doth the brass-smith make the rust, nor the begettem of the body filth, nor God [make] evil. It is continuance in the state of being made that makes them lose, as though it were, their bloom; and 'tis because of this God hath made change, as though it were the making clean of genesis.

8. Is it, then, possible for one and the same painter man to make both heaven, and gods, and earth, and sea, and men, and all the animals, and lifeless things, and trees, and yet impossible for God to make all things? What monstrous lack of understanding; what want of knowledge as to God! For such the strangest lot of all do suffer; for though they say they worship piously and sing the praise of God, yet by their not ascribing unto Him the making of all things, they know not God; and, added unto this not-knowing, they're guilty even of the worst impiety to Him—passions to Him attributing, or arrogance, or impotency. For if He doth not make all things, from arrogance He doth not make, or not being able,—which is impiety [to think].

9. One Passion hath God only—Good; and He who's Good, is neither arrogant nor impotent. For this is God—the Good, which hath all power of making all. And all that can be made is made by God,—that is, by [Him who is] the Good and who can make all things. But would'st thou learn how He doth make, and how things made are made, thou may'st do so.

10. Behold a very fair and most resemblant image—a husbandman casting the seed into the ground; here wheat, there barley, and there [again] some other of the seeds! Behold one and the same man planting the vine, the apple, and [all] other trees! In just the selfsame way doth God sow Immortality in Heaven, and Change on Earth, and Life and Motion in the universe. These are not many, but few and easy to be numbered; for four in all are they,—and God Himself and Genesis, in whom are all that are.

C.H. XVI: The Definitions of Asclepius unto King Ammon

The Perfect Sermon of Asclepius unto the King.¹

1. GREAT is the sermon (*logos*) which I send to thee, O King—the summing up and digest, as it were, of all the rest. For it is not composed to suit the many's prejudice, since it contains much that refuteth them. Nay, it will seem to thee as well to contradict sometimes my sermons too. Hermes, my master, in many a conversation, both when alone, and sometimes, too, when Tat was there, has said, that unto those who come across my books, their composition will seem most simple and [most] clear; but, on the contrary, as 'tis unclear, and has the [inner] meaning of its words concealed, it will be still unclearer, when, afterwards, the Greeks will want to turn our tongue into their own,—for this will be a very great distorting and obscuring of [even] what has been [already] written.

2. Turned into our own native tongue, the sermon (*logos*) keepeth clear the meaning of the words (*logoi*) [at any rate]. For that its very quality of sound, the [very] power of the Egyptian names, have in themselves the bringing into act of what is said. As far as, then, thou canst, O King—(and thou canst [do] all things)—keep [this] our sermon from translation; in order that such mighty mysteries may not come to the Greeks, and the disdainful speech of Greece, with [all] its looseness,² and its surface beauty: so to speak, take all the strength out of the solemn and the strong—the energetic speech of Names. The Greeks, O King, have novel words, energetic of “argumentation” [only]; and thus is the philosophizing of the Greeks—the noise of words. But we do not use words; but we use sounds full-filled with deeds.

¹ [This should not be confused with the “Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius” (see Salaman *et al.*, “The Way of Hermes” for an English translation). Nor with the “Perfect Sermon” (*logos telios*) called *Asclepius*.]

² [Despite the strong “Egyptianism” of this passage (which flatly contradicts a statement about speech in XII:13) it includes a Greek word-play and was almost certainly originally written in Greek, which Mead admits in his commentary. Compare also the anti-intellectualism of *Asc.* xii-xiv.]

3. Thus, then, will I begin the sermon by invocation unto God, the universals' Lord and Maker, [their] Sire, and [their] Encompasser; who though being All is One, and though being One is All; for that the Fullness of all things is One, and [is] in One, this latter One not coming as a second [One], but both being One. And this is the idea-hat I would have thee keep, through the whole study of our sermon, Sire! For should one try to separate what *seems* to be both All and One and Same from One,—he will be found to take his epithet of “All” from [the idea of] multitude, and not from [that of] fullness—which is impossible; for if he part All from the One, he will destroy the All. For all things must be One—if they indeed are One. Yea, they are One; and they shall never cease being One—in order that the Fullness may not be destroyed.

4. See then in Earth a host of founts of Water and of Fire forthspiriting in its midmost parts; in one and the same [space all] the three natures visible—of Fire, and Water, and of Earth, depending from one Root. Whence, too, it is believed to be the Treasury of every matter. It sendeth forth of its abundance, and in the place [of what it sendeth forth] receiveth the subsistence from above.

5. For thus the Demiurge—I mean the Sun—eternally doth order Heaven and Earth, pouring down Essence, and taking Matter up, drawing both round Himself and to Himself all things, and from Himself giving all things to all. For He it is whose goodly energies extend not only through the Heaven and the Air, but also onto Earth, right down unto the lowest Depth and the Abyss.

6. And if there be an Essence which the mind alone can grasp, this is his Substance, the reservoir of which would be His Light. But whence this [Substance] doth arise, or floweth forth, He, [and He] only, knows. [. . .] Or rather, in space and nature, He is near unto Himself . . . though as He is not seen by us, . . . understand [Him] by conjecture.¹

7. The spectacle of Him, however, is not left unto conjecture; nay [for] His very rays, in greatest splendour, shine all round

¹ [The text here appears highly corrupt.]

on all the Cosmos that doth lie above and lie below. For He is established in the midst, wreathed with the Cosmos, and just as a good charioteer, He safely drives the cosmic team, and holds them in unto Himself, lest they should run away in dire disorder. The reins are Life, and Soul, and Spirit, Deathlessness, and Genesis. He lets it, then, drive [round] not far off from Himself—nay, if the truth be said, together with Himself.

8. And in this way He operates all things. To the immortals He distributeth perpetual permanence; and with the upper hemisphere of His own Light—all that he sends above from out His other side: [the side of him] which looks to Heaven—He nourisheth the deathless parts of Cosmos. But with that side that sendeth down [its Light], and shineth round all of the hemisphere of Water, and of Earth, and Air, He vivifieth, and by births and changes keepeth in movement to and fro the animals in these [the lower] parts of Cosmos. . . .

9. He changes them in spiral fashion, and doth transform them into one another, genus to genus, species into species, their mutual changes into one another being balanced—just as He does when He doth deal with the Great Bodies. For in the case of every body, [its] permanence [consists in] transformation. In case of an immortal one, there is no dissolution; but when it is a mortal one, it is accompanied with dissolution. And this is how the deathless body doth differ from the mortal, and how the mortal one doth differ from the deathless.

10. Moreover, as His Light's continuous, so is His Power of giving Life to lives continuous, and not to be brought to an end in space or in abundance. For there are many choirs of daimons round Him, like unto hosts of very various kinds; who though they dwell with mortals, yet are not far from the immortals; but having as their lot from here unto the spaces of the Gods, they watch o'er the affairs of men, and work out things appointed by the Gods—by means of storms, whirlwinds and hurricanes, by transmutations wrought by fire and shakings of the earth, with famines also and with wars requiting [man's] impiety, —for this is in man's case the greatest ill against the Gods.

11. For that the duty of the Gods is to give benefits; the duty of mankind is to give worship;¹ the duty of the daimons is to give requital. For as to all the other things men do, through error, or foolhardiness, or by necessity, which they call Fate: or ignorance—these are not held requitable among the Gods; impiety alone is guilty at their bar.

12. The Sun is the preserver and the nurse of every class. And just as the Intelligible World, holding the Sensible in its embrace, fills it [all] full, distending it with forms of every kind and every shape—so, too, the Sun distendeth all in Cosmos, affording births to all, and strengtheneth them. When they are weary or they fail, He takes them in His arms again.

13. And under Him is ranged the choir of daimons—or, rather, choirs; for these are multitudinous and very varied, ranked underneath the groups of Stars, in equal number with each one of them. So, marshalled in their ranks, they are the ministers of each one of the Stars, being in their natures good, and bad, that is, in their activities (for that a daimon's essence is activity); while some of them are [of] mixed [natures], good and bad.

14. To all of these has been allotted the authority o'er things upon the Earth; and it is they who bring about the multifold confusion of the turmoils on the Earth—for states and nations generally, and for each individual separately. For they do shape our souls like to themselves, and set them moving with them,—obsessing nerves, and marrow, veins and arteries, the brain itself, down to the very heart.

15. For on each one of us being born and made alive, the daimons take hold on us—those [daimones] who are in service at that moment [of the wheel] of Genesis, who are ranged under each one of the Stars. For that these change at every moment; they do not stay the same, but circle back again. These, then, descending through the body to the two parts of the soul, set it awirling, each one towards its own activity. But the soul's rational part is set above the lordship of the daimons—designed to be receptacle of God.

¹ Or "to be pious."

16. Who then doth have a Ray shining upon him through the Sun within his rational part—and these in all are few—on them the daimons do not act; for no one of the daimons or of Gods has any power against one Ray of God. As for the rest, they are all led and driven, soul and body, by the daimons—loving and hating the activities of these. The reason (*logos*), [then,] is not the love that is deceived and that deceives. The daimons, therefore, exercise the whole of this terrene economy: using our bodies as [their] instruments. And this economy Hermes has called *Heimarmenē*.¹

17. The World Intelligible, then, depends from God; the Sensible from the Intelligible [World]. The Sun, through the Intelligible and the Sensible Cosmos, pours forth abundantly the stream from God of Good,—that is, the demiurgic operation. And round the Sun are the Eight Spheres, dependent from Him—the [Sphere] of the Non-wandering Ones, the Six [Spheres] of the Wanderers, and one Circumterrene.² And from the Spheres depend the daimones; and from these, men. And thus all things and all [of them] depend from God.

18. Wherefore God is the Sire of all; the Sun's [their] Demiurge; the Cosmos is the instrument of demiurgic operation. Intelligible Essence regulateth Heaven; and Heaven, the Gods; the daimones, ranked underneath the Gods, regulate men. This is the host of Gods and daimones. Through these God makes all things for His own self. And all [of them] are parts of God; and if they all [are] parts—then, God is all. Thus, making all, He makes Himself; nor ever can He cease [His making], for He Himself is ceaseless. Just, then, as God doth have no end and no beginning, so doth His making have no end and no beginning.

¹ [Conventionally translated 'fate'; it appears in romanized Greek as a technical term in the Latin *Asclepius*.]

² [This appears to describe a heliocentric cosmology and may have been taken as such by some Renaissance Hermeticists; see Yates, *Giordano Bruno*.]

C.H. XVII: [Of Asclepius to the King]¹

[...]

Asclepius. If thou dost think [of it], O King, even of bodies there are things bodiless.

The King. What [are they]?—(asked the King.)

Asc. The bodies that appear in mirrors—do they not seem then to have no body?

The King. It is so, O Asclepius; thou thinkest like a God!—(the King replied.)

Asc. There are things bodiless as well as these; for instance, forms²—do not they seem to thee to have no body, but to appear in bodies not only of the things which are ensouled, but also of those which are not ensouled?

The King. Thou sayest well, Asclepius.

Asc. Thus, [then,] there are reflexions of things bodiless on bodies, and of bodies too upon things bodiless—that is to say, [reflexions] of the Sensible on the Intelligible World, and of the [World] Intelligible on the Sensible. Wherefore, pay worship to the images, O King, since they too have their forms as from the World Intelligible.

(Thereon His Majesty arose and said:)

The King. It is the hour, O Prophet, to see about the comfort of our guests. To-morrow, [then,] will we resume our sacred converse.

¹ [This fragment is untitled in MS.; Mead argues that some pages in the prototype MS. are missing including the ending of CH. XVI and the title, and probably the bulk of the text, of the present work. The speaker is identified in some texts as Tat; Mead considered this a spurious 'correction' by a copyist. The unnamed King is perhaps meant to be the King Ammon who is addressed in C.H. XVI.]

² [In the sense of Platonic Ideas, probably.]

C.H. XVIII: [The Econium of Kings]
(About the Soul's being Hindered
by the Passions of the Body)¹

1. [Now] in the case of those professing the harmonious art of muse-like melody—if, when the piece is played, the discord of the instruments doth hinder their intent, its rendering becomes ridiculous. For when his instruments are quite too weak for what's required of them, the music-artist needs must be laughed at by the audience. For He, with all good will, gives of His art unweariedly; they blame the [artist's] weakness. He then who is the Natural Musician-God, not only in His making of the harmony of His [celestial] songs, but also in His sending forth the rhythm of the melody of His own song[s] right down unto the separate instruments, is, as God, never wearied. For that with God there is no growing weary.

2. So, then, if ever a musician desires to enter into the highest contest of his art he can—when now the trumpeters have rendered the same phrase of the [composer's] skill, and afterwards the flautists played the sweet notes of the melody upon their instruments, and they complete the music of the piece with pipe and plectrum—[if any thing goes wrong,] one does not lay the blame upon the inspiration of the music-maker. Nay, [by no means,]—to him one renders the respect that is his due; one blames the falseness of the instrument, in that it has become a hindrance to those who are most excellent—embarrassing the maker of the music in [the execution of] his melody, and robbing those who listen of the sweetness of the song.

3. In like way also, in our case, let no one of our audience for the weakness that inheres in body, blame impiously our Race. Nay, let him know God is Unwearied Spirit—for ever in the

¹ [Mead, in common with other commentators, is of the view that the title is the spurious interpolation of a later redactor and that this insipid piece of rhetoric was tacked on to the end of the *Corpus* at an early stage of compilation, possibly in order to reassure some actual emperor of the loyalty of the Poimandres-Community; the references to kings in XVI and XVII may also have suggested it. The title in square brackets appears to be Mead's.]

self-same way possessed of His own science, unceasing in His joyous gifts, the self-same benefits bestowing everywhere.

4. And if the Pheidias—the Demiurge—is not responded to, by lack of matter to perfect His skilfulness, although for His own part the Artist has done all he can, let us not lay the blame on Him. But let us, [rather,] blame the weakness of the string, in that, because it is too slack or is too tight, it mars the rhythm of the harmony.

5. So when it is that the mischance occurs by reason of the instrument, no one doth blame the Artist. Nay, [more;] the worse the instrument doth chance to be, the more the Artist gains in reputation by the frequency with which his hand doth strike the proper note, and more the love the listeners pour upon that Music-maker, without the slightest thought of blaming him. So will we too, most noble [Sirs], set our own lyre in tune again, within, with the Musician !

6. Nay, I have seen one of the artist-folk—although he had no power of playing on the lyre—when once he had been trained for the right noble theme, make frequent use of his own self as instrument, and tune the service of his string by means of mysteries, so that the listeners were amazed at how he turned necessitude into magnificence.

Of course you know the story of the harper who won the favour of the God who is the president of music-work. [One day,] when he was playing for a prize, and when the breaking of a string became a hindrance to him in the contest, the favour of the Better One supplied him with another string, and placed within his grasp the boon of fame. A grasshopper was made to settle on his lyre, through the foreknowledge of the Better One, and [so] fill in the melody in substitution of the [broken] string. And so by mending of his string the harper's grief was stayed, and fame of victory was won.

7. And this I feel is my own case, most noble [Sirs]! For but just now I seemed to make confession of my want of strength, and play the weakling for a little while; but now, by virtue of the strength of [that] Superior One, as though my song about the King had been perfected [by Him, I seem] to wake my muse.

For, you must know, the end of [this] our duty will be the glorious fame of Kings, and the good-will of our discourse (*logos*) [will occupy itself] about the triumphs which they win. Come then, let us make haste! For that the singer willeth it, and hath attuned his lyree for this; nay more, more sweetly will he play, more fitly will he sing, as he has for his song the greater subjects of his theme.

8. Since, then, he has the [stringing] of his lyre tuned specially to Kings, and has the key of laudatory songs, and as his goal the Royal praises, let him first raise himself unto the highest King—the God of wholes. Beginning, [then,] his song from the above, he, [thus,] in second place, descends to those after His likeness who hold the sceptre's power; since Kings themselves, indeed, prefer the [topics] of the song should step by step descend from the above, and where they have their [gifts of] victory presided o'er for them, thence should their hopes be led in orderly succession.

9. Let, then, the singer start with God, the greatest King of wholes, who is for ever free from death, both everlasting and possessed of [all] the might of everlastingness, the Glorious Victor, the very first, from whom all victories descend to those who in succession do succeed to victory.

10. Our sermon (*logos*) then, doth hasten to descend to [Kingly] praises and to the Presidents of common weal and peace, the Kings—whose lordship in most ancient times was placed upon the highest pinnacle by God Supreme; for whom the prizes have already been prepared even before their prowess in the war; of whom the trophies have been raised even before the shock of conflict. For whom it is appointed not only to be Kings but also to be best. At whom, before they even stir, the foreign land doth quake.

(ABOUT THE BLESSING OF THE BETTER [ONE]
AND PRAISING OF THE KING)

11. But now our theme (*logos*) doth hasten on to blend its end with its beginnings—with blessing of the Better [One]; and then to make a final end of its discourse (*logos*) on those divinest Kings who give us the [great] prize of peace. For just

as we began [by treating] of the Better [One] and of the Power Above, so let us make the end bend round again unto the same—the Better [One]. Just as the Sun, the nurse of all the things that grow, on his first rising, gathers unto himself the first-fruits of their yield with his most mighty hands, using his rays as though it were for plucking off their fruits—yea, [for] his rays are [truly] hands for him who plucketh first the most ambrosial [essences] of plants—so, too, should we, beginning from the Better [One], and [thus] recipient of His wisdom's stream, and turning it upon the garden of our souls above the heavens,—we should [direct and] train these [streams] of blessing back again unto their source, [blessing] whose entire power of germination [in us] He hath Himself poured into us.

12. 'Tis fit ten thousand tongues and voices should be used to send His blessings back again unto the all-pure God, who is the Father of our souls; and though we cannot utter what is fit for we are [far] unequal to the task—[yet will we say what best we can]. For Babes just born have not the strength to sing their Father's glory as it should be sung; but they give proper thanks for them, according to their strength, and meet with pardon for their feebleness. Nay, it is rather that God's glory doth consist in this [one] very thing—that He is greater than His children; and that the prelude and the source, the middle and the end, of blessings, is to confess the Father to be infinitely puissant and never knowing what a limit means.

13. So is it, too, in the King's case. For that we men, as though we were the children of the King, feel it our natural duty to give praise to him. Still must we ask for pardon [for our insufficiency], e'en though 'tis granted by our Sire before we [even] ask. And as it cannot be the Sire will turn from Babes new-born because they are so weak, but rather will rejoice when they begin to recognise [his love]—so also will the Gnosis of the all [rejoice], which doth distribute life to all, and power of giving blessing back to God, which He hath given [us].

14. For God, being Good, and having in Himself eternally the limit of His own eternal fitness, and being deathless, and containing in Himself that lot of that inheritance that cannot come unto an end, and [thus] for ever ever-flowing from out

that energy of His, He doth send tidings to this world down here [to urge us] to the rendering of praise that brings us home again. With Him, therefore, is there no difference with one another; there is no partiality with Him. But they are one in Thought. One is the Prescience of all. They have one Mind—their Father. One is the Sense that's active through them—their passion for each other. 'Tis Love Himself who worketh the one harmony of all.

15. Thus, therefore, let us sing the praise of God. Nay, rather, let us [first] descend to those who have received their sceptres from Him. For that we ought to make beginning with our Kings, and so by practising ourselves on them, accustom us to songs of praise, and train ourselves in pious service to the Better [One]. [We ought] to make the very first beginnings of our exercise of praise begin from him, and through him exercise the practice [of our praise], that so there may be in us both the exercising of our piety towards God, and of our praise to Kings.

16. For that we ought to make return to them, in that they have extended the prosperity of such great peace to us. It is the virtue of the King, nay, 'tis his name alone, that doth establish peace. He has his name of King because he levelleth the summits of dissension with his smooth tread,¹ and is the lord of reason (*logos*) that [makes] for peace. And in as much, in sooth, as he hath made himself the natural protector of the kingdom which is not his native land: his very name [is made] the sign of peace. For that, indeed, you know, the appellation of the King has frequently at once restrained the foe. Nay, more, the very statues of the King are peaceful harbours for those most tempest-tossed. The likeness of the King alone has to appear to win the victory, and to assure to all the citizens freedom from hurt and fear.

¹ [A Greek wordplay on βασιλευς (king) and βασει λεια (light step).]

THE PERFECT SERMON
(ASCLEPIUS)

[Editor's note]

Titles of this tract in extant MSS. vary. "Perfect Sermon" (*Sermo perfectus*, λόγος τέλειος) is how this tract is cited by the early Christian writer Lactantius, who quotes passages in Greek in his *Divine Institutes* (ca. 311 C.E.). *Logos teleios* could also mean "Sermon of Initiation."

The earliest complete texts of the discourse are in Latin. The original language of composition was almost certainly Greek; some Greek words appear in romanized form in the Latin text as technical terms and a few passages appear to depend on Greek word-plays.

Further excerpts from the Greek appear in the anthology of Stobæus and the writings of a 6th-century writer Johannes Laurentius Lydus. Mead, on comparing these quotations and those of Lactantius with the Latin, remarked that the latter was "... an exceedingly free rendering of the Greek, showing many expansions and contractions, and often missing the sense of the original ...". Some Latin quotations are found in the *De Civitate Dei* of Augustine of Hippo (early 5th cent. C.E.). Since Mead wrote, a Coptic translation of sections 21-29 was found in a codex discovered at Nag Hammadi (NHC VI, 8); this contains some quite significant variations with the Latin and is regarded as probably closer to the Greek original. The same codex includes a slight variation of the concluding prayer of the *Asclepius* (NHC VI, 7). The date of this codex is uncertain but probably no later than the fourth century C.E.

The division into chapters seems somewhat arbitrary but is long-established and is retained for citation purposes. Mead additionally added his own section numbering within chapters, and also noted a division into fifteen sections from the French edition of Ménard (1867), which latter was followed by Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland when they included the *Asclepius* in *The Virgin of the World*, an 1885 collection of Hermetic texts. These are omitted, and many apparently redundant paragraph breaks have been removed.

THE PERFECT SERMON (ASCLEPIUS)

*Asclepius iste pro sole mihi est.*¹

I.

[*Trismegistus.*] God, O Asclepius, hath brought thee unto us that thou mayest hear a Godly sermon, a sermon such as well may seem of all the previous ones we've [either] uttered, or with which we've been inspired by the Divine, more Godly than the piety of [ordinary] faith. If thou with eye of intellect shalt see this Word thou shalt in thy whole mind be filled quite full of all things good. If that, indeed, the "many" be the "good," and not the "one," in which are "all." Indeed the difference between the two is found in their agreement,—“All” is of “One” or “One” is “All.” So closely bound is each to other, that neither can be parted from its mate. But this with diligent attention shalt thou learn from out the sermon that shall follow [this]. But do thou, O Asclepius, go forth a moment and call in the one who is to hear.²

(And when he had come in, Asclepius proposed that Ammon too should be allowed to come. Thereon Thrice-greatest said:)

[*Tris.*] There is no cause why Ammon should be kept away from us. For we remember how we have ourselves set down in writing many things to his address, as though unto a son most dear and most beloved, of physics many things, of ethics [too] as many as could be. It is, however, with *thy* name I will inscribe this treatise. But call, I prithee, no one else but Ammon, lest a most pious sermon on a so great theme be spoilt by the admission of the multitude. For 'tis the mark of an unpious mind to publish to the knowledge of the crowd a tractate brimming o'er with the full Greatness of Divinity.

¹ [Roughly: "This Asclepius is like the sun to me." This begins the text in the edition from which Mead was working, but was identified by him as a scribal gloss, meaning that this treatise called 'Asclepius' had illumined the scribe.]

² [This, it will become apparent, is Tat. The "sacred group of four" is perhaps a literary artifice, or even (as Mead suggests) the responsibility of a redactor; Asclepius is the interlocutor throughout.]

(When Ammon too had come within the holy place, and when the sacred group of four was now complete with piety and with God's goodly presence—to them, sunk in fit silence reverently, their souls and minds pendent on Hermes' lips, thus Love Divine began to speak.)

II.

[*Tris.*] The soul of every man, O [my] Asclepius, is deathless; yet not all in like fashion, but some in one way or [one] time, some in another.

Asc. Is not, then, O Thrice-greatest one, each soul of one [and the same] quality?

Tris. How quickly hast thou fallen, O Asclepius, from reason's true sobriety! Did not I say that "All" is "One," and "One" is "All," in as much as all things have been in the Creator before they were created. Nor is He called unfitly "All," in that his members are the "All." Therefore, in all this argument, see that thou keep in mind Him who is "One"-"All," or who Himself is maker of the "All."

All things descend from Heaven to Earth, to Water and to Air. 'Tis Fire alone, in that it is borne upwards, giveth life; that which [is carried] downwards [is] subservient to Fire. Further, whatever doth descend from the above, begetteth; what floweth upwards, nourisheth. 'Tis Earth alone, in that it resteth on itself, that is Receiver of all things, and [also] the Restorer of all genera that it receives. This Whole: therefore, as thou rememberest, in that it is of all,—in other words, all things, embraced by nature under "Soul" and "World," are in [perpetual] flux, so varied by the multiform equality of all their forms, that countless kinds of well-distinguished qualities may be discerned, yet with this bond of union, that all should seem as One, and from "One" "All."

III.

That, then, from which the whole Cosmos is formed, consisteth of Four Elements—Fire, Water, Earth, and Air; Cosmos [itself is] one, [its] Soul [is] one, and God is one. Now lend to me the whole of thee,—all that thou can'st in mind, all that thou skill'st in penetration. For that the Reason of Divinity may not

be known except by an intention of the senses like to it 'Tis likeliest to the torrent's flood, down-dashing headlong from above with all-devouring tide; so that it comes about, that by the swiftness of its speed it is too quick for our attention, not only for the hearers, but also for the very teachers.

Heaven, then, God Sensible, is the director of all bodies; bodies' increasings and decreasings are ruled by Sun and Moon. But He who is the Ruler of the Heaven, and of its Soul as well, and of all things within the Cosmos,—He is God, who is the Maker of all things. For from all those that have been said above: o'er which the same God rules, there floweth forth a flood of all things streaming through the Cosmos and the Soul, of every class and kind, throughout the Nature of [all] things. The Cosmos hath, moreover, been prepared by God as the receptacle of forms of every kind. Forth-thinking Nature by these kinds of things, He hath extended Cosmos unto Heaven by means of the Four Elements,—all to give pleasure to the eye of God.

IV.

And all dependent from Above are subdivided into species in the fashion which I am to tell. The genera of all things company with their own species; so that the genus is a class in its entirety, the species is part of a genus. The genus of the Gods will, therefore, make the species of the Gods out of itself. In like way, too, the genus of the daimons, and of men, likewise of birds, and of all [animals] the Cosmos doth contain within itself, brings into being species like itself. There is besides a genus other than the animal,—a genus, or indeed a soul, in that it's not without sensation,—in consequence of which it both finds happiness in suitable conditions, and pines and spoils in adverse ones;—I mean [the class] of all things on the earth which owe their life to the sound state of roots and shoots, of which the various kinds are scattered through the length and breadth of Earth.

The Heaven itself is full of God. The genera we have just mentioned, therefore, occupy up to the spaces of all things whose species are immortal. For that a species is part of a genus,—as man, for instance, of mankind,—and that a part must follow its own class's quality. From which it comes to

pass that though all genera are deathless, all species are not so. The genus of Divinity is in itself and in its species [also] deathless. As for the genera of other things,—to their genus, they [too] are everlasting; [for] though [the genus] perish in its species, yet it persists through its fecundity in being born. And for this cause its species are beneath the sway of death; so that man mortal is, mankind immortal.

V.

And yet the species of all genera are interblended with all genera; some which have previously been made, some which are made from these. The latter, then, which are being made, —either by Gods, or daimons, or by men,—are species all most closely like to their own several genera. For that it is impossible that bodies should be formed without the will of God; or species be configured without the help of daimons; or animals be taught and trained without the help of men.

Whoever of the daimons, then, transcending their own genus, are, by chance, united with a species: by reason of the neighbourhood of any species of the Godlike class,—these are considered like to Gods. Whereas those species of the daimons which continue in the quality of their own class,—these love men's rational nature [and occupy themselves with men], and are called daimons proper. Likewise is it the case with men, or more so even. Diverse and multiform, the species of mankind. And coming in itself from the association spoken of above, it of necessity doth bring about a multitude of combinations of all other species and almost of all things.

Wherefore doth man draw nigh unto the Gods, if he have joined himself unto the Gods with Godlike piety by reason of his mind, whereby he is joined to the Gods; and [nigh] unto the daimons, in that he is joined unto them [as well]. Whereas those men who are contented with the mediocrity of their own class, and the remaining species of mankind, will be like those unto the species of whose class they've joined themselves.

VI.

It is for reasons such as these, Asclepius, man is a mighty wonder,—an animal meet for our worship and for our respect.

For he doth pass into God's Nature, as though himself were God. This genus [also] knows the genus of the daimons, as though man knew he had a [common] origin with them. He thinketh little of the part of human nature in him, from confidence in the divineness of [his] other part. How much more happy is the blend of human nature [than of all the rest]! Joined to the Gods by his cognate divinity, a man looks down upon the part of him by means of which he's common with the Earth. The rest of things to which he knows he's kin, by [reason of] the heavenly order [in him], he binds unto himself with bonds of love; and thus he turns his gaze to Heaven.

So, then, [man] hath his place in the more blessed station of the Midst; so that he loves [all] those below himself, and in his turn is loved by those above. He tills the Earth. He mingles with the Elements by reason of the swiftness of his mind. He plunges into the Sea's depths by means of its profundity. He puts his values on all things. Heaven seems not too high for him; for it is measured by the wisdom of his mind as though it were quite near. No darkness of the Air obstructs the penetration of his mind. No density of Earth impedes his work. No depth of Water blunts his sight. [Though still] the same [yet] is he all, and everywhere is he the same.

Of all these genera, those [species] which are animal have [many] roots, which stretch from the above below, whereas those which are stationary—these from [one] living root send forth a wood of branching greenery up from below into the upper parts. Moreover, some of them are nourished with a two-fold form of food, while others with a single form. Twain are the forms of food—for soul and body, of which [all] animals consist. Their soul is nourished by the ever-restless motion of the World; their bodies have their growth from foods [drawn] from the water and the earth of the inferior world. Spirit, with which they all are filled, being interblended with the rest, doth make them live; sense being added, and also reason in the case of man—which hath been given to man alone as a fifth part out of the æther. Of all the living things [God] doth adorn, extend, exalt, the sense of man alone unto the understanding of the Reason of Divinity. But since I am impressed to speak concerning Sense, I will a little further on set forth for you the

sermon on this [point]; for that it is most holy, and [most] mighty, not less than in the Reason of Divinity itself.

VII.

But now I'll finish for you what I have begun. For I was speaking at the start of union with the Gods, by which men only consciously enjoy the Gods' regard,—I mean whatever men have won such rapture that they have obtained a share of that Divine Sense of intelligence which is the most Divine of Senses, found in God and in man's reason.

Asc. Are not the senses of all men, Thrice-greatest one, the same?

Tris. Nay, [my] Asclepius, all have not won true reason; but wildly rushing in pursuit of [reason's] counterfeit, they never see the thing itself, and are deceived. And this breeds evil in their minds, and [thus] transforms the best of animals into the nature of a beast and manners of the brutes.

But as to Sense and all things similar, I will set forth the whole discourse when [I explain] concerning Spirit. For man is the sole animal that is twofold. One part of him is simple: the [man] "essential," (*ousiōdēs*)¹ as say the Greeks as say the Greeks, but which we call the "form of the Divine Similitude." He also is fourfold : that which the Greeks call "hylic," (*hulikos*) [but] which we call "cosmic"; of which is made the corporal part, in which is vested what we just have said is the divine in man:—in which the godhead of the Mind alone, together with its kin, that is the Pure Mind's senses, findeth home and rest, its self with its own self, as though shut in the body's walls.

Asc. What, then, Thrice-greatest one, has caused it that man should be planted in the world, and should not pass his life in highest happiness in that part [of the universe] where there is God?

[*Tris.*] Rightly thou questionest, O [my] Asclepius! And we pray God that He bestow on us the power of setting forth this reason; since everything depends upon His Will, and specially those things that are set forth about the Highest Whole, the Reason that's the object of our present argument. Hear, then, Asclepius!

¹ [Here as in many other places, romanised Greek words appeared in the Latin text. I have placed them in brackets after Mead's English rendering.]

VIII.

The Lord and Maker of all things, whom we call rightly God, when from Himself He made the second [God], the Visible and Sensible,—I call him Sensible not that He hath sensation in Himself (for as to this, whether or no He have himself sensation, we will some other time declare), but that He is the object of the senses of those who see;—when, then, He made Him first, but second to Himself, and that He seemed to Him [most] fair, as one filled to the full with goodness of all things, He fell in love with Him as being part of His Divinity.

Accordingly, in that He was so mighty and so fair, He willed that some one else should have the power to contemplate the One He had made from Himself. And thereon He made man,—the imitator of His Reason and His Love. The Will of God is in itself complete accomplishment; inasmuch as together with His having willed, in one and the same time He hath brought it to full accomplishment. And so, when He perceived that the “essential” (*ousiōdēs*) [man] could not be lover of all things, unless He clothed him in a cosmic carapace, He shut him in within a house of body,—and ordered it that all [men] should be so,—from either nature making him a single blend and fair-proportioned mixture.

Therefore hath He made man of soul and body,—that is, of an eternal and a mortal nature; so that an animal thus blended can content his dual origin,—admire and worship things in heaven, and cultivate and govern things on earth. By mortal thingse I do not mean the water or the earth [themselves], for these are two of the [immortal] elements that nature hath made subject unto men,—but [either] things that are by men, or [that are] in or from them; such as the cultivation of the earth itself, pastures, [and] buildings, harbours, voyagings, intercommunications, mutual services, which are the firmest bonds of men between themselves and that part of the Cosmos which consists [indeed] of water and of earth, [but is] the Cosmos’ terrene part,—which is preserved by knowledge and the use of arts and sciences; without which [things] God willeth not Cosmos should be complete. In that necessity doth follow what seems good to God; performance waits upon His will. Nor

is it credible that that which once hath pleased Him, will become displeasing unto God; since He hath known both what will be, and what will please Him, long before.

IX.

But, O Asclepius, I see that thou with swift desire of mind art in a hurry to be told how man can have a love and worship of the Heaven, or of the things that are therein. Hear, then, Asclepius! The love of God and Heaven, together with all them that are therein, is one perpetual act of worship. No other thing ensouled, of Gods or animals, can do this thing, save man alone. 'Tis in the admiration, adoration, [and] the praise of men, and [in their] acts of worship, that Heaven and Heaven's hosts find their delight.

Nor is it without cause the Muses' choir hath been sent down by Highest Deity unto the host of men; in order that, forsooth, the terrene world should not seem too uncultured, had it lacked the charm of measures, but rather that with songs and praise of men accompanied with music, He might be lauded,—He who alone is all, or is the Sire of all; and so not even on the earths: should there have been an absence of the sweetness of the harmony of heavenly praise.

Some, then, though they be very few, endowed with the Pure Mind, have been entrusted with the sacred charge of contemplating Heaven. Whereas those men who, from the two-fold blending of their nature, have not as yet withdrawn their inner reason from their body's mass, these are appointed for the study of the elements, and [all] that is below them.

Thus man's an animal; yet not indeed less potent in that he's partly mortal, but rather doth he seem to be all the more fit and efficacious for reaching Certain Reason, since he has had mortality bestowed on him as well. For it is plain he could not have sustained the strain of both, unless he had been formed out of both natures, so that he could possess the powers of cultivating Earthly things and loving Heaven.

X.

The Reason of a thesis such as this, O [my] Asclepius, I would that thou should'st grasp, not only with the keen attention of

thy soul, but also with its living power [as well]. For 'tis a Reason that most men cannot believe; the Perfect and the True are to be grasped by the more holy minds. Hence, then, will I begin.

The Lord of the Eternity is the first God; the second's Cosmos; man is the third. God is the Maker of the Cosmos and of all the things therein; at the same time He ruleth all, with man himself, [who is] the ruler of the compound thing; the whole of which man taking on himself, doth make of it the proper care of his own love, in order that the two of them, himself and Cosmos, may be an ornament each unto other; so that from this divine compost of man, "World" seems most fitly called *Kosmos*¹ in Greek.

He knows himself; he knows the World as well. So that he recollects, indeed, what is convenient to his own parts. He calls to mind what he must use, that they may be of service to himself; giving the greatest praise and thanks to God, His Image reverencing,—not ignorant that he is, too, God's image the second [one]; for that there are two images of God—Cosmos and man.

So that it comes to pass that, since man's is a single structure,—in that part [of him] which doth consist of Soul, and Sense, of Spirit, and of Reason, he's divine; so that he seems to have the power to mount from as it were the higher elements into the Heaven. But in his cosmic part, which is composed of fire, and water, and of air, he stayeth mortal on the Earth,—lest he should leave all things committed to his care forsaken and bereft. Thus human kind is made in one part deathless, and in the other part subject to death while in a body.

XI.

Now of that dual nature,—that is to say of man,—there is a chief capacity. [And that is] piety, which goodness follows after. [And] this [capacity] then, and then only, seems to be perfected, if it be fortified with virtue of despising all desires for alien things. For alien from every part of kinship with the Gods are all things on the Earth, whatever are possessed from bodily desires,—to which we rightly give the name "possessions,"

¹ [The Greek word also has the meanings of "order" and "ornament."]

in that they are not born with us, but later on begin to be possessed by us; wherefore we call them by the name possessions.¹

All such things, then, are alien from man,—even his body. So that we can despise not only what we long for, but also that from which the vice of longing comes to us. For just as far as the increase of reason leads our soul, so far one should be man; in order that by contemplating the divine, one should look down upon, and disregard the mortal part, which hath been joined to him, through the necessity of helping on the lower world.

For that, in order that a man should be complete in either part, observe that he hath been composed of elements of either part in sets of four;—with hands, and feet, both of them pairs, and with the other members of his body, by means of which he may do service to the lower (that is to say the terrene) world. And to these parts [are added other] four;—of sense, and soul, of memory, and foresight, by means of which he may become acquainted with the rest of things divine, and judge of them. Hence it is brought about that man investigates the differences and qualities, effects and quantities of things, with critical research; yet, as he is held back with the too heavy weight of body's imperfection, he cannot properly descry the causes of the nature of [all] things which [really] are the true ones.

Man, then, being thus created and composed, and to such ministry and service set by Highest God,—man, by his keeping suitably the world in proper order, [and] by his piously adoring God, in both becomingly and suitably obeying God's Good Will, —[man being] such as this, with what reward think'st thou he should be recompensed? If that, indeed,—since Cosmos is God's work,—he who preserves and adds on to its beauty by his love, joins his own work unto God's Will; when he with toil and care doth fashion out the species (which He hath made [already] with His Divine Intent), with help of his own body;—with what reward think'st thou he should be recompensed, unless it be with that with which our forebears have been blest?

That this may be the pleasure of God's Love, such is our prayer for you, devoted ones. In other words, may He, when ye

¹ [A rather weak wordplay in the Latin; possibly an attempt to render an untranslatable wordplay in the Greek.]

have served your time, and have put off the world's restraint, and freed yourselves from deathly bonds, restore you pure and holy to the nature of your higher self, that is of the Divine!

XII.

Asc. Rightly and truly, O Thrice-greatest one, thou speakest. This is the prize for those who piously subordinate their lives to God and live to help the world.

Tris. [To those], however, who have lived in other fashion impiously,—[to them] both is return to Heaven denied, and there's appointed them migration into other bodies unworthy of a holy soul and base; so that, as this discourse of ours will show: souls in their life on earth run risk of losing hope of future immortality.

But [all of this] doth seem to some beyond belief; a tale to others; to others [yet again], perchance, a subject for their mirth. For in this life in body, it is a pleasant thing—the pleasure that one gets from one's possessions. 'Tis for this cause that spite, in envy of its [hope of] immortality, doth clap the soul in prison, as they say, and keep it down, so that it stays in that part of itself in which it's mortal, nor suffers it to know the part of its divinity.

For I will tell thee, as though it were prophetic-ly, that no one after us shall have the Single Love, the Love of wisdom-loving, which consists in Gnosis of Divinity alone,—[the practice of] perpetual contemplation and of holy piety. For that the many do confound philosophy with multifarious reasoning.

Asc. Why is it, then, the many make philosophy so hard to grasp; or wherefore is it they confound this thing with multifarious reasoning?

XIII.

Tris. 'Tis in this way, Asclepius;—by mixing it, by means of subtle expositions, with divers sciences not easy to be grasped,—such as arithmetic, and music, and geometry. But Pure Philosophy, which doth depend on godly piety alone, should only so far occupy itself with other arts, that it may [know how to] appreciate the working out in numbers of the fore-appointed stations of the stars when they return, and of

the course of their procession. Let her, moreover, know how to appreciate the Earth's dimensions, its qualities and quantities, the Water's depths, the strength of Fire, and the effects and nature of all these. [And so] let her give worship and give praise unto the Art and Mind of God.

As for [true] Music,—to know this is naught else than to have knowledge of the order of all things, and whatsoever God's Reason hath decreed. For that the order of each several thing when set together in one [key] for all, by means of skilful reason, will make, as 'twere, the sweetest and the truest harmony with God's [own] Song.

XIV.

Asc. Who, therefore, will the men be after us?

Tris. They will be led astray by sophists' cleverness, and turned from True Philosophy,—the Pure and Holy [Love]. For that to worship God with single mind and soul, and reverence the things that He hath made, and to give thanks unto His Will, which is the only thing quite full of Good,—this is Philosophy unsullied by the soul's rough curiousness. But of this subject let what has been said so far suffice.

And now let us begin to treat of Spirit and such things. There was first God and Matter (*hulē*), which we in Greek believe [to be] the Cosmos; and Spirit was with Cosmos, or Spirit was in Cosmos, but not in like way as in God; nor were there things [as yet] from which the Cosmos [comes to birth] in God. They were not; just for the very reason that they were not, but were as yet in that [condition] whence they *have had* their birth. For those things only are not called ingenerable which have not yet been born, but [also] those which lack the fertilizing power of generating, so that from them naught can be born. And so whatever things there are that have in them the power of generating,—these two are generable, [that is to say,] from which birth can take place, though they be born from their own selves [alone]. For there's no question that from those born from themselves birth can with ease take place, since from them all are born.

God, then, the everlasting, God the eternal, nor can be born, nor could He have been born. That is, That was, That shall be

ever. This, therefore, is God's Nature—all from itself [alone]. But Matter (*hulē*) (or the Nature of the Cosmos) and Spirit, although they do not seem to be things born from any source, yet in themselves possess the power of generation and of generating,—the nature of fecundity. For the beginning [truly] is in [just that] quality of nature which possesses in itself the power and matter both of conception and of birth? This, then, without conception of another, is generable of its own self.

XV.

But, on the other hand, [whereas] those things which only have the power of bringing forth by blending with another nature, are thus to be distinguished, this Space of Cosmos, with those that are in it, seems not to have been born, in that [the Cosmos] has in it undoubtedly all Nature's potency. By "Space" I mean that in which are all things. For all these things could not have been had Space not been, to hold them all. Since for all things that there have been, must be provided Space. For neither could the qualities nor quantities, nor the positions, nor [yet] the operations, be distinguished of those things which are *no where*.

So then the Cosmos, also, though not born, still has in it the births of all; in that, indeed, it doth afford for all of them most fecund wombs for their conception. It, therefore, is the sum of [all that] quality of Matter which hath creative potency, although it hath not been [itself] created. And, seeing that [this] quality of Matter is in its nature [simple] productiveness; so the same [source] produces bad as well [as good].

XVI.

I have not, therefore, O Asclepius and Ammon, said what many say, that God could not excise and banish evil from the Scheme of Things;—to whom no answer need at all be given. Yet for your sakes I will continue what I have begun, and give a reason. They say that God ought to have freed the World from bad in every way; for so much is its in the World, that it doth seem to be as though it were one of its limbs. This was foreseen by Highest God and [due] provision made, as much as ever could have been in reason made, then when He thought it proper to endow the minds of men with sense, and science and intelligence.

For it is by these things alone whereby we stand above the rest of animals, that we are able to avoid the snares and crimes of ill. For he who shall on sight have tunied from them, before he hath become immeshed in them,—he is a man protected by divine intelligence and [godly] prudence. For that the ground-work of [true] science doth consist of the top-stones of virtue.

It is by Spirit that all things are governed in the Cosmos, and made quick,—Spirit made subject to the Will of Highest God, as though it were an engine or machine. So far, then, [only] let Him be by us conceived,—as Him who is conceivable by mind alone, who is called Highest God, the Ruler and Director of God Sensible,—of Him who in Himself includes all Space, all Substance, and all Matter, of things producing and begetting, and all whatever is, however great it be.

XVII.

It is by Spirit that all species in the Cosmos are [or] moved or ruled,—each one according to its proper nature given it by God. Matter (*hulē*), or Cosmos, on the other hand, is that which holds all things,—the field of motion, and the that which crowds together all; of which God is the Ruler, distributing unto all cosmic things all that is requisite to each. It is with Spirit that He fills all things, according to the quality of each one's nature.

[Now,] seeing that the hollow roundness of the Cosmos is borne round into the fashion of a sphere; by reason of its [very] quality or form, it never can be altogether visible unto itself. So that, however high a place shouldest choose for looking down could'st not see from it what is because in many places it confronts in it thou below, thou at bottom, [the senses], and so is thought to have the quality [of being visible throughout]. For it is solely owing to the forms of species, with images of which it seems insculpted, that it is thought [to be] as though 'twere visible [throughout]; but as a fact 'tis ever to itself invisible.

3. Wherefore, its bottom, or its [lowest] part, if [such a] place there be within a sphere, is called in Greek *a-eidēs*; since that *eidein*¹ in Greek means “seeing,”—which “being-seen” the

¹ [*sic*, s.b. “*idein*” (*ιδειν*). The Greek word-play, deriving the name of Hades from the word for “visible” with the negative prefix, was established in classical times; it appears in some of the dialogues of Plato, for instance.]

sphere's beginning lacks. Hence, too, the species have the name *eideai*,¹ since they're of form we cannot see. Therefore, in that they are deprived of "being-seen," in Greek they are called *Hades*; in that they are at bottom of the sphere, they're called in Latin *Inferi*. These, then, are principal and prior, and, as it were, the sources and the heads of all the things which are in them, through them, or from them.

XVIII.

Asc. All things, then, in themselves (as thou, Thrice-greatest one, dost say) are cosmic [principles] (as I should say) of all the species which are in them, [or] as it were, the sum and substance of each one of them.

Tris. So Cosmos, then, doth nourish bodies; the Spirit, souls; the [Higher] Sense² (with which Celestial Gift mankind alone is blest) doth feed the mind. And [these are] not all men, but [they are] few, whose minds are of such quality that they can be receptive of so great a blessing.

For as the World's illumined by the Sun, so is the mind of man illumined by that Light; nay, in [still] fuller measure. For whatsoever thing the Sun doth shine upon, it is anon, by interjection of the Earth or Moon, or by the intervention of the night, robbed of its light. But once the [Higher] Sense hath been commingled with the soul of man, there is at-onement from the happy union of the blending of their natures; so that minds of this kind are never more held fast in errors of the darkness. Wherefore, with reason have they said the [Higher] Senses are the souls of Gods; to which I add: not of *all* Gods, but of the great ones [only]; nay, even of the principles of these.

XIX

Asc. What dost thou call, Thrice-greatest one, the heads of things, or sources of beginnings?

Tris. Great are the mysteries which I reveal to thee, divine the secrets I disclose; and so I make beginning of this thing¹ with prayers for Heaven's favour. The hierarchies of Gods are

¹ [Mead queries this as an error for *ιδέας*, as in the Platonic "Ideas" or forms.]

² [*sensus*; Copenhaver renders "consciousness," the context suggests that *nous* or something like it is meant.]

numerous; and of them all one class is called the Noumenal,¹ the other [class] the Sensible.² The former are called Noumenal, not for the reason that they're thought to lie beyond *our* senses; for these are just the Gods we sense more truly than the ones we call the visible,—just as our argument will prove, and thou, if thou attend, wilt be made fit to see. For that a lofty reasoning, and much more one that is too godlike for the mental grasp of [average] men, if that the speaker's words are not received with more attentive service of the ears,—will fly and flow beyond them; or rather will flow back [again], and mingle with the streams of its own source.

There are, then, [certain] Gods who are the principals of all the species. Next there come those whose essence (*ousia*) is their principal. These are the Sensible, each similar to its own dual source who by their sensibility affect all things,—the one part through the other part [in each] making to shine the proper work of every single one. Of Heaven,—or of whatso'er it be that is embraced within the term,—the essence-chief (*ousiarchēs*) is Zeus; for 'tis through Heaven that Zeus gives life to all. Sun's essence-chief (*ousiarchēs*) is light; for the good gift of light is poured on us through the Sun's disk.

The, "Thirty-six," who have the name of Horoscopes are in the [self] same space as the Fixed Stars; of these the essence-chief (*ousiarchēs*), or prince, is he whom they call Pantomorph (*pantomorphos*), or Omniform, who fashioneth the various forms for various species. The "Seven" who are called spheres, have essence-chiefs (*ousiarchai*), that is, [have each] their proper rulers, whom they call [all together] Fortune and *Heimarmenē*,³ whereby all things are changed by nature's law; perpetual stability being varied with incessant motion. The Air, moreover, is the engine, or machine, through which all things are made—(there is, however, an essence-chief of this, a second [Air])—mortal from mortal things and things like these.

These hierarchies of Gods, then, being thus and [in this way] related: from bottom unto top, are [also] thus connected with each other, and tend towards themselves; so mortal things are

¹ *intelligibilis*.

² *sensibilis*.

³ Fate, *εἰμαρμένη*.

bound to mortal, things sensible to sensible. The whole of [this grand scale of] Rulership, however, seems to Him [who is] the Highest Lord, either to be not many things, or rather [to be] one. For that from One all things depending, and flowing down from it,—when they are seen as separate, they're thought to be as many as they possibly can be; but in their union it is one [thing], or rather two, from which all things are made;—that is, from Matter, by means of which the other things are made, and by the Will of Him, by nod of whom they're brought to pass.

XX.

Asc. Is this again *the* reason, O Thrice-greatest one?

Tris. It is, Asclepius. For God's the Father or the Lord of all, or whatsoever else may be the name by which He's named more holily and piously by men,—which should be set apart among ourselves for sake of our intelligence. For if we contemplate this so transcendent God, we shall not make Him definite by any of these names. For if a [spoken] word is this:—a sound proceeding from the air, when struck by breath,¹ denoting the whole will, perchance, of man, or else the [higher] sense, which by good chance a man perceives by means of mind, when out of [all his] senses,—a name the stuff of which, made of a syllable or two, has so been limited and pondered, that it might serve in man as necessary link between the voice and ear;—thus [must] the Name of God in full consist of Sense, and Spirit, and of Air, and of all things in them, or through, or with them.

Indeed, I have no hope that the Creator of the whole of Greatness, the Father and the Lord of all the things [that are], could ever have one name, even although it should be made up of a multitude—He who cannot be named, or rather He who can be called by every name. For He, indeed, is One and All; so that it needs must be that all things should be called by the same name as His, or He Himself called by the names of all.

He, then, alone, yet all-complete in the fertility of either sex, ever with child of His own Will, doth ever bring to birth whatever He hath willed to procreate. His Will is the All-goodness, which also is the Goodness of all things, born from the nature of His own Divinity,—in order that all things may

¹ *spiritu.*

be, just as they all have been, and that henceforth the nature of being born from their own selves may be sufficient to all things that will be born. Let this, then, be the reason given thee, Asclepius, wherefore and how all things are made of either sex.

XXI.

Asc. Thou speak'st of God, then, O Thrice-greatest one?

Tris. Not only God, Asclepius, but all things living and inanimate. For 'tis impossible that any of the things that are should be unfruitful. For if fecundity should be removed from all the things that are, it could not be that they should be for ever what they are. I mean that Nature, Sense, and Cosmos, have in themselves the power of being born, and of preserving all things that are born. For either sex is full of procreation; and of each one there is a union, or,—what's more true,—a unity incomprehensible; which you may rightly call *Erōs* or *Aphroditē*, or both [names].

This, then, is truer than all truth, and plainer than what the mind[']s eye] perceives;—that from that Universal God of Universal Nature all other things for evermore have found, and had bestowed on them, the mystery of bringing forth; in which there is innate the sweetest Charity, [and] Joy, [and] Merriment, Longing, and Love Divine. We might have had to tell the mighty power and the compulsion of this mystery, if it had not been able to be known by every one from personal experience, by observation of himself.¹

For if thou should'st regard that supreme [point] of time when . . .² the one nature doth pour forth the young into the other one, and when the other greedily absorbs [it] from the first, and hides it [ever] deeper [in itself];—then, at that time, out of their common congress, females attain the nature of the

¹ [From this sentence to around the middle of cap. xxix, a version of the text appears in Coptic translation in NHC VI, with a number of significant variations from the Latin. See Robinson (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Library in English* for a translation.]

² [There is no lacuna in the text, and the Latin, which Mead helpfully gives in a note (. . . *quo ex crebro attritu prurimus ut . . .*) presents no real difficulty for translation; literally “. . . when from constant rubbing we itch so that . . .” although *prurimus*, ‘itch,’ is used in a transferred sense (one hopes . . . if not, you should really get that checked out). Mead clearly still had at least one foot in the nineteenth century.]

males, males weary grow with female listlessness.¹ And so the consummation of this mystery, so sweet and requisite, is wrought in secret; lest, owing to the vulgar jests of ignorance, the deity of either sex² should be compelled to blush at natural congress,—and much more still, if it should be subjected to the sight of impious folk.

XXII.

The pious are not numerous, however; nay, they are very few, so that they may be counted even in the world. Whence it doth come about, that in the many bad inheres, through defect of the Gnosis and Discernment of the things that are. For that it is from the intelligence of Godlike Reason; by which all things are ordered, there come to birth contempt and remedy of vice throughout the world. But when unknowingness and ignorance persist, all vicious things wax strong, and plague the soul with wounds incurable; so that, infected with them, and invitiated, it swells up, as though it were with poisons,—except for those who know the Discipline of souls and highest Cure of intellect.

So, then, although it may do good to few alone, 'tis proper to develope and explain this thesis:—wherefore Divinity hath deigned to share His science and intelligence with men alone. Give ear, accordingly! When God, [our] sire and Lord, made man, after the Gods, out of an equal mixture of a less pure cosmic part and a divine,—it [naturally] came to pass the imperfections of the cosmic part remained commingled with [our] frames, and other oness [as well], by reason of the food and sustenance we have out of necessity in common with all lives; by reason of which things it needs must be that the desires, and passions, and other vices, of the mind should occupy the souls of human kind.

As for the Gods, in as much as they had been made of Nature's fairest part, and have no need of the supports of reason and of

¹ [The Coptic, as translated by James Brashler, Peter Dirkse and Douglas Parrott in Robinson, *op. cit.*, puts this bit as follows: "... when the semen reaches the climax, it leaps forth. In that moment the female receives the strength of the male; the male for his part receives the strength of the female, while the semen does this."]

² [Read by Copenhaver as "the divinity that arises in both natures through sexual coupling."]

discipline:—although, indeed, their deathlessness, the very strength of being ever of one single age, stands in this case for prudence and for science,—still, for the sake of reason's unity, instead of science and of intellect (so that the Gods should not be strange to these),—He, by His everlasting law, decreed for them an order, circumscribed by the necessity of law. While as for man, He doth distinguish him from all the other animals by reason and by discipline alone; by means of which men can remove and separate their bodies' vices,— He helping them to hope and effort after deathlessness.

In fine, He hath made man both good and able to share in immortal life,—out of two natures, [one] mortal, [one] divine. And just because he is thus fashioned by the Will of God, it is appointed that man should be superior both to the Gods, who have been made of an immortal nature only, and also to all mortal things. It is because of this that man, being joined unto the Gods by kinship, doth reverence them with piety and holy mind; while, on their side, the Gods with pious sympathy regard and guard all things of men.

XXIII.

But this can only be averred of a few men endowed with pious minds. Still, of the rest, the vicious folk, we ought to say no word, for fear a very sacred sermon should be spoiled by thinking of them. And since our sermon treats of the relationship and intercourse of men and Gods,—learn, O Asclepius, the power and strength of man! [Our] Lord and Father, or what is Highest God,—as He's Creator of the Gods in Heaven, so man's the maker of the gods who, in the temples, suffer man's approach, and who not only have light poured on them, but who send forth [their] light [on all]; not only does a man go forward towards the God[s], but also he confirms the Gods [on earth]. Art thou surprised, Asclepius; nay is it not that even thou dost not believe?

Asc. I am amazed, Thrice-greatest one; but willingly I give assent to [all] thy words. I judge that man most blest who hath attained so great felicity.

Tris. And rightly so; [for] he deserves our wonder, in that he is the greatest of them all. As for the genus of the Gods in

Heaven,—’tis plain from the commixture of them all, that it has been made pregnant from the fairest part of nature, and that the only signs [by which they are discerned] are, as it were, before all else their heads.

Whereas the species of the gods which humankind constructs is fashioned out of either nature,—out of that nature which is more ancient and far more divine, and out of that which is in men; that is, out of the stuff of which they have been made and are configured, not only in their heads alone, but also in each limb and their whole frame. And so mankind, in imaging Divinity, stays mindful of the nature and the source of its own self. So that, just as [our] Sire and Lord did make the Gods æonian,¹ that they might be like Him; so hath mankind configured its own gods according to the likeness of the look of its own self.

XXIV.

Asc. Thou dost not mean their statues, dost thou, O Thrice-greatest one?

Tris. [I mean their] statues, O Asclepius,—dost thou not see how much thou even, doubttest?—statues, ensouled with sense, and filled with spirit, which work such mighty and such [strange] results,—statues which can foresee what is to come, and which perchance can prophesy, foretelling things by dreams and many other ways,—[statues] that take their strength away from men, or cure their sorrow, if they do so deserve. Dost thou not know, Asclepius, that Egypt is the image of the Heaven; or, what is truer still, the transference, or the descent, of all that are in governance or exercise in Heaven? And if more truly [still] it must be said,—this land of ours is Shrine of all the World.

Further, in that ’tis fitting that the prudent should know all before, it is not right ye should be ignorant of this. The time will come when Egypt will appear to have in vain served the Divinity with pious mind and constant worship; and all its holy cult will fall to nothingness and be in vain. For that Divinity is now about to hasten back from Earth to Heaven, and Egypt shall be left; and Earth, which was the seat of pious cults, shall

¹ [Affectation for “eternal.”]

be bereft and widowed of the presence of the Gods. And foreigners shall fill this region and this land; and there shall be not only the neglect of pious cults, but—what is still more painful,—as though enacted by the laws, a penalty shall be decreed against the practice of [our] pious cults and worship of the Gods—[entire] proscription of them.

Then shall this holiest land, seat of [our] shrines and temples, be choked with tombs and corpses. O Egypt, Egypt, of thy pious cults tales only will remain, as far beyond belief for thy own sons [as for the rest of men]; words only will be left cut on thy stones, thy pious deeds recounting! And Egypt will be made the home of Scyth or Indian, or some one like to them,—that is a foreign neighbour. Ay, for the Godly company shall mount again to Heaven, and their forsaken worshippers shall all die out; and Egypt, thus bereft of God and man, shall be abandoned.

And now I speak to thee, O River,¹ holiest [Stream]! I tell thee what will be. With bloody torrents shalt thou overflow thy banks. Not only shall thy streams divine be stained with blood; but they shall all flow over [with the same]. The tale of tombs shall far exceed the [number of the] quick; and the surviving remnant shall be Egyptians in their tongue alone, but in their actions foreigners.

XXV.

Why dost thou weep, Asclepius? Nay, more than this, by far more wretched,—Egypt herself shall be impelled and stained with greater ills. For she, the Holy [Land], and once deservedly the most beloved by God, by reason of her pious service of the Gods on earth,—she, the sole colony of holiness, and teacher of religion [on the earth], shall be the type of all that is most barbarous. And then, out of our loathing for mankind, the World will seem no more deserving of our wonder and our praise. All this good thing,—than which there has been fairer naught that can be seen, nor is there anything, nor will there [ever] be,—will be in jeopardy.

And it will prove a burden unto men; and on account of this they will despise and cease to love this Cosmos as a whole,—

¹ [*i.e.*, the Nile.]

the changeless work of God; the glorious construction of the Good, comprised of multifold variety of forms; the engine of God's Will, supporting His own work ungrudgingly; the multitudinous whole massed in a unity of all, that should be revered, praised and loved,—by them at least who have the eyes to see. For Darkness will be set before the Light, and Death will be thought preferable to Life. No one will raise his eyes to Heaven; the pious man will be considered mad, the impious a sage; the frenzied held as strong, the worst as best.

For soul, and all concerning it,—whereby it doth presume that either it hath been born deathless, or that it will attain to deathlessness, according to the argument I have set forth for you,—[all this] will be considered not only food for sport: but even vanity. Nay, [if ye will] believe me, the penalty of death shall be decreed to him who shall devote himself to the Religion of the Mind.¹ New statutes shall come into force, a novel law; naught [that is] sacred, nothing pious, naught that is worthy of the Heaven, or Gods in Heaven, shall [e'er] be heard, or [even] mentally believed.

The sorrowful departure of the Gods from men takes place; bad angels² only stay, who mingled with humanity will lay their hands on them, and drive the wretched folk to every ill of recklessness,—to wars, and robberies, deceits, and all those things that are opposed to the soul's nature. Then shall the Earth no longer hold together; the Sea no longer shall be sailed upon; nor ehall the Heaven continue with the Courses of the Stars, nor the Star-course in Heaven. The voice of every God shall cease in the [Great] Silence that no one can break; the fruits of Earth shall rot; nay, Earth no longer shall bring forth; and Air itself shall faint in that sad listlessness.

XXVI.

This, when it comes, shall be the World's old age, impiety,—irregularity, and lack of rationality in all good things. And when these things all come to pass, Asclepius,—then He, [our] Lord and Sire, God First in power, and Ruler of the One God [Visible], in check of crime, and calling error back from the

¹ [*Mentis religione, mens* possibly here a Latin equivalent of *nous*.]

² *Nocentes angeli*. [The Coptic (trans. cit.) has "wicked angels."]

corruption of all things unto good manners and to deeds spontaneous with His Will (that is to say God's Goodness),—ending all ill, by either washing it away with water-flood, or burning it away with fire, or by the means of pestilent diseases, spread throughout all hostile lands,—God will recall the Cosmos to its ancient form; so that the World itself shall seem meet to be worshipped and admired; and God, the Maker and Restorer of so vast a work, be sung by the humanity who shall be then, with ceaseless heraldings of praise and [hymns of] blessing.

For this [Re-]birth of Cosmos is the making new of all good things, and the most holy and most pious bringing-back again of Nature's self, by means of a set course of time,—of Nature, which was without beginning, and which is without an end. For that God's Will hath no beginning; and, in that 'tis the same and as it is, it is without an end.

Asc. Because God's Nature's the Determination of the Will. Determination is the Highest Good; is it not so, Thrice-greatest one?

Tris. Asclepius, Will is Determination's child; nay, willing ih itself comes from the Will. Not that He willeth aught desiring it; for that He is the Fullness of all things, and wills what things He has. He thus wills all good things, and has all that He wills. Nay, rather, He doth think and will *all* good. This, then, is God; the World of God's His Image.

XXVII.

Asc. [Is Cosmos] good, Thrice-greatest one?

Tris. [Tis] good, as I will teach thee, O Asclepius. For just as God is the Apportioner and Steward of good things to all the species, or [more correctly] genera, which are in Cosmos,—that is to say, of Sense: and Soul, and Life,—so Cosmos is the giver and bestower of all things which seem unto [us] mortals good;—that is to say, the alternation of its parts, of seasonable fruits, birth, growth, maturity, and things like these. And for this cause God doth transcend the height of highest Heaven, extending everywhere, and doth behold all things on every side.

Beyond the Heaven starless Space doth stretch, stranger to every, thing possessed of body. The Dispensator who's between

the Heaven and Earth, is Ruler of the Space which we call Zeus [Above]. The Earth and Sea is ruled by Zeus Below;¹ he is the Nourisher of mortal lives, and of fruitbearing [trees]. It is by reason of the powers of all of these that fruits, and trees, and earth, grow green. The powers and energies of [all] the other [Gods] will be distributed through all the things that are.

Yea, they who rule the earth shall be distributed [through all the lands], and [finally] be gathered in a state,—at top of Egypt's upper part,—which shall be founded towards the setting sun, and to which all the mortal race shall speed.

Asc. But now, just at this moment, where are they, Thrice-greatest one?

Tris. They're gathered in a very large community, upon the Libyan Hill. And now enough concerning this hath been declared.

But now the question as to deathlessness or as to death must be discussed. The expectation and the fear of death torture the multitude, who do not know True Reason. Now death is brought about by dissolution of the body, wearied out with toil, and of the number, when complete, by which the body's members are arranged into a single engine for the purposes of life. The body dies, when it no longer can support the life-powers of a man. This, then, is death,—the body's dissolution, and the disappearance of corporeal sense.²

As to *this* death anxiety is needless. But there's another [death] which no man can escape, but which the ignorance and unbelief of man think little of.

Asc. What is it, O Thrice-greatest one, that men know nothing of, or disbelieve that it can be?

Tris. So, lend thy ear, Asclepius!

¹ *Jupiter Plutonium.*

² [This passage in Greek was quoted in the anthology of Stobæus under the head "Of Hermes, from those to Asclepius." Followeth Mead's translation of this Greek version:

"Now must we speak of death. For death affrights the many as the greatest of all ills, in ignorance of fact. Death is the dissolution of the toiling frame. For when the 'number' of the body's joints becomes complete,—the basis of the body's jointing being number,—that body dies; [that is,] when it no longer can support the man. And this is death,—the body's dissolution and the disappearance of corporeal sense."]

XXVIII.

When, [then,] the soul's departure from the body shall take place,—then shall the judgment and the weighing of its merit pass into its highest daimon's power. And when he sees it pious is and just,—he suffers it to rest in spots appropriate to it. But if he find it soiled with stains of evil deeds, and fouled with vice,—he drives it from Above into the Depths, and hands it o'er to warring hurricanes and vortices of Air, of Fire, and Water.

'Twixt Heaven and Earth, upon the waves of Cosmos, is it dragged in contrary directions, for ever racked with ceaseless pains; so that in this its deathless nature doth afflict the soul, in that because of its unceasing sense, it hath the yoke of ceaseless torture set upon its neck.¹ Know, then, that we should dread, and be afraid, and [ever] be upon our guard, lest we should be entangled in these [toils]. For those who do not now believe, will after their misdeeds be driven to believe, by facts not words, by actual sufferings of punishment and not by threats.

Asc. The faults of men are not, then, punished, O Thrice-greatest one, by law of man alone?

Tris. In the first place, Asclepius, all things on Earth must die. Further, those things which live by reason of a body, and which do cease from living by reason of the same,—all these, according to the merits of this life, or its demerits, find due [rewards or] punishments. [And as to punishments] they're all the more severe, if in their life [their misdeeds] chance to have been hidden, till their death. For [then] they will be made full conscious of all things by the divinity, just as they are, according to the shades of punishment allotted to their crimes.

XXIX.

Asc. And these deserve [still] greater punishments, Thrice-greatest one?²

¹ [The Coptic goes into more detail here.]

² [From this point on the Coptic is almost completely different and for the remainder of the extract goes off on one about the tortures inflicted on sinners by daimons (NHC VI, 78:14-43), apparently regarding those who steal from temples as the worst offenders.]

Tris. [Assuredly;] for those condemned by laws of man do lose their life by violence, so that [all] men may see they have not yielded up their soul to pay the debt of nature, but have received the penalty of their deserts. Upon the other hand, the righteous man finds his defence in serving God and deepest piety. For God doth guard such men from every ill.

Yea, He who is the Sire of all, [our] Lord, and who alone is all, doth love to show Himself to all. It is not by the place where he may be, nor by the quality which he may have, nor by the greatness which he may possess, but by the mind's intelligence alone, that He doth shed His light on man,—[on him] who shakes the clouds of Error from his soul, and sights the brilliancy of Truth, mingling himself with the All-sense of the Divine Intelligence; through love of which he wins his freedom from that part of him o'er which Death rules, and has the seed of the assurance of his future Deathlessness implanted in him.

This, then, is how the good will differ from the bad. Each several one will shine in piety, in sanctity, in prudence, in worship, and in service of [our] God, and see True Reason, as though [he looked at it] with [corporal] eyes; and each will by the confidence of his belief excel all other men, as by its light the Sun the other stars. For that it is not so much by the greatness of his light as by his holiness and his divinity, the Sun himself lights up the other stars.

Yea, [my] Asclepius, thou should'st regard him as the second God, ruling all things, and giving light to all things living in the Cosmos, whether ensouled or unensouled. For if the Cosmos is a living thing, and if it has been, and it is, and will be ever-living,—naught in the Cosmos is subject to death.

For of an ever-living thing, it is [the same] of every part which is; [that is,] that 'tis [as ever-living] as it is [itself]; and in the World itself [which is] for everyone, and at the self-same time an ever-living thing of life,—in it there is no place for death.

And so he should be the full store of life and deathlessness; if that it needs must be that he should live for ever. And so the Sun, just as the Cosmos, lasts for aye. So is he, too, for ever ruler of [all] vital powers, or of [our] whole vitality; he is their ruler, or the one who gives them out. God, then, is the eternal

ruler of all living things, or vital functions, that are in the World. He is the everlasting giver-forth of Life itself. Once for all [time] He hath bestowed Life on all vital powers; He further doth preserve them by a law that lasts for evermore, as I will [now] explain.

XXX.

For in the very Life of the Eternity is Cosmos moved; and in the very Everlastingness¹ of Life [itself] is Cosmic Space. On which account it shall not stop at any time, nor shall it be destroyed; for that its very self is palisaded round about, and bound together as it were, by Living's Sempiternity. Cosmos is [thus] Life-giver unto all that are in it, and is the Space of all that are in governance beneath the Sun. The motion of the Cosmos in itself consisteth of a two-fold energy. 'Tis vivified itself from the without by the Eternity, and vivifies all things that are within, making all different, by numbers and by times, fixed and appointed [for them].

Now Time's distinguished on the Earth by quality of air, by variation of its heat and cold; in Heaven by the returnings of the stars to the same spots, the revolution of their course in Time. And while the Cosmos is the home of Time, it is kept green [itself] by reason of Time's course and motion. Time, on the other hand, is kept by regulation. Order and Time effect renewal of all things which are in Cosmos by means of alternation.

All things, then, being thus, there's nothing stable, nothing fixed, nothing immoveable, of things that are being born, in Heaven or on the Earth. Immoveable [is] God alone, and rightly [He] alone; for He Himself is in Himself, and by Himself, and round Himself, completely full and perfect. He is His own immoveable stability. Nor by the pressure of some other one can He be moved, nor in the space [of anyone]. For in Him are all [spaces], and He Himself alone is in them all; unless someone should venture to assert that God's own motion's in Eternity; nay, rather, it is just Immoveable Eternity itself, back into which the motion of all times is funded, and out of which the motion of all times takes its beginning.

¹ [Both "Eternity" and "Everlastingness" render *æternitas*; probably *αἰών* in the Greek.]

XXXI.

God, then, hath [ever] been unchanging: and ever, in like fashion, with Himself hath the Eternity consisted,—having within itself Cosmos ingenerate, which we correctly call [God] Sensible. Of that [transcendent] Deity this Image hath been made,—Cosmos the imitator of Eternity. Time, further, hath the strength and nature of its own stability, in spite of its being in perpetual motion,—from its necessity of [ever] from itself reverting to itself.¹

And so, although Eternity is stable, motionless, and fixed, still, seeing that the movement of [this] Time (which is subject to motion) is ever being recalled into Eternity,—and for that reason. Time's mobility is circular,—it comes to pass that the Eternity itself, although in its own self, is motionless, [yet] on account of Time, in which it is—(and it is in it),—it seems to be in movement as all motion. So that it comes to pass, that both Eternity's stability becometh moved, and Time's mobility becometh stable. So may we ever hold that God Himself is moved into Himself by [ever-] same transcendency of motion. For that stability is in His vastness motion motionless; for by His vastness is [His] law exempt from change.

That, then, which so transcends, which is not subject unto sense, [which is] beyond all bounds, [and which] cannot be grasped,—That transcends all appraisement; That cannot be supported, nor borne up, nor can it be tracked out. For where, and when, and whence, and how, and what, He is,—is known to none. For He's borne up by [His] supreme stability, and His stability is in Himself [alone],—whether [this mystery] be God, or the Eternity, or both, or one in other, or both in either.

And for this cause, just as Eternity transcends the bounds of Time; so Time [itself], in that it cannot have bounds set to it by number, or by change, or by the period of the revolution of some second [kind of Time],—is of the nature of Eternity. Both, then, seem boundless, both eternal. And so stability, though naturally fixed, yet seeing that it can sustain the things that are in motion,—because of all the good it does by reason of its firmness, deservedly doth hold the chiefest place.

¹ [Compare the God-Aiōn-Kosmos-Time-Becoming scheme in C.H. XI.]

XXXII

The principals of all that are, are, therefore, God and Æon.¹ The Cosmos, on the other hand, in that 'tis moveable, is not a principal. For its mobility exceeds its own stability by treating the immoveable fixation as the law of everlasting movement. The Whole Sense, then, of the Divinity, though like [to Him] in its own self immoveable, doth set itself in motion within its own stability. 'Tis holy, incorruptible, and everlasting, and if there can be any better attribute to give to it, ['tis its],—Eternity of God supreme, in Truth itself subsisting, the Fullness of all things, of Sense, and of the whole of Science, consisting, so to say, with God.

The Cosmic Sense is the container of all sensibles, [all] species, and [all] sciences. The human [higher² sense consists] in the retentiveness of memory, in that it can recall all things that it hath done. For only just as far as the man-animal has the divinity of Sense descended; in that God hath not willed the highest Sense divine should be commingled with the rest of animals; lest it should blush for shame on being mingled with the other lives. For whatsoever be the quality, or the extent, of the intelligence of a man's Sense, the whole of it consists in power of recollecting what is past. It is through his retentiveness of memory, that man's been made the ruler of the earth.

Now the intelligence of Nature can be won by quality of Cosmic Sense,—from all the things in Cosmos which sense can perceive. Concerning [this] Eternity, which is the second [one],—the Sense of this we get from out the senses' Cosmos, and we discern its quality [by the same means]. But the intelligence of Quality [itself], the "Whatness" of the Sense of God Supreme, is Truth alone,—of which [pure] Truth not even the most tenuous sketch, or [faintest] shade, in Cosmos is discerned. For where is aught [of it] discerned by measurement of times,—wherein are seen untruths, and births [-and-deaths], and errors?

¹ [Still *æternitas* in the Latin.]

² [The frequent interpolation of the word 'higher' where there is nothing in the text corresponding is one of the few respects in which this translation is distorted by the views of the theosophical schools of the nineteenth century.]

Thou seest, then, Asclepius, on what we are [already] founded, with what we occupy ourselves, and after what we dare to strive. But unto Thee, O God most high, I give my thanks, in that Thou hast enlightened me with Light to see Divinity! And ye, O Tat, Asclepius and Ammon, in silence hide the mysteries divine within the secret places of your hearts, and breathe no word of their concealment!

Now in our case the intellect doth differ from the sense in this,—that by the mind's extension intellect can reach to the intelligence and the discernment of the quality of Cosmic Sense. The Intellect of Cosmos, on the other hand, extends to the Eternity and to the Gnosis of the Gods who are above itself. And thus it comes to pass for men, that we perceive the things in Heaven, as it were through a mist, at, far as the condition of the human sense allows. 'Tis true that the extension [of the mind] which we possess for the survey of such transcendent things, is very narrow [still]; but [it will be] most ample when it shall perceive with the felicity of [true] self-consciousness.

XXXIII.

Now on the subject of a "Void,"—which seems to almost all a thing of vast importance,—I hold the following view. Naught is, naught could have been, naught ever will be void. For all the members of the Cosmos are completely full; so that Cosmos itself is full and [quite] complete with bodies, diverse in quality and form, possessing each its proper kind and size. And of these bodies—one's greater than another, or another's less than is another, by difference of strength and size. Of course, the stronger of them are more easily perceived, just as the larger [are]. The lesser ones, however, or the more minute, can scarcely be perceived, or not at all—those which we know are things [at all] by sense of touch alone. Whence many come to think they are not bodies, and that there are void spaces,—which is impossible.

So also [for the Space] which is called Extra-cosmic,—if there be any (which I do not believe),—then] is it filled by Him with things Intelligible, that is things of like nature with His own Divinity; just as this Cosmos which is called the Sensible, is fully filled with bodies and with animals, consonant with its

proper nature and its quality;—[bodies] the proper shape of which we do not all behold, but [see] some large beyond their proper measure, some very small; either because of the great space which lies between [them and ourselves], or else because our sight is dull; so that they seem to us to be minute, or by the multitude are thought not to exist at all, because of their too great tenuity. I mean the daimones, who, I believe, have their abode with us, and heroes, who abide between the purest part of air above us and the earth,—where it is ever cloudless, and no [movement from the] motion of a single star [disturbs the peace].

Because of this, Asclepius, thou shalt call nothing void; unless thou wilt declare of what that's void, which thou dost say is void;—for instance, void of fire, of water, or things like to these. For if it should fall out, that it should seem that anything is able to be void of things like these,—though that which seemeth void be little or be big, it still cannot be void of spirit and of air.

XXXIV.

In like way must we also talk concerning "Space,"¹—a term which by itself is void of "sense." For Space seems what it is from that of which it is [the space]. For if the qualifying word is cut away, the sense is maimed. Wherefore we shall [more] rightly say the space of water, space of fire, or [space] of things like these. For as it is impossible that aught be void; so is Space also in itself not possible to be distinguished what it is. For if you postulate a space without that [thing] of which it is [the space], it will appear to be void space,—which I do not believe exists in Cosmos.

If nothing, then, is void, so also Space by its own self does not show what it is unless you add to it lengths, breadths [and depths],—just as you add the proper marks unto men's bodies. These things, then, being thus, Asclepius, and ye who are with [him],—know the Intelligible Cosmos (that is, [the one] which is discerned by contemplation of the mind alone) is bodiless; nor can aught corporal be mingled with its nature,—[by corporal I

¹ [The word in the Latin is *locus*, rederring the Greek *τοπος*, not *spatium*; it would perhaps be better translated "place."]

mean] what can be known by quality, by quantity, and numbers. For there is nothing of this kind in that.

This Cosmos, then, which is called Sensible, is the receptacle of all things sensible,—of species, qualities, or bodies. But not a single one of these can quicken without God. For God is all, and by Him [are] all things, and all [are] of His Will. For that He is all Goodness, Fitness, Wisdom, unchangeable,—that can be sensed and understood by His own self alone. Without Him naught hath been, nor is, nor will be.

For all things are from Him, in Him, and through Him,—both multitudinous qualities, and mighty quantities, and magnitudes exceeding every means of measurement, and species of all forms;—which things, if thou should'st understand, Asclepius, thou wilt give thanks to God. And if thou should'st observe it as a whole, thou wilt be taught, by means of the True Reason, that Cosmos in itself is knowable to sense, and that all things in it are wrapped as in a vesture by that Higher Cosmos [spoken of above].

XXXV.

Now every single class of living thing, Asclepius, of whatsoever kind, or it be mortal or be rational, whether it be endowed with soul, or be without one, just as each has its class, so does each several [class] have images of its own class. And though each separate class of animal has in it every form of its own class, still in the selfsame [kind of] form the units differ from each other. And so although the class of men is of one kind, so that a man can be distinguished by his [general] look, still individual men within the sameness of their [common] form do differ from each other.

For the idea which is divine, is bodiless, and is whatever is grasped by the mind. So that although these two, from which the general form and body are derived, are bodiless, it is impossible that any single form should be produced exactly like another,—because the moments of the hours and points of inclination [when they're born] are different. But they are changed as many times as there are moments in the hour of that revolving Circle in which abides that God whom we have called All-formed.

The species, then, persists, as frequently producing from itself as many images, and as diverse, as there are moments in the Cosmic Revolution,—a Cosmos which doth [ever] change in revolution. But the idea [itself] is neither changed nor turned. So are the forms of every single genus permanent, [and yet] dissimilar in the same [general] form.

XXXVI.

Asc. And does the Cosmos have a species, O Thrice-greatest one?

Tris. Dost not thou see, Asclepius, that all has been explained to thee as though to one asleep? For what is Cosmos, or of what doth it consist, if not of all things born? This, then, you may assert of heaven, and earth, and elements. For though the other things possess more frequent change of species, [still even] heaven, [by its] becoming moist, or dry, or cold, or hot, or clear, or dull, [all] in one kind of heaven,—these [too] are frequent changes into species.

Earth hath, moreover, always many changes in its species;—both when she brings forth fruits, and when she also nourishes her bringings-forth with the return of all the fruits; the diverse qualities and quantities of air, its stoppings and its flowings; and before all the qualities of trees, of flowers, and berries, of scents, of savours—species. Fire [also] brings about most numerous conversions, and divine. For these are all-formed images of Sun and Moon; they're, as it were, like our own mirrors, which with their emulous resplendence give us back the likenesses of our own images.

XXXVII.

But now let this suffice about such things; and let us once again return to man and reason,—gift divine, from which man has the name of rational animal. Less to be wondered at are the things said of man,—though they are [still] to be admired. Nay, of all marvels that which wins our wonder [most] is that man has been able to find out the nature of the Gods and bring it into play.

Since, then, our earliest progenitors were in great error,—seeing they had no rational faith about the Gods, and that they paid no heed unto their cult and holy worship,—they chanced

upon an art whereby they made Gods [for themselves]. To this invention they conjoined a power that suited it, [derived] from cosmic nature; and blending these together, since souls they could not make, [they set about] evoking daimons' souls or those of angels; [and thus] attached them to their sacred images and holy mysteries, so that the statues should, by means of these, possess the powers of doing good and the reverse.

For thy forebear, Asclepius, the first discoverer of medicine,¹ to whom there is a temple hallowed on Libya's Mount, hard by the shore of crocodiles, in which his cosmic man reposes, that is to say his body; for that the rest [of him], or better still, the whole (if that a man when wholly [plunged] in consciousness of life, be better), hath gone back home to heaven,—still furnishing, [but] now by his divinity, the sick with all the remedies which he was wont in days gone by to give by art of medicine

Hermes, which is the name of my forebear, whose home is in a place called after him, doth aid and guard all mortal [men] who come to him from every side. As for Osiris' [spouse]; how many are the blessings that we know Isis bestows when she's—propitious; how many does she injure when she's wrath! For that the terrene and the cosmic Gods are easily enraged, in that they are created and composed of the two natures.

And for this cause it comes to pass that these are called the "sacred animals" by the Egyptians, and that each several state gives service to the souls of those whose souls have been made holy, while they were still alive; so that [the several states] are governed by the laws [of their peculiar sacred animals], and called after their names. It is because of this, Asclepius, those [animals] which are considered by some states deserving of their worship, in others are thought otherwise; and on account of this the states of the Egyptians wage with each other frequent war.

¹ [Presumably means the Greek God Asklēpios, here apparently supposed to have been a deified human pioneer of medicine, or the Egyptian deity Imhotep (also a deified human, a 3rd dynasty official to whom many important discoveries and accomplishments were ascribed including the design of Djoser's step pyramid) with whom he was identified by Greek-speaking residents of Egypt. The geographical reference is somewhat vague.]

XXXVIII.

Asc. And of what nature, O Thrice-greatest one, may be the quality of those who are considered terrene Gods?

Tris. It doth consist, Asclepius, of plants, and stones, and spices, which contain the nature of [their own] divinity. And for this cause they are delighted with repeated sacriilce, with hymns, and lauds, and sweetest sounds, tuned to the key of Heaven's harmonious song.

So that what is of heavenly nature, being drawn down into the images by means of heavenly use and practices, may be enabled to endure with joy the nature of mankind, and sojourn with it for long periods of time. Thus is it that man is the maker of the Gods.

But do not, O Asclepius, I pray thee, think the doings of the terrene Gods are the result of chance. The heavenly Gods dwell in the heights of Heaven, each filling up and watching o'er the rank he hath received; whereas these Gods of ours, each in its way,—by looking after certain things, foretelling others by oracles and prophecy, foreseeing others, and duly helping them along,—act as allies of men, as though they were our relatives and friends.

XXXIX.

Asc. What part of the economy, Thrice-greatest one, does the *Heimarmenē*, or Fate, then occupy? For do not the celestial Gods rule over generals; the terrene occupy particulars?

Tris. That which we call *Heimarmenē*, Asclepius, is the necessity of all things that are born, bound ever to themselves with interlinked enchainments. This, then, is either the effector of all things, or it is highest God, or what is made the second God by God Himself,—or else the discipline of all things both in heaven and on earth, established by the laws of the Divine

And so these twain, Fate and Necessity, are bound to one another mutually by inseparable cohesion. The former of them, the *Heimarmenē*, gives birth to the beginnings of all things; Necessity compels the end of [all] depending from these principals. On these doth Order follow, that is their warp-and-woof, and Time's arrangement for the perfecting of [all] things.

For there is naught without the interblend of Order. That Cosmos is made perfect in all things; for Cosmos' self is vehicled in Order, or totally consists of Order.¹

XL.

So, then, these three, Fate, [and] Necessity, [and] Order, are most immediately effected by God's Will, who rules the Cosmos by His Law and by His Holy Reason. From these, accordingly, all willing or notwilling is altogether foreign, according to God's will. They are not moved by wrath nor swayed by favour, but are the instruments of the Eternal Reason's self-compulsion, which is [the Reason] of Eternity, that never can be turned aside, or changed, or be destroyed.

First, then, is Fate, which, as it were, by casting in the seed, supplies the embryo of all that are to be. Follows Necessity, whereby they all are forcibly compelled unto their end. Third, Order [comes], preserving warp-and-woof of [all] the things which Fate and [which] Necessity arrange. This, then, is the Eternity, which neither doth begin nor cease to be, which, fixed by law unchangeable, abides in the unceasing motion of its course.

It rises and it sets, by turns, throughout its limbs ; so that by reason of Time's changes it often rises with the very limbs with which it [once] had set. For [its] sphericity,—its law of revolution,—is of this nature, that all things are so straitly joined to their own selves, that no one knoweth what is the beginning of their revolution; since they appear for ever all to go before and follow after their own selves. Good and bad issues, [therefore,] are commingled in all cosmic things.

And now it hath been told you on each several point,—as man hath power [to tell], and God hath willed it and permitted it. This, then, alone remains that we should do,—bless God and give Him praise; and so return to taking thought for body[s comfort]. For now sufficiently have we been filled with feast of mind by our discourse on sacred things.

¹ [As noted, *kosmos* in Greek also has the meaning of "order" (also "ornament," whence "cosmetic"). In the Latin text the word used is *mundus* which Mead has rendered "Cosmos" in most, though not all instances.]

XLI

Now when they came forth from the holy place, they turned their faces towards the south¹ when they began their prayers to God. For when the sun is setting, should anyone desire to pray to God, he ought to turn him thitherwards; so also at the rising of the same, unto that spot which lies beneath the sun. As they were just beginning to recite the prayer, Asclepius did whisper:

[Asc.] Let us suggest to father, Tat,—what he did bid us do,—that we should say our prayer to God with added incense and with unguents.

Whom when Thrice-greatest heard, he grew distressed and said:

[Tris.] Nay, nay, Asclepius; speak more propitious words! For this is like to profanation of [our] sacred rites,—when thou dost pray to God, to offer incense and the rest. For naught is there of which He stands in need, in that He is all things, or all are in Him. But let us worship, pouring forth our thanks. For this is the best incense in God's sight—when thanks are given to Him by men.²

[We give] Thee grace, Thou highest [and] most excellent! For by Thy Grace we have received the so great Light of Thy own Gnosis. O holy Name, fit [Name] to be adored, O Name unique, by which the Only God is to be blest through worship of [our] Sire,—[of Thee] who deignest to afford to all a Father's piety, and care, and love, and whatsoever virtue is more sweet [than these], endowing [us] with sense, [and] reason, [and] intelligence;—with sense that we may feel Thee; with reason that we may track Thee out from the appearances of things; with means of recognition that we may joy in knowing Thee.

Saved by Thy Power divine, let us rejoice that Thou hast shown Thyself to us in all Thy Fullness. Let us rejoice that Thou hast deigned to consecrate us, [still] entombed in bodies, to Eternity. For this is the sole festival of praise worthy of man,—to know Thy Majesty. We have known Thee; yea, by the Single Sense of our intelligence, we have perceived Thy Light

¹ [Considered "an error for south-west or west" by Mead, but the same direction is given in C.H. XIII:16. There may be a genuine Egyptian taboo involved here, the west, *Amentet*, being the realm of the dead.]

² [Compare the "speech offerings" (Copenhaver's trans.) of C.H. XIII:19, 21.]

supreme,—O Thou true Life of life, O Fecund Womb that giveth birth to every nature!

We have known Thee, O Thou completely filled with the Conception from Thyself of Universal Nature! We have known Thee, O Thou Eternal Constancy! For in the whole of this our prayer in worship of Thy Good, this favour only of Thy Goodness do we crave;—that Thou wilt keep us constant in our Love of knowing Thee, and let us ne'er be cut off from this kind of Life.

With this desire we [now] betake us to [our] pure and fleshless meal.¹

¹ [From “We give Thee grace ...” a variation of this prayer in Coptic appears in one of the Nag Hammadi codices (NHC VI, 63:33-65:7), immediately following the Hermetic tract “The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth” and followed by a scribal note (in which the scribe claimed to have “very many” Hermetic discourses), which was in turn followed by the version of *Asc.* xxi-xxix already mentioned. Another version of this prayer appears in a Greek papyrus preserved in the Louvre (PGM III, 591-606) where it forms the conclusion of a somewhat fragmentary invocation of Hēlios.]

STOBÆI
HERMETICA

[Editor's note]

Johannes Stobæus (fl. 5th cent. C.E.), to use the Latinised form of his name, compiled a massive collection of extracts from Greek writers for the purpose of instructing his son. These include around forty excerpts of varying length (some apparently individual short 'sayings') from Hermetic writings. Some of these represent portions of otherwise known texts including parts of C.H. II, IV and IX and the *Asclepius*; the majority are from otherwise unknown *logoi*, including two substantial parts of a tract known as the *Korē Kosmou* or "Virgin of the World."

Mead has translated 27 of these excerpts (in addition to the quotation from *Asc.* xxvii, which appears in a note to his rendering of the Latin). The ordering seems influenced by his classification scheme of the literature where Hermes and his various disciples represent different stages of gnōsis; thus we have I-XI addressed to Tat, XII-XIX addressed to Ammon, XX with no clear addressee and XXI-XXVII mainly featuring Isis and Horus. These numbers are thus peculiar to this edition. The numbering of excerpts used in modern literature (e.g. the apparatus to Copenhaver's *Hermetica*) follows Nock & Festugière's edition of the texts (first pub. 1946-54) in which excerpts numbered I-XXIX appeared in vols. III-IV.

Three of the excerpts (I, III and VIII by Mead's numbering) were interspersed in a rearranged Latin edition of C.H. I-XIV by Francesco Patrizi (1591) which was used as the basis for J. Everard's *Divine Pyramider of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus*.

An English translation by Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland of the *Korē Kosmou* and other Stobæus excerpts, along with C.H. XVI-XVIII (run together under the title "Definitions of Asclepius") and the *Asclepius* was published in 1885 under the title *Virgin of the World* by Robert Fryar of Bath, as a companion to his re-issuing of Everard's seventeenth-century translation of C.H. I-XIV and three Stobæus excerpts. J.D. Chambers included 21 excerpts in his 1882 edition of the *Hermetica*, rejecting "Aphrodite," the *Korē Kosmou*, and the other "Isis to Horus" material and expressing doubts about "Of the Decans and the Stars," but including the fragment on Death from *Asclepius* xxvii despite rejecting the *Asclepius* as a whole. In 2018, an academic English translation by M. David Litwa of the 29 excerpts in Nock & Festugiere was published by Cambridge University Press, forming the first half or so of a volume titled *Hermetica II*.

Excerpt I
Of Piety and [True] Philosophy

Hermes to Tat

[The title is from Patrizi's edition. This forms the "First Book" in Everad's *Divine Pymander*.]

1.¹ *Her.* Both for the sake of love to man, and piety to God, I [now], my son, for the first time take pen in hand. For there can be no piety more righteous than to know the things that are, and to give thanks for these to Him who made them,—which I will never cease to do.

Tat. By doing what, O father, then, if naught be true down here, may one live wisely?

2. *Her.* Be pious, son! Who pious is, doth reach the height of [all] philosophy; without philosophy the height of piety cannot be scaled. But he who learns what are existent things, and how they have been ordered, and by whom, and for whose sake,—he will give thanks for all unto the Demiurge, as unto a good sire, a nurse [most] excellent, a steward who doth never break his trust.

3. Who giveth thanks, he will be pious; and he who pious is, will [get to] know both where is Truth, and what it is. And as he learns, he will more and more pious grow. For never, son, can an embodied soul that has once leaped aloft, so as to get a hold upon the truly Good and True, slip back again into the contrary. For when the soul [once] knows the Author of its Peace, 'tis filled with wondrous love, and with forgetfulness of every ill, and can no more keep from the Good.

4. Let this be, O [my] son, the goal of piety;—to which if thou attain, thou shalt both nobly live, and happily depart from life, for that thy soul no longer will be ignorant of whither it should wing its flight again. This is the only [Way], my son,—the Path [that leads] to Truth, [the Path] on which our forebears, too, did set their feet, and, setting them, did find the Good. Solemn and smooth this Path, yet difficult to tread for soul while still in body.

¹ [Section numbers, like the excerpt numbers themselves, are Mead's.]

5. For first it hath to fight against itself, and make a great dissension, and manage that the victory should rest with the one part [of its own self]. For that there is a contest of the one against the two,¹—the former trying to flee, the latter dragging down. And there's great strife and battle [dire] of these with one another,—the one desiring to escape, the others striving to detain.

6. The victory, moreover, of the one or of the others is not resemblant. For that the one doth hasten [upwards] to the Good, the others settle [downwards] to the bad. The one longs to be freed; the others love their slavery. If [now] the two be vanquished, they remain deprived of their own selves and of their ruler; but if the one be worsted, 'tis harried by the two, and driven about, being tortured by the life down here. This is, [my] son, the one who leadeth thee upon the Thither Path. Thou must, [my] son, first leave behind thy body, before the end [of it is reached], and come out victor in the life of conflict, and thus as victor wend thy way towards home.

7. And now, [my] son, I will go through the things that are by heads; for thou wilt understand the things that will be said, if thou remember what thy ears have heard.²

All things that are, are [then] in motion; alone the that which is not, is exempt from it.

¹ [The reference is possibly to the tripartite division of the person described in Excerpt XVII, which opposes "soul" (presumably ψυχή) to θυμός and ἐπιθυμία, translated "heart" and "appetite" in shudder quotes by Mead; the former has many shades of meaning including "soul," "life," "breath," "heart" (metaphorically), "mind," "temper," "will," "desire," "anger"; the latter, more straightforwardly "desire, yearning, longing" (Middle Liddell, *s.v.*). In excerpt XVII, in any case, *thumos* is being used for something like "emotions" and *epithumia* for "bodily desires." This is something like the Platonic scheme in the *Republic* and elsewhere, and is also apparently alluded to in C.H. I:24 where *ho thumos kai hē epithumia* (there rendered "passion and desire") are discarded in the process of "ascent."]

² [From here to the end of §15 the treatise assumes the traditional "wisdom literature" form of a collection of "sentences" on related subjects but with no development of any connected theme; they are represented as the "heads" of the Hermetic teaching, but it is also possible they are rather the original material and that §§1-6 and 16-17 were written later to serve as a frame for them. Mahé (cited in Copenhaver's *Hermetica*, introduction lvi-lvii) has argued that the origins of the *Hermetica* lie in such collections of 'sentences' or aphorisms which were gradually padded out by commentators.]

Every body is in a state of change; [but] all bodies are not dissolvable; some bodies [only] are dissolvable.

Not every animal is mortal; not every animal, immortal.

That which can be dissolved, can [also] be destroyed; the permanent [is] the unchangeable; the that which doth not change, [is] the eternal.

What doth become for ever, for ever also is destroyed; what once for all becomes, is never more destroyed, nor does it [ever more] become some other thing.

8. First God; second the Cosmos; third [is] man. The Cosmos, for man's sake; and man, for God's.

The soul's irrational part is mortal; its rational part, immortal.

All essence [is] immortal; all essence, free from change.

All that exists [is] twofold; naught of existing things remains.

Not all are moved by soul; the soul moves all that doth exist.

9. All that suffereth [is] sensible; not all that's sensible, doth suffer.

All that feels pain, doth also have experience of pleasure,—a mortal life; not all that doth experience pleasure, feeleth [also] pain,—a life immortal.

Not every body's subject to disease; all bodies subject to disease are subject [too] to dissolution.

10. The mind's in God; the reasoning faculty's in man.

The reason's in the mind; the mind's above all suffering.

Nothing in body's true; all in the bodiless is free from what's untrue.

All that becomes, [is] subject unto change; not all that doth become, need be dissolved.

Naught[s] good upon the earth; naught[s] bad in heaven.

11. God[s] good; [and] man [is] bad.

Good [is] free-willed; bad is against the will.

The gods do choose what things *are* good, as good; . . .

The good law of the mighty [One] is *the* good law; good law's *the* law.¹

Time's for the gods; the law for men.²

¹ [Mead regards the text here as corrupt.]

² Or: "time is divine, the law is man's."

Bad is the stuff that feeds the world; time is the thing that brings man to an end.

12. All in the heaven is free from change; all on the earth is subject unto it.

Naught in the heaven's a slave; naught on the earth is free.

Nothing can *not* be known in heaven; naught can be known on earth.

The things on earth do not consort with things in heaven.

All things in heaven are free from blame; all on the earth are blameworthy.

The immortal is not mortal; the mortal, not immortal.

That which is sown, is not invariably brought forth; but that which is brought forth, must have invariably been sown.

13. [Now] for a body that *can* be dissolved, [there are] two "times":—[the period] from its sowing till its birth, and from its birth until its death; but for an everlasting body, the time from birth alone.

Things subject unto dissolution wax and wane.

The matter that's dissolved, doth undergo two contrary transformings:—death and birth; but everlasting [matter], doth change either to its own self, or into things like to itself.

The birth of man [is] the beginning of his dissolution; man's dissolution the beginning of his birth.

That which departs, [returns; and what returns] departs [again].

14. Of things existent, some are in bodies, some in forms, and some [are] in activities.

Body[s] in forms; and form and energy in body.

The deathless shares not in the mortal [part]; the mortal shares in the immortal.

The mortal body doth not mount into the deathless one; the deathless one descends unto the mortal frame.

Activities do not ascend, but they descend.

15. The things on earth bestow no benefit on things in heaven; the things in heaven shower every benefit on things on earth.

Of bodies everlasting heaven is the container; of those corruptible, the earth.

Earth [is] irrational; the heaven [is] rational.

The things in heaven [are] under it; the things on earth above the earth.

[Heaven's] the first element; [earth's] the last element.

Fore-knowledge [is] God's Order; Necessity[s] handmaiden to Fore-knowledge.

Fortune[s] the course of the disorderly,—the image of activity: untrue opinion.

What, [then] is God? The Good that naught can change.

What, man? The bad that can be changed.

16. If thou rememberest these heads: thou wilt remember also what I have already set forth for thee with greater wealth of words. For these are summaries of those. Avoid, however, converse with the many [on these things]; not that I would that thou shouldst keep them selfishly unto thyself, but rather that thou shouldst not seem ridiculous unto the multitude. For that the like's acceptable unto the like; the unlike's never friend to the unlike. Such words as these have very very few to give them ear; nay, probably, they will not even have the few. They have, moreover, some [strange force] peculiar unto themselves; for they provoke the evil all the more to bad. Wherefore thou shouldst protect the many [from themselves], for they ignore the power of what's been said.

17. *Tat.* What meanest thou, O father?

Her. This, [my] son! All that in man is animal, is proner unto bad [than unto good]; nay, it doth cohabit with it, because it is in love with it. Now if this animal should learn that Cosmos is subject to genesis, and all things come and go according to Fore-knowledge and by Necessity, Fate ruling all,—in no long time it would grow worse than it is now: [and] thinking scorn of the whole [universe] as being subject unto genesis, and unto Fate referring [all] the causes of the bad, would never cease from every evil deed. Wherefore, care should be taken of them, in order that being [left] in ignorance, they may become less bad through fear of the unknown.

Excerpt II
[Of The Ineffability of God]

Hermes to Tat

[The title is Mead's. The form suggests we are here seeing the beginning of development from "sentence" material into connected discourses.]

To understand God is difficult, to speak [of Him] impossible. For that the Bodiless can never be expressed in body, the Perfect never can be comprehended by that which is imperfect, and that 'tis difficult for the Eternal to company with the ephemeral. The one is for ever, the other doth pass; the one is in [the clarity of] Truth, the other in the shadow of appearance. So far off from the stronger [is] the weaker, the lesser from the greater [is so far], as [is] the mortal [far] from the Divine.

It is the distance, then, between the two that dims the Vision of the Beautiful. For 'tis with eyes that bodies can be seen, with tongue that things seen can be spoken of; but That which hath no body, that is unmanifest, and figureless, and is not made objective [to us] out of matter,—cannot be comprehended by our sense.

I have it in my mind, O Tat, I have it in my mind, that what cannot be spoken of, is God.

Excerpt III Of Truth

Hermes to Tat

[The title is from Patrizi's edition. This forms the "Fifteenth Book" in Everad's *Divine Pymander*. The teaching is mostly ordinary Platonism.]

1. [*Her.*] Concerning Truth, O Tat, it is not possible that man should dare to speak, for man's an animal imperfect, composed out of imperfect members, his tabernacle¹ patched together from many bodies strange [to him]. But what is possible and right, this do I say,—that Truth is [to be found] in the eternal bodies only, [those things] of which the bodies in themselves are true:—fire very fire and nothing else, earth very earth and nothing else, air very air and nothing else, and water very water and naught else. Our frames, however, are a compound of all these. For they have [in them] fire, and they have also earth, they've water, too, and air; but they are neither fire, nor earth, nor water, nor air, nor any [element that's] true. And if our composition has not had Truth for its beginning, how can it either see or speak the Truth? Nay, it can only have a notion of it,—[and that too] if God will.

2. All things, accordingly, that are on earth, O Tat, are not the Truth; they're copies [only] of the True. And these are not all things, but few [of them]; the rest consist of falsity and error, Tat, and shows of seeming like unto images. Whenever the appearance doth receive the influx from above, it turns into a copy of the Truth; without its energizing from above, it is left false. Just as the portrait also indicates the body in the picture, but in itself is not a body, in spite of the appearance of the thing that's seen. 'Tis seen as having eyes; but it sees naught, hears naught at all. The picture, too, has all the other things, but they are false, tricking the sight of the beholders,—these thinking that they see what's true, while what they see is really false. All, then, who do not see what's false see truth. If, then, we thus do comprehend, or see, each one of these just as it really is, we really comprehend and see. But if [we compre-

¹ [*skēnos*. See note on C.H. XIII:12.]

hend, or see, things] contrary to that which is, we shall not comprehend, nor shall we know aught true.

3. [*Tat.*] There is, then, father, Truth e'en on the earth ?

[*Her.*] Not inconsiderably, O son, art thou at fault. Truth is in no wise, Tat, upon the earth, nor can it be. But some men can, [I say,] have an idea of it,—should God grant them the power of godly vision. Thus there is nothing true on earth,—[so much] I know and say. All are appearances and shows,—I know and speak true [things]. We ought not, surely, though, to call the knowing and the speaking of true things the Truth?

4. [*Tat.*] Why, how on earth ought we to know and speak of things being true,—yet nothing's true on earth?

[*Her.*] This [much] is true,—that we do not know aught that's true down here. How could it be, O son? For Truth is the most perfect virtue, the very highest Good, by matter undisturbed, uncircumscribed by body,—naked, [and] evident, changeless, august, unalterable Good. But things down here, O son, thou seest what they are,—not able to receive this Good, corruptible, [and] passible, dissolvable, changeful, and ever altering, being born from one another. Things, then, that are not true even to their own selves, how can they [possibly] be true? For all that alters is untrue; it does not stay in what it is, but shows itself to us by changing into one another its appearances.

5. [*Tat.*] And even man,—is he not true, O father?

[*Her.*] As man,—he is not true, O son. For that the True is that which has its composition from itself alone, and in itself stays as it is. But man has been composed of many things, and does not stay in his own self. He changes and he alters, from age to age, from form to form, and that too, even while he;s still in [one and] the [same] tent.¹ Nay, many fail to recognize their children, when a brief space of time comes in between; and so again of children with their parents. That, then, which changes so that it's no longer recognized,—can that be true, O Tat? Is it not, rather, false, coming and going, in the [all]

¹ [*skēnos* again; a different English word being used for no better reason than scansion as far as I can tell.]

varied shows of its [continual] changes? But do thou have it in thy mind that a true thing is that which stays and lasts for aye. But “man” is not for ever; wherefore it is not true. “Man’s” an appearance. And appearance is extreme untruth.

6. [*Tat.*] But these external bodies: father, too, in that they change, are they not true?

[*Her.*] All that is subject unto genesis and change, is verily not true; but in as much as they are brought to being by the Forefather [of them all], they have their matter true. But even they have something false in that they change; for naught that doth not stay with its own self is true.

[*Tat.*] True, father [mine]! Is one to say, then, that the Sun alone,—in that in greater measure than the rest of them he doth not change but stayeth with himself,—is Truth?

[*Her.*] [Nay, rather, but] because he, and he only, hath entrusted unto him the making of all things in cosmos, ruling all and making all;—to whom I reverence give, and worship pay unto his Truth, and recognise him as the Demiurge after the One and First.

[*Tat.*] What then, O father, should’st thou say is the first Truth?

[*Her.*] The One and Only, Tat,—He who is not of matter, or in body, the colourless, the figureless, the changeless [One], He who doth alter not, who ever is. But the untrue, O son, doth perish. All things, however, on the earth that perish,—the Forethought of the True hath comprehended [them], and doth and will encompass [them]. For birth without corruption cannot be; corruption followeth on every birth, in order that it may be born again. For that things that are born, must of necessity be born from things that are destroyed; and things that have been born, must of necessity be [once again] destroyed, in order that the genesis of things existent may not stop. First, [then], see that thou recognize him as the Demiurge for birth-and-death of [all] existent things.

8. Things that are born out of destruction, then, must of necessity be false,—in that they are becoming now these things, now those. For ’tis impossible they should become the same. But that which is not “same,”—how can it possibly be

true? Such things we should, then, call appearances, [my] son; for instance, if we give the man his proper designation, [we ought to designate him] a man's appearance ;—[and so] the child a child's appearance, the youth a youth's appearance, the man a man's appearance, the old man an appearance of the same. For man is not a man, nor child a child, nor youth a youth, nor grown up man a grown up man, nor aged man a [single] aged man. But as they change they are untrue,—both pre-existent things and things existent. But thus think of them, son,—as even these untruths being energies dependent from above from Truth itself. And this being so, I say untruth is Truth's in-working

Excerpt IV [God, Nature and the Gods]

[The title is Mead's. Neither internally nor in the heading given by Stobæus is there any direct indication of the addressee, but Mead has grouped it with the *Tat-logoi* based on supposed parallels with Excerpt VII, which comes shortly before it in Stobæus' *Physica*.]

1. There is, then, That which transcends being,—beyond all things existent, and all that really are. For That-transcending-being is [that mystery] because of which exists that being-ness¹ which is called universal, common unto intelligibles that really are, and to those beings which are thought of according to the law of sameness. Those which are contrary to these, according to the law of otherness, are again themselves according to themselves. And Nature is an essence which the senses can perceive, containing in itself all sensibles.

2. Between these are the intelligible and the sensible gods. Things that pertain to the intelligence, share in [the nature of] the Gods that are intelligible only; while things pertaining to opinion, have their part with those that are the sensible. These latter are the images of the intelligences; the Sun, for instance, is the image of the Demiurgic God above the Heaven. For just as He hath made the universe, so doth Sun make the animals, and generate the plants, and regulate the breaths.

¹ οὐσιότης.

Excerpt V
[Of Matter]
Hermes to Tat.

[The title is Mead's. It is identified as being from "those ('sermons' being understood by Mead) to Tat" by Stobæus' heading and by the speaker addressing the listener as "son."]

Matter both has been born, O son, and it has been [before it came into existence]; for Matter is the vase of genesis, and genesis, the mode of energy of God, who's free from all necessity of genesis, and pre-exists. [Matter], accordingly, by its reception of the seed of genesis, did come [herself] to birth, and [so] became subject to change, and, being shaped, took forms; for she, contriving the forms of her [own] changing, presided over her own changing self. The unborn state of Matter, then, was formlessness; its genesis is its being brought into activity.

Excerpt VI Of Time

Hermes to Tat.

[The title is Patrizi's. It is identified as being from "those to Tat" by Stobæus.]

1. Now to find out concerning the three times; for they are neither by themselves, nor [yet] are they at-oned;¹ and [yet] again they are at-oned, and by themselves [as well]. For should'st thou think the present is without the past, it can't be present unless it has become already past. For from the past the present comes, and from the present future goes. But if we have to scrutinize more closely, thus let us argue:

2. Past time doth pass into no longer being this, and future [time] doth not exist, in its not being present; nay, present even is not present, in its continuing. Time, then, which *stands* not [steady] (ἔστηκε), but which is on the turn, without a central point at which to stop,—how can it be called *in-stant* (ἐνεστώς),² seeing even that it hath no power to stand (ἑστάναι)? Again, past joining present, and present [joining] future, they [thus] are one; for they are not without them in their, sameness, and their oneness, and their continuity. Thus, [then], time's both continuous and discontinuous, though one and the same [time].

¹ [Remember that Mead uses this abomination, either as an affected archaism or deliberately misleadingly, for "united."]

² [Mead is attempting to reproduce a Greek word-play in the English; this word would be conventionally translated "present."]

Excerpt VII
Of Bodies Everlasting
[and Bodies Perishable]

Hermes to Tat.

[The first half of the title is Patrizi's, Mead has interpolated the rest to fit the actual contents of the excerpt. In the texts of Stobæus this is identified as being from "those to Ammon to Tat"; Mead considers "to Tat" to be a scribal correction of an erroneous "to Ammon" since the hearer is named in the text.]

1. The Lord and Demiurge of all eternal bodies, Tat, when He had made them once for all, made them no more, nor doth He make them [now]. Committing them unto themselves, and counting them with one another, He let them go, in want of naught, as everlasting things. If they have want of any, it will be want of one another and not of any increase to their number from without, in that they are immortal. For that it needs must be that bodies made by Him should have their nature of this kind.

2. Our Demiurge,¹ however, who is [himself already] in a body: hath made us,—he makes for ever, and will [ever] make, bodies corruptible and under sway of death. For 'twere not law that he should imitate the Maker of himself,—all the more so as 'tis impossible. For that the latter did create from the first essence which is bodiless; the former made as from the bodying brought into existence [by his Lord].

3. It follows, then, according to right reason, that while those bodies, since they are brought into existence from incorporeal essence, are free from death, ours are corruptible and under sway of death,—in that our matter is composed of bodies: as may be seen from their being weak and needing much assistance. For how would it be possible our bodies' continuity should last, unless it had some nutriment imported [into it] from similar elements, and [so] renewed our bodies day by day? For that we have a stream of earth, and water, fire, and air,

¹ [Contrasted with the demiurge of eternal bodies of §1; Mead suggests "perhaps the Sun," adducing C.H. XVI:18 and Excerpt III §6 and IV §2.]

flowing into us, which renovates our bodies, and keeps our tent¹ together. We are too weak to bear the motions [of our frames], enduring them not even for one single day. For know, [my] son, that if our bodies did not rest at night, we should not last a single day.

4. Wherefore, our Maker, being good, and with foreknowledge of all things, in order that the animal may last, hath given sleep, the greatest [calm] of the fatigue of notion, and hath appointed equal time to each, or rather more, for rest. Ponder well, son, the mightiest energy of sleep,—the opposite to the soul's [energy], but, not inferior to it. For that just as the soul is motion's energy, so bodies also cannot live without [the help of] sleep. For 'tis the relaxation and the recreation of the jointed limbs; it also operates within, converting into body the fresh supply of matter that flows in, apportioning to each its proper [kind],—the water to the blood, the earth to bones and marrow, the air to nerves and veins, the fire to sight. Wherefore the body, too, feels keen delight in sleep, for it is sleep that brings this [feeling of] delight into activity.

¹ *skēnos* again.

Excerpt VIII Of Energy and Feeling

Hermes to Tat.

[The title is Patrizi's. In the texts of Stobæus this is identified as being from "those to Tat." This forms the "Fourteenth Book" in Everard's *Divine Pymander*. The opening indicates this has been extracted from a longer discourse.]

1. *Tat.* Rightly hast thou explained these things, O father [mine]. Now give me further teaching as to those. For thou hast said somewhere that science and that art do constitute the rational's energy.¹ But now thou say'st that the irrational lives, through deprivation of the rational, are and are called *irrational*. According to this reasoning, [therefore], it follows of necessity that the irrational lives are without any share in science or in art, through deprivation of the rational.

2. *Her.* [It follows] of necessity, [my] son.

Tat. How, then, O father, do we see some of irrational [creatures] using [both] intelligence, and art?—the ants, for instance, storing their food for winter, and in like fashion, [too,] the creatures of the air building their nests, and the four-footed beasts [each] knowing their own holes.

Her. These things they do, O son, neither by science nor by art, but by [the force of] nature. Science and art are teachable; but none of these irrationals is taught a thing. Things done by nature are [so] done by reason of the general energy of things. Things [done] by art and science are achieved by those who know, [and] not by all. Things done by all are brought into activity by nature.

3. For instance, all look up [to heaven]; but all [are] not musicians, or [are] all archers, or hunters, or the rest. But some of them have learned one thing, [others another thing], science and art being active [in them]. In the same way, if some ants only did this thing, and others not, thou would'st have rightly said they acted by [the light] of science, and stored their food by means of art. But if they all without distinction are driven by

¹ [Presumably refers to some now lost discourse.]

their nature to [do] this, though [it may be] against their will,—’tis plain they do not do it or by science or by art.

4. For Tat, these energies, though [in themselves] they are incorporeal, are [found] in bodies, and act through bodies. Wherefore, O Tat, in that they are incorporeal, thou sayest that they are immortal; but, in so far as without bodies they cannot manifest activity, I say that they are ever in a body. Things once called into being for some purpose, or some cause, things that come under Providence and Fate, can never stay inactive of their proper energy. For that which is, shall ever be; for that this [being] is [the very] body and the life of it.

5. It follows from this reason, [then,] that these are always bodies. Wherefore I say that “bodying” itself is an eternal [exercise of] energy. If bodies are on earth, they’re subject unto dissolution; yet must these [ever] be [on earth to serve] as places and as organs for the energies. The energies, however, [are] immortal, and the immortal is eternally,—[that is, that] bodymaking, if it ever is, is energy.

6. [The energies] accompany the soul, though not appearing all at once. Some of them energize the man the moment that he’s born, united with the soul round its irrational [parts]; whereas the purer ones, with change of age, co-operate with the soul’s rational part. But all these energies depend on bodies. From godly bodies they descend to mortal [frames], these body-making [energies]; each one of them is [ever] active, either around the body or the soul. Yea, they are active with the soul itself without a body. They are for ever in activity. The soul, however, is not for ever in a *mortal* body, for it can be without the *body*; whereas the energies can never be without the *bodies*. This is a sacred saying (*logos*), son: Body apart from soul cannot persist; its being can.¹

7. *Tat*. What dost thou mean, O father [mine]?

Her. Thus understand it, Tat! When soul leaves body, body itself remains. But [even] the body so abandoned: as long as it remains, is in activity, being broken up and made to disappear.

¹ [Probably from some collection of “sentences” similar to those forming Excerpt I §§7-15.]

For body without [the exercise of] energy could not experience these things. This energy, accordingly, continues with the body when the soul has gone. This, therefore, is the difference of an immortal body and a mortal one,—that the immortal doth consist of a one single matter, but this [body does] not. The former's active, and the latter's passive. For every thing that maketh active is the stronger; and [every thing] that is made active is the weaker. The stronger, too, being in authority and free, doth lead; the [weaker] follows [as] a slave.

8. The energies, then, energize not only bodies that are ensouled, but also [bodies] unensouled,—stocks, stones, and all such things;—both making [them] to grow, and to bear fruits, and ripening [them], dissolving, melting, rotting and crumbling [them], and setting up [in them] all like activities which bodies without souls can undergo. For energy's the name, O son, for just the thing that's going on,—that is becoming. And many things needs must for ever be becoming; nay, rather, all things [must]. For never is Cosmos bereft of any of existent things, but being borne for aye in its own self, it bears existent things, —[things] that shall never cease from being destroyed again.

9. Know, then, that energy of every kind is ever free from death,—no matter what it is, or in what body. And of the energies, some are of godly bodies, and some of those which are corruptible; some [are] general, and some special. Some [are] of genera, and some are of the parts of every genus. The godly ones, [accordingly], are those that exercise their energies through everlasting bodies. And these are perfect [energies], in that [they energize] through perfect bodies. But partial [energies are] those [that energize] through each one of the [single] living things. And special [energies are those that energize] through each one of existent things.

10. This argument, accordingly, O son, deduces that all things are full of energies. For though it needs must be that energies should be in bodies,—and there be many bodies in the Cosmos, —I say that energies are many more than bodies. For often in one body there is [found] one, and a second and a third [activity],—not counting in the general ones that come with it. By general ones I mean the purely corporal ones, that exercise

themselves through the sensations and the motions [of the body]. For that without these energies the body [of an animal] can not persist.

11. The souls of men, however, have a second class of energies,—the special ones [that exercise themselves] through arts, and sciences, and practices, and [purposed] doings. For that the feelings a follow on the energies or rather are completions of the energies. Know, then, O son, the difference of energy and of sensation. [Thus] energy is sent down from above; whereas sensation, being in the body and having its existence from it, receives the energy and makes it manifest, as though it did embody it. Wherefore I say sensations are both corporal and mortal, and last as long as doth the body [only]. Nay, rather, its sensations are born together with the body, and they die with it.

12. But the immortal bodies in themselves have no sensation,—[not even an] immortal [one], as though they were composed out of some essence of some kind. For that sensation doth arise entirely from naught else than either from the bad or else the good that's added to the body, or that is, on the contrary, taken [from it] again. But with eternal bodies there is no adding to nor taking from. Wherefore, sensation doth not occur in them.

13. *Tat.* Is, then, sensation felt in every body?

Her. In every body, son; and energies are active in all [bodies, too].

Tat. Even in bodies without souls, O father [mine]?

Her. Even in them, O son. There are, however, differences in the sensations. The feelings of the rational occur with reason; those of irrationals are simply corporal; as for the things that have no soul, they [also] have sensations, but passive ones,—experience of increase [only] and decrease. Moreover, passion and sensation depend from one [same] head, And they are gathered up again into the same, and that, too, by the energies.

14. Of lives with souls there are two other energies which go with the sensations and the passions,—grief and joy. And without these, an ensouled life, and most of all a rational one, could not experience sensation. Wherefore, I say that there are

forms of passions,—[and] forms that dominate the rational lives more [than the rest]. The energies, then, are the active forces [in sensations], while the sensations are the indications of the energies.

15. Further, as these are corporal, they're set in motion by the irrational parts of [a man's] soul; wherefore, I say that both of them are mischievous. For that both joy, though [for the moment] it provides sensation joined with pleasure, immediately becomes a cause of many ills to him who feeleth it; while grief [itself] provides [still] greater pains and suffering. Wherefore, they both would seem [most] mischievous.

16. *Tat.* Can, then, sensation be the same in soul and body, father [mine]?

Her. How dost thou mean,—sensation in the soul, [my] son?

Tat. Surely it cannot be that soul's incorporeal, and that sensation is a body, father,—sensation which is sometimes in a body and sometimes not, [just as the soul]?

Her. If we should put it in a body, son, we should [then] represent it as like the soul or [like] the energies. For that we say these are incorporals in bodies. But [as] sensation's neither energy nor soul, nor any other thing than body, according to what has been said above, it cannot, therefore, be incorporeal. And if it's not incorporeal, it must be body. For of existing things some must be bodies and the rest incorporeal.

Excerpt IX Of [The Decans and] the Stars

Hermes to Tat.

[Patrizi, who omits §§1-5 as numbered here, calls this simply “Of the Stars.” Mead has amended the title to reflect the actual contents. In the texts of Stobæus this is identified as being from “those to Tat.”]

1. *Tat.* Since in thy former General Sermons (*Logoi*),¹ [father,] thou didst promise me an explanation of the Six-and-thirty Decans? explain, I prithee, now concerning them and their activity.

Her. There’s not the slightest wish in me not to do so, o Tat, and this should prove the most authoritative sermon (*logos*) and the chiefest of them all. So ponder on it well. We have already spoken unto thee about the Circle of the Animals, or the Life-giving one,² of the Five Planets, and of Sun and Moon, and of the Circle of each one of these.

2. *Tat.* Thou hast done so, Thrice-greatest one.³

Her. Thus would I have thee understand as well about the Six-and-thirty Decans,—calling the former things to mind, in order that the sermon on the latter may also be well understood by thee.

Tat. I have recalled them, father, [to my mind].

Her. We said, [my] son, there is a Body which encompasses all things. Conceive it, then, as being in itself a kind of figure of a sphere-like shape; so is the universe conformed.

Tat. I’ve thought of such a figure in my mind, just as thou dost describe, O father [mine].

3. *Her.* Beneath the Circle of this [all-embracing] frame are ranged the Six-and-thirty Decans, between this Circle of the Universe and that one of the Animals, determining the boundaries of both these Circles, and, as it were, holding that of

¹ [The *genikoi logoi* addressed to Tat have been noticed in several other places, e.g. C.H. X:1.]

² [i.e., the Zodiac; ζωοφόρον, “life-bearing” being a gloss or word-play.]

³ [Probably in some lost discourse; though the Zodiacal circle is mentioned in C.H. XIII and associated with various vices which need to be overcome in the course of ‘rebirth.’]

the Animals aloft up in the air, and [so] defining it. They share the motion of the Planetary Spheres, and [yet] have equal powers with the [main] motion of the Whole: crosswise the Seven. They're checked by nothing but the All-encircling Body, for this must be the final thing in the [whole grades of] motion,—itself by its own self. But they speed on the Seven other Circles, because they move with a less rapid motion than the [Circle] of the All. Let us, then, think of them as though of Watchers stationed round [and watching] over both the Seven themselves and o'er the Circle of the All,—or rather over all things in the World,—holding together all, and keeping the good order of all things.

4. *Tat.* Thus do I have it, father, in my mind, from what thou say'st.

Her. Moreover, Tat, thou should'st have in thy mind that they are also free from the necessities laid on the other Stars. They are not checked and settled in their course, nor are they [further] hindered and made to tread in their own steps again; nor are they kept away from the Sun's light,—[all of] which things the other Stars endure. But free, above them all, as though they were inerrant Guards and Overseers of the whole, they night and day surround the universe.

5. *Tat.* Do these, then, also, further exercise an influence upon us?

Her. The greatest, O [my] son. For if they act in them, how should they fail to act on us as well,—both on each one of us and generally? Thus, O [my] son, of all those things that happen generally, the bringing into action is from these; as for example,—and ponder what I say,—downfalls of kingdoms, states' rebellions, plagues [and] famines, tidal waves [and] quakings of the earth; no one of these, O son, takes place without their action. Nay, further still, bear this in mind. If they rule over them, and we are in our turn beneath the Seven, dost thou not think that some of their activity extends to us as well,—[who are] assuredly their sons, or [come into existence] by their means?

6. *Tat.* What, [then,] may be the type of body that they have, O father [mine] ?

Her. The many call them daimones; but they are not some special class of daimones, for they have not some other kind of bodies made of some special kind of matter, nor are they moved by means of soul, as we [are moved], but they are [simple] operations of these Six-and-thirty Gods. Nay, further, still, have in thy mind, O Tat, their operations,—that they cast in the earth the seed of those whom [men] call Tanēs,¹ some playing the part of saviours, others being most destructive.

7. Further the Stars in heaven as well do in their several [courses] bear them underworkers; and they have ministers and warriors too. And they in [everlasting] congress with them speed on their course in æther floating, fullfilling [all] its space, so that there is no space above empty of stars. They are the cosmic engine of the universe, having their own peculiar action, which is subordinate, however, to the action of the Thirty-six,—from whom throughout [all] lands arise the deaths of [all] the other lives with souls, and hosts of [lesser] lives that spoil the fruit.

8. And under them is what is called the Bear,—just in the middle of the Circle of the Animals, composed of seven stars,² and with another corresponding [Bear] above its head.³ Its energy is as it were an axle's, setting nowhere and nowhere rising,⁴ but stopping [ever] in the self-same space, and turning round the same, giving its proper motion to the Life-producing Circle, and handing over this whole universe from night to day, from day to night. And after this there is another choir of stars, to which we have not thought it proper to give names; but they who will come after us, in imitation, will give them names themselves.

9. Again, below the Moon, are other stars,⁵ corruptible, deprived of energy, which hold together for a little while, in that they've been exhaled out of the earth itself into the air above the

¹ [Mead suggests that τάνας is a contraction of τιτάνας, Titans.]

² [*Ursa Major*, the bear that chases its tail.]

³ [*Ursa Minor*, the bear swung round by its tail.]

⁴ [The fact of *Ursa Major* being considered among the never-setting stars gives a minimum possible latitude for the origin of the present *logos*.]

⁵ Referring, presumably, to the phenomena of "shooting stars."

earth,—which ever are being broken up, in that they have a nature like unto [that of] useless lives on earth, which come into existence for no other purpose than to die, such as the tribe of flies, and fleas, and worms, and other things like them. For these are useful, Tat, neither to us nor to the world; but, on the contrary, they trouble and annoy, being nature's by-products, which owe their birth to her extravagance. Just in the same way, too, the stars exhaled from earth do not attain the upper space. They cannot do so, since they are sent forth from below; and, owing to the greatness of their weight, dragged down by their own matter, they quickly are dispersed, and, breaking up, fall back again on earth, affecting nothing but the mere disturbance of the air about the earth.

10. There is another class, O Tat, that of the so-called long-haired [stars],¹ appearing at their proper times, and after a short time, becoming once again invisible;—they neither rise nor set nor are they broken up. These are the brilliant messengers and heralds of the general destinies of things that are to be. They occupy the space below the Circle of the Sun. When, then, some chance is going to happen to the world, [comets] appear, and, shining for some days, again return behind the Circle of the Sun, and stay invisible,—some showing in the east, some in the north, some in the west, and others in the south. We call them Prophets.

11. Such is the nature of the stars. The stars, however, differ from the star-groups. The stars² are they which sail in heaven; the star-groups, on the contrary, are fixed in heaven's frame: and they are borne along together with the heaven,—Twelve out of which we call the Zōdia.³

He who knows these can form some notion clearly of [what] God is; and, if one should dare say so, becoming [thus] a seer for himself, [so] contemplate Him, and, contemplating Him, be blessed.

¹ [*i. e.*, comets.]

² [*αστέρες* here are more or less all heavenly bodies *except* those called 'stars' in modern astronomy (with the exception of our own sun); *i. e.* planets, meteors, and comets.]

³ [*Ζωδια*, "the signs of the Zodiac," pl. of *Ζωδιων*, "a small figure," dimin. of *Ζωων*, "living creature, animal" but also "a figure, image" (Middle Liddell, *s. v.*).]

12. *Tat.* Blessèd, in truth, is he, O father [mine], who contemplateth Him.

Her. But 'tis impossible, O son, that one in body should have this good chance. Moreover, he should train his soul beforehand, here and now, that when it reacheth there, [the space] where it is possible for it to contemplate, it may not miss its way. But men who love their bodies,—such men will never contemplate the Vision of the Beautiful and Good. For what, O son, is that [fair] Beauty which hath no form nor any colour, nor any mass?

Tat. Can there be aught that's beautiful apart from these?

Her. God only, O [my] son; or rather that which is still greater,—the [proper] name of God.¹

¹ [The excerpt apparently breaks off some way prior to the end of the sermon; the final sentence of §11 begins a new subject, which is hardly developed before the text we have ends.]

Excerpt X
[Concerning the Rule of Providence,
Necessity and Fate]

Hermes to Tat.

[The title is Mead's, drawn from the final sentence of the excerpt; Patrizi calls it simply "Of Fate." In the texts of Stobæus this is identified as being from "those to Tat." C.H. XII:5-6 refers to a *logos* on Fate (*heimarmenē*), Hermes telling Tat that he has discoursed on the subject elsewhere and would thus not address those topics there, but the references to Fate in the present extract hardly answer, or even address, the questions raised by Tat at C.H. XII:5.]

1. [*Tat.*] Rightly, O father, hast thou told me all; now further, [pray,] recall unto my mind what are the things that Providence doth rule, and what the things ruled by Necessity, and in like fashion also [those] under Fate.

[*Her.*] I said there were in us, O Tat, three species of incorporals. The first's a thing the mind alone can grasp; it thus is colourless, figureless, massless, proceeding out of the First Essence in itself, sensed by the mind alone. And there are also, [secondly,] in us, opposed to this, configurings,—of which this serves as the receptacle. But what has once been set in motion by the Primal Essence for some [set] purpose of the Reason (*logos*), and that has been conceived [by it], straightway doth change into another form of motion; this is the image of the Demiurgic Thought.

2. And there is [also] a third species of incorporals, which doth eventuate round bodies,—space, time, [and] motion, figure, surface, size, [and] species. Of these there are two [sets of] differences. The first [lies] in the quality pertaining specially unto themselves; the second [set is] of the body. The special qualities are figure, colour, species, space, time, movement. [The differences] peculiar to body are figure configured, and colour coloured; there's also form conformed, surface and size. The latter with the former have no part.

3. The Intelligible Essence, then, in company with God, has power o'er its own self, and [power] to keep another, in that it

keeps itself, since Essence in itself is not under Necessity. But when 'tis left by God, it takes unto itself the corporal nature ; its choice of it being ruled by Providence,—that is, its choosing of the world. All the irrational is moved to-wards some reason. Reason [comes] under Providence; unreason [falls] under Necessity; the things that happen in the corporal [fall] under Fate. Such is the Sermon¹ on the rule of Providence, Necessity and Fate.

¹ [Assuming 'Sermon' translates *logos*, "such is the teaching" or "such are my words" (lit. "such is the word") would also be possible.]

Excerpt XI
[Of Justice]
[Hermes to Tat.]

[The title is Mead's. In the texts of Stobæus this is vaguely headed as being "of Hermes," although the hearer is addressed as "son" which is characteristic of the *Tat-logoi*.]

1. For there hath been appointed, O [my] son, a very mighty Daimon turning in the universe's midst, that sees all things that men do on the earth. Just as Foreknowledge and Necessity have been set o'er the Order of the gods, in the same way is Justice set o'er men, causing the same to act on them. For they rule o'er the order of the things existing as divine, which have no will, nor any power, to err. For the Divine cannot be made to wander; from which the incapacity to err accrues [to it]. But Justice is appointed to correct the errors men commit on earth.

2. For, seeing that their race is under sway of death, and made out of bad matter, [it naturally errs], and failure is the natural thing, especially to those who are without the power of seeing the Divine. 'Tis over these that Justice doth have special sway. They're subject both to Fate through the activities of birth, and unto Justice through the mistakes [they make] in life.

Excerpt XII
Of Providence and Fate
Hermes to Ammon.

[The title is Patrizi's. In the texts of Stobæus this is headed as being "from those to Ammon." Ammon appears (as King Ammon) as the recipient of the discourse in C.H. XVI, and as one of the hearers in the *Asclepius*. In classical times the Egyptian god Amun (*imn*) was identified with Zeus; an Amun (the hidden) was among the Ogdoad of primal creative gods of Khemnu (Hermopolis), one of the main cult-centres of Thôth, but as the main god of Thebes he became an important figure in the New Kingdom, and through identification with the sun-god Rē became, as Amen-Rē, pretty much the supreme God of Egypt—at least until the New Kingdom collapsed largely due to embezzlement and mismanagement by his priesthood who had more or less taken over the running of the empire after the death of Akhenaten and his immediate successors. Be that as it may, Stobæus apparently had before him a group of *logoi* from Hermes to Ammon from which he took this and the following seven excerpts.]

All things are born by Nature and by Fate, and there is not a [single] space bereft of Providence. Now Providence is the Self-perfect Reason. And of this [Reason] there are two spontaneous powers,—Necessity and Fate. And Fate doth minister to Providence and to Necessity; while unto Fate the Stars do minister. For Fate no one is able to escape, nor keep himself from their shrewd scrutiny. For that the Stars are instruments of Fate; it is at its behest that they effect all things for nature and for men.

Excerpt XIII
Of The Whole Economy

Hermes to Ammon.

[The title is from the anthology of Stobæus, where it is headed “Of Hermes from those to Amoun (Ἀμοῦν)” (this spelling appears only here in Stobæus).]

Now what supporteth the whole World, is Providence; what holdeth it together and encircleth it about, is [called] Necessity; what drives all on and drives them round, is Fate, bringing Necessity to bear on them (for that its nature is the bringing into play of [this] Necessity); [it is] the cause of birth and death of life. So, then, the Cosmos is beneath the sway of Providence (for 'tis the first to meet with it); but Providence [itself] extends itself to Heaven. For which cause, too, the Gods revolve, and speed round [Heaven], possessed of tireless, never-ceasing motion. But Fate [extends itself in Cosmos]; for which cause, too, Necessity [encompasses the Cosmos].¹ And Providence foreknows; but Fate's the reason of the disposition of the Stars. Such is the law that no one can escape, by which all things are ordered.

¹ [Mead describes the text as “hopeless” and so has apparently made up what he thought it should say.]

Excerpt XIV Of Soul [i]

Hermes to Ammon.

[The title is Patrizi's. In the *Physica* of Stobæus, it is headed "Of Hermes from those to Ammon."]

1. The Soul is further [in itself] incorporeal essence, and even when in body it by no means doth depart from the essentiality peculiar to itself. Its nature is, according to its essence to be for ever moving, according to its thought [to be] self-motive [purely], not moved in something, nor towards something, nor bet] because of something. For it is prior [to them] in power, and prior stands not in any need of consequents. "In something," furthermore,—means space, and time, and nature; "towards something,"—[this] means harmony, and form, and figure;—"because of something,"—[this] means body, for 'tis because of body that there is time, and space, and nature. Now all these things are in connection with each other by means of a congenital relationship.

2. For instance, now, the body must have space, for it would be past all contriving that a body should exist without a space. It changes, too, in nature, and 'tis impossible for change to be apart from time, and from the movement nature makes; nor is it further possible for there to be composing of a body apart from harmony. It is because of body, then, that space exists; for that by its reception of the changes of the body, it does not let a thing that's changing pass away. But, changing, it doth alternate from one thing to another, and is deprived of being in a permanent condition, but not of being body. For body, *quâ* body, remains body; but any special moment of its state does not remain. The body, then, keeps changing in its states.

3. And so, space is incorporeal, and time, and natural motion; but each of these has naturally its own peculiar property. The property of space is receptivity; of time [tis] interval and number; of nature [it is] motion; of harmony [tis] love; of body, change. The special nature of the Soul, however, is essential thought.

Excerpt XV
[Of Soul – ii]
Hermes to Ammon.

[Patrizi has this as a continuation of the former, although there is something of a change of subject. In the *Physica* of Stobæus, it is headed “Of Hermes from those to Ammon.”]

1. That which is moved is moved according to the operation of the motion that doth move the all. For that the Nature of the all supplies the all with motion,—one [motion being] the [one] according to its Power, the other that according to [its] Operation. The former doth extend itself throughout the whole of Cosmos, and holdeth it together from within; the latter doth extend itself [around it], and encompasseth it from without. And these go everywhere together through all things. Now the [Productive] Nature of all things supplies the things produced with [power of re-] production, sowing the seeds of its own self, [and] having its becomings by means of moving matter.

2. And Matter being moved was heated and did turn to Fire and Water,—the one [being] strong and active, and the other passive. And Fire opposed by Water was dried up by it, and did become Earth borne on Water. And when it was excessively dried up, a vapour rose from out the three,—from Water, Earth and Fire,—and became Air. The [Four] came into congress, [then,] according to the reason of the Harmony,—hot with cold, [and] dry with moist. And from the union of these [four] is spirit born, and seed proportionate to the surrounding Spirit. This [spirit] falling in the womb does not remain inactive in the seed, but being active it transforms the seed, and [this] being [thus] transformed, develops growth and size. And as it grows in size, it draws unto itself a copy of a model, and is modelled.

3. And on the model is the form supported,—by means of which that which is represented by an image is so represented. Now, since the spirit in the womb had not the motion that maintaineth life, but that which causeth fermentation [only], the Harmony composed the latter as the receptacle of rational life. This [life] is indivisible and changeless ; it never changes

from its changelessness. It ruleth the conception of the thing within the womb, by means of numbers, delivereth it, and bringeth it into the outer air. The Soul dwells very near to it;—not owing to some common property, but under the constraint of Fate; for that it has no love to be with body. Wherefore, [the Harmony] according unto Fate doth furnish to the thing that's born [its] rational motion, and the intellectual essence of the life itself. For that [this] doth insinuate itself into the spirit, and set it moving with the motion of the life.

Excerpt XVI
[Of Soul – iii]
[Hermes to Ammon.]

[The title is Mead's. In the *Physica* of Stobæus, it is headed simply "Of Hermes" but is immediately followed by the excerpt following which is internally addressed to Ammon.]

1. The Soul is, then, incorporeal essence; for if it should have body, it would no longer have the power of being self-maintained. For every body needeth being; it needeth also ordered life as well. For that for every thing that comes to birth, change also must succeed. For that which doth become, becomes in size; for in becoming it hath increase. Again, for every thing that doth increase, decrease succeedeth; and on increase destruction. For, sharing in the form of life, it lives; it shares, also, in being through the Soul.

2. But that which is the cause of being to another, is being first itself. And by [this] "being" I now mean becoming in reason, and taking part in intellectual life. It is the Soul that doth supply this intellectual life. It is called living through the life, and rational through the intellect, and mortal through the body. Soul is, accordingly, a thing incorporeal, possessing [in itself] the power of freedom from all change. For how would it be possible to talk about an intellectual living thing, if that there were no [living] essence to furnish life? Nor, any more, would it be possible to say a rational [living] thing, were there no ratiocinative essence to furnish intellectual life.

3. It is not to all [lives] that intellect extends; [it doth depend] on the relationship of body's composition to the Harmony. For if the hot in the compost be in excess, he's light and fervid; but if the cold, he's heavy and he's dull. For Nature makes the composition fit the Harmony. There are three forms of the becoming,—the hot, the cold, and medium. It makes it fit according to the ruling Star in the star-mixture. And Soul receiving it, as Fate decrees, supplies this work of Nature with [the proper kind of] life. Nature, accordingly, assimilates the body's harmony unto the mixture of the Stars, and counites its

complex mixtures with their Harmony, so that they are in mutual sympathy. For that the end of the Stars' Harmony is to give birth to sympathy according to their Fate.

Excerpt XVII
[Of Soul – iv]
[Hermes to Ammon.]

[The title is Mead's. In the *Physica* of Stobæus, it is headed simply "Of Hermes" but is internally addressed to Ammon.]

1. Soul, Ammon, then, is essence containing its, own end within itself; in [its] beginning taking to itself the way of life allotted it by Fate, it draws also unto itself a reason like to matter, possessing "heart" and "appetite."¹ "Heart," too, is matter; if it doth make its state accordant with the Soul's intelligence, it, [then,] becometh courage, and is not led away by cowardice. And "appetite" is matter, too; if it doth make its state accord with the Soul's rational power, it [then] becometh temperance, and is not moved by pleasure, for reasoning fills up the "appetite's" deficiency.

2. And when both [these] are harmonized, and equalized, and both are made subordinate to the Soul's rational power, justice is born. For that their state of equilibrium doth take away the "heart's" excess, and equalizes the deficiency of "appetite." The source of these, however, is the penetrating essence of all thought, its self by its own self, [working] in its own reason that doth think round everything, with its own reason as its rule. It is the essence that doth lead and guide as ruler; its reason is as 'twere its counsellor who thinks about all things.

3. The reason of the essence, then, is gnosis of those reasonings which furnish the irrational [part] with reasoning's conjecturing,—a faint thing as compared with reasoning [itself], but reasoning as compared with the irrational, as echo unto voice, and moonlight to the sun. And "heart" and "appetite" are harmonized upon a rational plan; they pull the one against the other, and [so] they learn to know in their own selves a circular intent.

¹ [Mead uses "Heart" for *thumos* and "Appetite" for *epithumia*. See note to excerpt I §5.]

Excerpt XVIII
[Of Soul – v]
[Hermes to Ammon.]

[The title is Mead's. In the *Physica* of Stobæus, it is headed simply "Of the same" (*i.e.* Hermes), immediately following the preceding.]

1. [Now], every Soul is free from death and in perpetual motion. For in the General Sermons¹ we have said some motions are by means of the activities, others are owing to the bodies. We say, moreover, that the Soul's produced out of a certain essence,—not a matter,—incorporal itself, just as its essence is. Now every thing that's born, must of necessity be born from something. All things, moreover, in which destruction followeth on birth, must of necessity have two kinds of motion with them:—the [motion] of the Soul, by which they're moved; and body's [motion], by which they wax and wane. Moreover, also, on the former's dissolution, the latter is dissolved. This I define, [then,] as the motion of bodies corruptible.

2. The Soul, however, is in perpetual motion,—in that perpetually it moves itself, and makes [its] motion active [too] in other things. And so, according to this reason, every Soul is free from death, having for motion the making active of itself. The kinds of Souls are three:—divine, [and] human, [and] irrational. Now the divine [is that] of its divine body, in which there is the making active of itself. For it is moved in it, and moves itself. For when it is set free from mortal lives, it separates itself from the irrational portions of itself, departs unto the godlike body, and as 'tis in perpetual motion, is moved in its own self, with the same motion as the universe.

3. The human [kind] has also something of the godlike [body], but it has joined to it as well the [parts] irrational,—the appetite and heart.² These latter also are immortal, in that

¹ [The *logoi genekoi* are generally only mentioned in Tat-discourses; Mead decided on balance to group this with "those to Ammon" in accordance with similarities of style and subject and their being grouped together in the anthology of Stobæus.]

² [See note to previous excerpt for these.]

they happen also in themselves to be activities; but [they are] the activities of mortal bodies. Wherefore, they are removed far from the godlike portion of the Soul, when it is in its godlike body; but when this enters in a mortal frame, they also cling to it, and by the presence [of these elements] it keeps on being a human Soul. But that of the irrationals consists of heart and appetite. And for this cause these lives are also called irrational, through deprivation of the reason of the Soul.

4. You may consider, too, as a fourth [kind] that of the soulless, which from without the bodies operates in them, and sets them moving. But this should [really] be the moving of itself within its godlike body, and the moving of these [other] things as it were by the way.

Excerpt XIX
[Of Soul – vi]
[Hermes to Ammon.]

[The title is Mead's. In the *Physica* of Stobæus, it is headed simply "Of the same" (*i.e.* Hermes), immediately following the preceding. It is indeed possible that some or all of the six excerpts on the soul were drawn from the same extended discourse.]

1. Soul, then, is an eternal intellectual essence, having for purpose the reason of itself; and when it thinks with [it,] it doth attract [unto itself] the Harmony's intention. But when it leaves behind the body Nature makes, it bideth in and by itself,—the maker of itself in the noëtic world. It ruleth its own reason, bearing in its own thought a motion (called by the name of life) like unto [that of] that which cometh into life.¹

2. For that the thing peculiar to the Soul [is this],—to furnish other things with what is like its own peculiarity. There are, accordingly, two lives, two motions:—one, that according to the essence of the Soul; the other, that according to the nature of the body. The former [is] more general, [the latter is more partial]; the [life] that is according unto essence has no authority but its own self, the other [is] under necessity. For every thing that's moved, is under the necessity of that which moveth [it]. The motion that doth move, however, is in close union with the love of the noëtic essence. For Soul must be incorporeal,—essence that hath no share in any body Nature makes. For were it corporal, it would have neither reason nor intelligence. For every body is without intelligence; but when it doth receive of essence, it doth obtain the power of being a breathing animal.

3. The spirit [hath the power to contemplate] the body; the reason of the essence hath the power to contemplate the Beautiful. The sensible—the spirit—is that which can discern appearances. It is distributed into the various sense-organs; a part of it becometh spirit by means of which we see, [a part] by

¹ [This passage also appears as X:7 of the *Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius* (not in the present collection).]

means of which we hear, [a part] by means of which we smell, [a part] by means of which we taste, [a part] by means of which we touch. This spirit, when it is led upwards by the understanding, discerns that which is sensible; but if 'tis not, it only maketh pictures for itself. For it is of the body, and that, too, receptive of all [impressions].

4. The reason of the essence, on the other hand, is that which is possessed of judgement. The knowledge of things worthy [to be known] is co-existent with the reason; [that which is coexistent] with the spirit [is] opinion. The latter has its operation from the surrounding world; the former, from itself.

Excerpt XX
[The Power of Choice]

[The title is Mead's. In the *Ethica* of Stobæus, it is headed simply "Of Hermes." There is no internal indication as to whom it was addressed; Meads considers it was probably an extract from one of the *Tat-logoi*.]

1. There is, then, essence, reason, thought, perception. Opinion and sensation move towards perception; reason directs itself towards essence; and thought sends itself forth through its own self. And thought is interwoven with perception, and entering into one another they become one form,—which is that of the Soul [itself]. Opinion and sensation move towards the Soul's perception; but they do not remain in the same state. Hence is there excess, and falling short, and difference with them. When they are drawn away from the perception, they deteriorate; but when they follow it and are obedient, they share in the perceptive reason through the sciences.

2. We have the power to choose; it is within our power to choose the better, and in like way [to choose] the worse, according to our will. And if [our] choice clings to the evil things, it doth consort with the corporeal nature; [and] for this cause Fate rules o'er him who makes this choice. Since, then, the intellectual essence in us is absolutely free,—[namely] the reason that embraces all in thought,—and that it ever is a law unto itself and self-identical, on this account Fate does not reach it. Thus furnishing it first from the First God, it sent forth the perceptive reason, and the whole reason which Nature hath appointed unto them that come to birth. With these the Soul consorting, consorteth with their fates, though [in herself] she hath no part [or lot] in their fates' nature.

Patrizi adds the following to the preceding; it is not found in Stobæus, and appears to be a scholium.

What is necessitated by the interwoven harmony of [all] the parts, in no way differs from that which is fated.

Excerpt XXI
Of Isis to Horus

[In Stobæus, this brief fragment is headed simply "Of Hermes from that of Isis to Horus." Mead observes that the style is unlike the other "Isis to Horus" Hermetica and suggests it is more likely from the "Asclepius to Ammon" group such as C.H. XVI.]

A refutation, when it is recognized, O greatest King, carries the man who is refuted towards the desire of things he did not know before.

Excerpt XXII
[An Apophthegm]

Hermes on being asked, What is God?—replied: The Demiurge of wholes,—the Mind most wise and everlasting.

Excerpt XXIII
From “Aphroditē”

[In the *Physica* of Stobæus, this is headed “Of Hermes from ‘Aphroditē.’ ” No other specimens of this Hermetic text or group of texts are known. The interlocuter is unnamed.]

How, [then,] are offspring born like to their parents? Or how are they returned to [their own] species?

[*Aphroditē.*] I will set forth the reason. When generation stores up seed from the ripe blood being sweated forth, it comes to pass that somehow there’s exhaled from the whole mass of limbs a certain essence, following the law of a divine activity, as though the man himself were being born; the same thing also in the woman’s case apparently takes place. When, then, what floweth from the man hath the ascendancy, and keeps intact, the young one’s brought to light resembling its sire; contrary wise, in the same way, [resembling] its dam. Moreover, if there should be ascendancy of any part, [then] the resemblance [of the young] will favour that [especial] part. But sometimes also for long generations the offspring favoureth the husband’s form, because his decan has the greater influence at that [particular] moment when the wife conceives.

Excerpt XXIV
[A Hymn of the Gods]

[In the *Physica* of Stobæus, this is headed simply "Of Hermes."]

Seven Stars far varied in their course revolved upon the [wide] Olympian plain; with them for ever will Eternity¹ spin [fate]:— Mēnē² that shine by night, [and] gloomy Kronos, [and] sweet Hēlios, and Paphiē³ who's carried in the shrine, courageous Arēs, fair-winged Hermēs, and Zeus the primal source from whom Nature doth come.

Now they themselves have had the race of men entrusted to their care; so that in us there is a Mēnē, Zeus, an Arēs, Paphiē, a Kronos, Hēlios and Hermēs.

Wherefore we are divided up [so as] to draw from the ætherial spirit, tears, laughter, anger, birth, reason, sleep, desire.

Tears are Kronos, birth Zeus, reason [is] Hermēs, courage Mars, and Mēnē sleep, in sooth, and Cytherea⁴ desire, and Hēlios [is] laughter—for 'tis because of him that justly every mortal thinking thing doth laugh and the immortal world.

¹ *aiōn*.

² [Poetic name for the Moon.]

³ [Poetic name for Aphrodītē from her cult-centre at Paphos, Cyprus.]

⁴ [*Κυθήρεια*, another title of Aphrodītē (probably from another one of her cult-centres).]

Excerpt XXV
KORĒ KOSMOU (i)

[Mead preferred the conventional English translation "Virgin of the World." Patrizi Latinised it as *Minerva Mundi* (Κόρη Διός being a title of Athenē); *korē* also has the secondary meaning of the pupil of the eye. In the *Physica* of Stobæus this excerpt is headed "From Hermes Trismegistus' Sacred Book *Korē Kosmou*."]

1. So speaking Isis doth pour forth for Horus the sweet draught (the first) of deathlessness which souls have custom to receive from Gods, and thus begins her holiest discourse (*logos*):

Seeing that, Son Horus, Heaven, adorned with many a wreath [of starry crowns], is set o'er every nature of [all] things beneath, and that nowhere it lacketh aught of anything which the whole cosmos now doth hold,—in every way it needs must be that every nature which lies underneath, should be co-ordered and full-filled by those that lie above; for things below cannot of course give order to the ordering above. It needs must, therefore, be the less should give place to the greater mysteries. The ordinance of the sublimer things transcends the lower; it is both sure in every way and falleth 'neath no mortal's thought. Wherefore the [mysteries] below did sigh, fearing the wondrous beauty and the everlasting durance of the ones above. 'Twas worth the gazing and the pains to see Heaven's beauty, beauty that seemed like God,—God who was yet unknown, and the rich majesty of Night, who weaves her web with rapid light, though it be less than Sun's, and of the other mysteries in turn that move in Heaven, with ordered motions and with periods of times, with certain hidden influences bestowing order on the things below and co-increasing them.

2. Thus fear succeeded fear, and searching search incessant, and for so long as the Creator of the universals willed, did ignorance retain its grip on all. But when He judged it fit to manifest Him who He is, He breathed into the Gods the Loves, and freely poured the splendour which He had within His heart, into their minds, in ever greater and still greater measure; that they they might have the wish to seek, next they might yearn to find, and finally have power to win success as

well. But this, my Horus, wonder-worthy son, could never have been done had that seed been subject to death, for that as yet had no existence, but only with a soul that could vibrate responsive to the mysteries of Heaven.

3. Such was all-knowing Hermes, who saw all things, and seeing understood, and understanding had the power both to disclose and to give explanation. For what he knew, he graved on stone; yet though he graved them onto stone he hid them mostly, keeping sure silence though in speech, that every younger age of cosmic time might seek for them. And thus, with charge unto his kinsmen of the Gods to keep sure watch, he mounted to the Stars. To him succeeded Tat, who was at once his son and heir unto these knowledges; and not long afterwards Asclepius-Imuth,¹ according to the will of Ptah who is Hephaestus,² and all the rest who were to make enquiry of the faithful certitude of heavenly contemplation, as Foreknowledge willed, Foreknowledge queen of all.

4. Hermes, however, made explanation to surrounding [space], how that not even to his son (because of the yet newness of his youth) had he been able to hand on the Perfect Vision. But when the Sun did rise for me, and with all-seeing eyes I gazed upon the hidden [mysteries] of that New Dawn, and contemplated them, slowly there came to me—but it was sure—conviction that the sacred symbols of the cosmic elements were hid away hard by the secrets of Osiris.

5. [Hermes], ere he returned to Heaven, invoked a spell on them, and spake these words. (For 'tis not meet, my son, that I should leave this proclamation ineffectual, but [rather] should speak forth what words [our] Hermes uttered when he hid his books away.) Thus then he said:

“O holy books, who have been made by my immortal hands, by incorruption's magic spells, . . .³ free from decay throughout eternity remain and incorrupt from time! Become unseeable, unfindable, for every one whose foot shall tread the plains of

¹ [Imuth is presumably a Greek contraction of Imhotep; see note to *Asc.* xxxvii.]

² [The craftsman-creator god Ptah of Memphis was identified with the Greek Hephaistos in classical times.]

³ [The text here is corrupt.]

this [our] land, until old Heaven doth bring forth meet instruments for you, whom the Creator shall call souls.”

Thus spake he; and, laying spells on them by means of his own works, he shuts them safe away in their own zones. And long enough the time has been since they were hid away.¹

6. And Nature, O my son, was barren, till they who then were under orders to patrol the Heaven, approaching to the God of all, their King, reported on the lethargy of things. The time was come for cosmos to awake, and this was no one’s task but His alone. “We pray Thee, then,” they said, “direct Thy thought to things which now exist and to what things the future needs.”

7. When they spake thus, God smiled and said: “Nature, arise!” And from His word there came a marvel, feminine, possessed of perfect beauty, gazing at which the Gods stood all-amazed. And God the Fore-father, with name of Nature, honoured her, and bade her be prolific. Then gazing fixedly on the surrounding space, He spake these words as well: “Let Heaven be filled with all things full, and Air, and Æther too!” God spake and it was so. And Nature with herself communing knew she must not disregard the Sire’s command; so with the help of Toil she made a daughter fair, whom she did call Invention. And on her God bestowed the gift of being, and with His gift He set apart all them that had been so-far made, filled them with mysteries, and to Invention gave the power of ruling them.

8. But He, no longer willing that the world above should be inert, but thinking good to fill it full of breaths, so that its parts should not remain immotive and inert, He thus began on these with use of holy arts as proper for the bringing forth of His own special work. For taking breath from His own Breath and blending this with knowing Fire, He mingled them with certain other substances which have no power to know; and having made the two—either with other-one, with certain hidden words of power, He thus set all the mixture going thoroughly; until out of the compost smiled a substance, as it were, far subtler, purer far, and more translucent than the things from which it came; it was so clear that no one but the Artist could detect it.

¹ This is purely conjectural; the text is utterly corrupt.

9. And since it neither thawed when fire was set unto it (for it was made of Fire), nor yet did freeze when it had once been properly produced (for it was made of Breath), but kept its mixture's composition a certain special kind, peculiar to itself, of special type and special blend,—(which composition, you must know, God called *psychōsis*, after the more auspicious meaning of the name¹ and from the similarity of its behaviour) —it was from this coagulate He fashioned souls enough in myriads, moulding with order and with measure the efflorescent product of the mixture for what He willed, with skilled experience and fitting reason, so that they should not be compelled to differ any way one from another.

10. For, you must know, the efflorescence that exhaled out of the movement God induced, was not like to itself. For that its first florescence was greater, fuller, every way more pure, than was its second; its second was far second to the first, but greater far than was its third. And thus the total number of degrees reached up to sixty. In spite of this, in laying down the law, He ordered it that all should be eternal, as though from out one essence, the forms of which Himself alone could bring to their completion.

11. Moreover, He appointed for them limits and reservations in the height of upper Nature, that they might keep the cylinder a-whirl in proper order and economy and [thus] might please their Sire. And so in that all-fairest station of the Æther He summoned unto Him the natures of all things that had as yet been made, and spake these words: "O Souls, ye children fair of Mine own Breath and My solicitude, whom I have now with My own Hands brought to successful birth and consecrate to My own world, give ear unto these words of Mine as unto laws, and meddle not with any other space but that which is appointed for you by My will. For you, if ye keep steadfast, the Heaven, with the star-order, and thrones I have ordained full-filled with virtue, shall stay as now they are for you; but if ye shall in any way attempt some innovation contrary to My decrees, I swear to you by My most holy Breath, and by this mixture out of

¹ [The Greek word can have the signification either of "giving soul or life to, animating, quickening" (LSJ, *s.v.*) or "making cold."]

which I brought you into being, and by these Hands of Mine which gave you life, that I will speedily devise for you a bond and punishments.”

12. And having said these words, the God, who is my Lord, mixed the remaining cognate elements (Water and Earth) together, and, as before, invoking on them certain occult words, words of great power though not so potent as the first, He set them moving rapidly, and breathed into the mixture power of life; and taking the coagulate (which like the other floated to the top), when it had been well steeped and had become consistent, He modelled out of it those of the [sacred] animals possessing forms like unto men's. The mixtures' residue He gave unto those souls that had gone in advance and had been summoned to the lands of Gods, to regions near the Stars, and to the [choir of] holy daimones. He said:

13. “My sons, ye children of My Nature, fashion things! Take ye the residue of what My art hath made, and let each fashion something which shall bear resemblance to his own nature. These will I further give to you as models.”

He took and set in order fair and fine, agreeably to the motions of the souls, the world of sacred animals, appending as it were to those resembling men those which came next in order, and on these types of lives He did bestow the all-devising powers and all-contriving procreative breath of all the things which were for ever generally to be. And He withdrew, with promises to join unto the visible productions of their hands breath that cannot be seen, and essence of engendering its like to each, so that they might give birth to others like themselves. And these are under no necessity to do aught else than what they did at first.

14. [And Horus asked:] What did the souls do, mother, then?

And Isis said: Taking the blend of matter, Horus, son, they first looked at the Father's mixture and adored it, and tried to find out whence it was composed; but this was not an easy thing for them to know. They then began to fear lest they should fall beneath the Father's wrath for trying to find out, and so they set to work to do what they were bid. Thereon, out of the upper stuff which had its topmost layer superfluously

light, they formed the race of birds; while they were doing this the mixture had become half-hardened, and by this time had taken on a firm consistency—thereon they fashioned out the race of things which have four feet; [next they did fashion forth] the race of fish—less light and needing a moist substance of a different kind to swim in; and as the residue was of a cold and heavy nature, from it the souls devised the race of creeping things.

15. They then, my son, as though they had done something grand, with over-busy daring armed themselves, and acted contrary to the commands they had received; and forthwith they began to overstep their proper limits and their reservations, and would no longer stay in the same place, but were for ever moving, and thought that being ever stationed in one place was death. That they would do this thing, however, O my son (as Hermes says when he speaks unto me), had not escaped the Eye of Him who is the God and Lord of universal things; and He searched out a punishment and bond, the which they now in misery endure.¹ Thus it was that the Sovereign King of all resolved to fabricate with art the human frame, in order that in it the race of Souls throughout might be chastised.

16. "Then sending for me," Hermes says, "He spake: 'Soul of My Soul, and holy mind of My own Mind, up to what point, the nature of the things beneath, shall it be seen in gloom? How long shall what has up to now been made remain inactive and be destitute of praise? Bring hither to Me now, My son, all of the Gods in Heaven,' said God"—as Hermes saith.

And when they came obedient to His command,—“Look down,” said He, “upon the Earth, and all beneath.” And they forthwith both looked and understood the Sovereign’s will. And when He spake to them on human kind’s behalf, they [all] agreed to furnish those who were to be, with whatsoever thing they each could best provide.

¹ [This almost suggests the passage in I Enoch (cap. XVIII) where Enoch sees “seven stars” imprisoned who, he is informed, “transgressed the commandment of the Lord in the beginning of their rising, because they did not come forth at their appointed times” (Charles trans.). This sequence is also the nearest we get in the Hermetic literature to the “Gnostic” notion of the rebellious demiurge; even in the most “dualistic” Hermetica the demiurge is not evil.]

17. Sun said: "I'll shine unto my full." Moon promised to pour light upon the after-the-sun course, and said she had already given birth to Fear, and Silence, and also Sleep, and Memory—a thing that would turn out to be most useful for them. Chronus announced himself already sire of Justice and Necessity. Zeus said: "So that the race which is to be may not for ever fight, already for them have made Fortune, and Hope, and Peace." Arēs declared he had become already sire of Struggle, Wrath, and Strife. Nor yet did Aphroditē hesitate; she also said: "I'll join to them Desire, my Lord, and Bliss, and Laughter [too], so that our kindred souls, in working out their very grievous condemnation, may not exhaust their punishment unto the full." Full pleased were all, my son, at Aphroditē's words. "And for my part," said Hermes, "I will make men's nature well endowed; I will devote to them Prudence and Wisdom, Persuasiveness and Truth, and never will I cease from congress with Invention, but ever will I benefit the mortal life of men born underneath my types of life.¹ For that the types our Father and Creator hath set apart for me, are types of wisdom and intelligence, and more than ever [is this so] what time the motion of the Stars set over them doth have the natural power of each consonant with itself."

18. And God, the Master of the universe, rejoiced on hearing this, and ordered that the race of men should be. "I," Hermes says," was seeking for the stuff which had to be employed, and calling on the Monarch for His aid. And He gave order to the Souls to give the mixture's residue; and taking it I found it utterly dried up. Thereon, in mixing it, I used more water far than was required to bring the matter back unto its former state, so that the plasm was in every way relaxable, and weak and powerless, in order that it might not, in addition to its natural sagacity, be full of power as well. I moulded it, and it was fair; and I rejoiced at seeing mine own work, and from below I called upon the Monarch to behold. And He did look on it, and was rejoiced, and ordered that the Souls should be en fleshed. Then were they first plunged in deep gloom, and,

¹ [Again, Mead obfuscates the astrological reference by over-literal translation of a reference to the signs of the Zodiac.]

learning that they were condemned, began to wail. I was myself amazed at the Souls' utterances."

19. Now give good heed, son Horus, for thou art being told the Mystic Spectacle which Kamēphis,¹ our forefather, was privileged to hear from Hermes, record-writer of all deeds, and I from Kamēphis, most ancient of [us] all, when he did honour me with the Black [Rite] that gives perfection;² hear thou it now from me! For when, O wondrous son of mighty fame, they were about to be shut in their prisons, some simply uttered wails and groans—in just the self-same way as beasts that once have been at liberty, when torn from their accustomed haunts they love so well, will be bad slaves, will fight and make revolt, and be in no agreement with their masters; nay more, if circumstance should serve, will even do to death those that oppress them. Others with louder outcry hissed like snakes; another one shrieked shrilly, and ere he spake shed many tears, and, turning up and down what things served him as eyes, he said:

20. "O Heaven, thou source of our begetting, O Æther, Air, O Hands and holy Breath of God our Monarch, O ye most brilliant Stars, eyes of the Gods, O tireless light of Sun and Moon, co-nurslings of our origin,—reft from [you] all we suffer piteously. And this the more, in that from spacious realms of light, from out [thy] holy envelope and wealthy dome, and from the blessed government we shared with Gods, we shall be thus shut down into these honourless and lowly quarters. What is the so unseemly thing we miserables have done? What [crime] deserves these punishments? How many sins await us wretched ones? How many are the things we have to do in this our hopeless plight, necessities to furnish for this watery frame that is so soon dissolved?

¹ [Kamēphis is probably Khnum (Kneph), depicted as ram-headed and shown crafting humans on a potter's wheel (connecting him with the iconography of Ptah). Khnum is also thought to be the *Agathodaimon* who appears as the third of the dynasty of divine kings of Egypt according to Manetho after Hephaistos (Ptah) and Hēlios (Rē). Khnum got assimilated to Amen-Rē under Theban syncretism but so did most of the other major male gods of Egypt.]

² [Mead speculates at length in his commentary about this "Black Rite" or "Dark Mystery."]

21. "For that no longer shall our eyes behold the souls of God; when through such watery spheres as these we see our own forefather Heaven grown small and tiny, we shall dissolve in sighs,—nay, there'll be times we shall not see at all, for sentence hath been passed on us poor things; the gift of real sight hath not been given to us, in that it hath not been permitted us to see without the light. Windows they are, not eyes! How wretchedly shall we endure to hear our kindred breaths breathe in the air, when we no longer shall be breathing with them! For home, instead of this great world high in the air, a heart's small mass awaits us. Set Thou us free from bonds so base as these to which we have sunk down, and end our grief! O Lord, and Father, and our Maker, if so it be Thou hast thus quickly grown indifferent unto the works of Thine own Hands, appoint for us some limits! Still deem us worthy of some words, though they be few, while yet we can see through the whole world-order bright on every side!"

22. Thus speaking, Horus, son, the Souls gained their request; for that the Monarch came; and sitting on the Throne of Truth made answer to their prayers. "O Souls, Love and Necessity shall be your lords, they who are lords and marshals after Me of all. Know, all of you who are set under My unageing rule, that as long as ye keep you free of sin, ye shall dwell in the fields of Heaven; but if some cause of blame for aught attach itself to you, ye shall dwell in the place that Destiny allots, condemned to mortal wombs. If, then, the things imputed to your charge be slight, leaving the bond of fleshly frames subject to death, ye shall again embrace your [father] Heaven, and sigh no more; but if ye shall commit some greater sins, and with the end appointed of your frames be not advanced, no longer shall ye dwell in Heaven, nor even in the bodies of mankind, but shall continue after that to wander round in lives irrational."

23. Thus speaking, Horus mine, He gave to all the gift of breath, and thus continued: "It is not without purpose or by chance I have laid down the law of your transformings; but as [it will be] for the worse if ye do aught unseemly, so for the better, if ye shall will what's worthy of your birth. For I, and no one else, will be the Witness and the Watcher. Know, then, it is for what

ye have done heretofore, ye do endure this being shut in bodies as a punishment. The difference in your rebirths, accordingly, for you, shall be as I have said, a difference of bodies, and their [find] dissolution [shall be] a benefit and a [return to] the fair happiness of former days. But if ye think to do aught else unworthy of Me, your mind shall lose its sight so as to think the contrary [of what is true], and take the punishment for benefit; the change to better things for infamous despite. But the more righteous of you, who stand upon the threshold of the change to the diviner state, shall among men be righteous kings, and genuine philosophers, founders of states, and law-givers, and real seers, and true herb-knowers, and prophets of the Gods most excellent, skilful musicians, skilled astronomers, and augurs wise, consummate sacrificers,—as many of you as are worthy of things fair and good.

24. “Among winged tribes [they shall be] eagles, for these will neither scare away their kind nor feed on them; nay more, when they are by, no other weaker beast will be allowed by them to suffer wrong, for what will be the eagles’ nature is too just [to suffer it]. Among four-footed things [they will be] lions,—a life of strength and of a kind which in a measure needs no sleep, in mortal body practising the exercises of immortal life—for they nor weary grow nor sleep. And among creeping things [they will be] dragons, in that this animal will have great strength and live for long, will do no harm, and in a way be friends with man, and let itself be tamed; it will possess no poison and will cast its skin, as is the nature of the Gods. Among the things that swim [they will be] dolphins; for dolphins will take pity upon those who fall into the sea, and if they are still breathing bear them to the land, while if they’re dead they will not ever even touch them, though they will be the most voracious tribe that in the water dwells.”

25. Thus speaking God became imperishable Mind. Thereon, son Horus, from the Earth uprose a very Mighty Spirit which no mass of body could contain, whose strength consisted in his intellect. And though he knew full well the things on which he questioned—the body with which man was clothed according to his type, a body fair and dignified, yet savage overmuch and

full of fear—immediately he saw the souls were entering the plasms, he cried out: “What are these called, O Hermes, Writer of the Records of the Gods?” And when he answered “Men!”—“Hermes,” he said, “it is a daring work, this making man, with eyes inquisitive, and talkative of tongue, with power henceforth to hear things even which are no concern of his, dainty of smell, who will use to its full his power of touch on every thing. Hast thou, his generator, judged it good to leave him free from care, who in the future daringly will gaze upon the fairest mysteries which Nature hath? Wouldst thou leave him without a grief, who in the days to come will make his thoughts reach unto mysteries beyond the Earth?”

26. “Men will dig up the roots of plants, and will find out their juices’ qualities. Men will observe the nature of the stones. Men will dissect not only animals irrational, but they’ll dissect themselves, desiring to find out how they were made. They will stretch out their daring hands e’en to the sea, and cutting self-grown forests down will ferry one another o’er to lands beyond. [Men] will seek out as well the inner nature of the holy spaces which no foot may tread, and will chase after them into the height, desiring to observe the nature of the motion of the Heaven. These are yet moderate things [which they will do]. For nothing more remains than Earth’s remotest realms; nay, in their daring they will track out Night, the farthest Night of all.

27. “Naught have they, then, to stop them from receiving their initiation in the good of freedom from all pain, and, unconstrained by terror’s grievous goads, from living softly out a life free from all care. Then will they not gird on the armour of an over-busy daring up to Heaven? Will they not, then, reach out their souls freed from all care unto the [primal] elements themselves? Teach them henceforth to long to plan out something, where they have as well to fear the danger of its ill-success, in order that they may be tamed by the sharp tooth of pain in failure of their hopes. Let the too busy nature of their souls be balanced by desires, and fears, and griefs, and empty hopes. Let loves in quick succession sway their souls, hopes, manifold desires, sometimes fulfilled, and sometimes unfulfilled, that the sweet bait of their success may draw them into

struggle amid direr ills. Let fever lay its heavy hand on them, that losing heart they may submit desire to discipline.”

28. Thou grievest, dost thou, Horus, son, to hear thy mother put these things in words? Art thou not struck with wonder, art thou not terror-struck at how poor man was grievously oppressed? Hear what is sadder still! When Mōmos¹ said these things Hermes was pleased, for what he said was said out of affection for him; and so he did all that he recommended, speaking thus: “Mōmos, the Nature of the Breath Divine which doth surround [all things] shall not become inert. The Master of the universe appointed me as steward and as manager. Wherefore the overseer of His command will be the keen-eyed Goddess of the all, Adrasteia;² and I will skilfully devise an instrument, mysterious, possessed of power of sight that cannot err, and cannot be escaped, whereto all things on earth shall of necessity be subject, from birth to final dissolution,—an instrument which binds together all that’s done. This instrument shall rule all other things on Earth as well [as man].”

29. These words, said Hermes, did I speak to Mōmos, and forthwith the instrument was set a-going. When this was done, and when the souls had entered in the bodies, and [Hermes] had himself been praised for what was done, again the Monarch did convoke the Gods in session. The Gods assembled, and once more did He make proclamation, saying: “Ye Gods, all ye who have been made of chiefest Nature, free from all decay, who have received as your appointed lot for ever more to order out the mighty Æon, through whom all universal things will never weary grow surrendering themselves in turn the one to other,—how long shall we be rulers of this sovereignty that none can ever know? How long these things, shall they transcend the power of sight of Sun and Moon? Let each of us bring forth according to his power. Let Us by our own energy wipe out this inert state of things; let chaos seem to be a myth incredible to future days. Set hand to mighty work; and I myself will first begin.”

¹ [Mōmos in Greek mythology appears to be a personification of “blame” or “censure”; he is a critic who finds fault with everything the gods do or propose and is here identified as the speaker in §§25-27. Hesiod’s theogony (213-4) makes him one of many fatherless children of Night.]

² [A periphrastic name of Nemesis, supposed to mean “the inescapable.”]

30. He spake; straightway in cosmic order there began the differentiation of the up-to-then black unity [of things]. And Heaven shone forth above tricked out with all his mysteries; Earth, still a-tremble, as the Sun shone forth grew harder, and appeared with all the fair adornments that bedeck her round on every side. For beautiful to God are even things which men think mean, in that in truth they have been made to serve the laws of God. And God rejoiced when now He saw His works a-moving; and filling full His Hands, which held as much as all surrounding space, with all that Nature had produced, and squeezing tight the handfuls mightily, He said: "Take [these], O holy Earth, take those, all honoured one, who art to be the mother of all things, and henceforth lack thou naught!"

31. God spake, and opening His Hands, such Hands as God should have, He poured them all into the composition of the world. And they in the beginnings were unknown in every way; for that the Souls as newly shut in prison, not enduring their disgrace, began to strive in emulation with the Gods in Heaven, in full command of their high birth, and when held back, in that they had the same Creator, made, revolt, and using weaker men as instruments, began to make them set upon each other, and range themselves in conflict, and make war among themselves. Thus strength did mightily prevail o'er weakness, so that the strong did burn and massacre the weak, and from the holy places down they cast the living and the dead down from the holy shrines, until the Elements in their distress resolved to go to God their Monarch [to complain] about the savage state in which men lived. The evil now being very great, the Elements approached the God who made them, and formulated their complaint in some such words as these:

32. It was moreover Fire who first received authority to speak. He said: "O Lord, Artificer of this new World, thou Name mysterious among the Gods, and up to now revered by all mankind, how long hast Thou, O Daimon, judged it right to leave the life of mortals without God? Show now Thyself unto Thy World consulting Thee; initiate the savagery of life with peace; give laws to life; to right give oracles; fill with fair hopes all things; and let men fear the vengeance of the Gods, and

none will sin. Should they receive due retribution for their sins, they will refrain henceforth from doing wrong; they will respect their oaths, and no one any more will ponder sacrilege. Let them be taught to render thanks for benefits received, that I, the Fire, may joyfully do service in the sacrificial rites, that they may from the altar send sweet-smelling vapours forth. For up to now I am polluted, Lord; and by the godless daring of these men I am compelled to burn up flesh. They will not let me be for what I was brought forth; but they adulterate with all indecency my undecaying state.”

33. And Air too said: “I also, Master, am made turbid by the vapours which the bodies of the dead exhale, and I am pestilential, and, no longer filled with health, I gaze down from above on things I ought not to behold.”

Next Water, O my son of mighty soul, received authority to speak, and spake and said: “O Father, O wonderful Creator of all things, Daimon self-born, and Nature’s Maker, who through Thee doth conceive all things, now at this last, command the rivers’ streams for ever to be pure, for that the rivers and the seas or wash the murderers’ hands or else receive the murdered.”

34. After came Earth in bitter grief, and taking up the tale, O son of high renown, thus she began to speak: “O sovereign Lord, Chief of the Heavenly Ones, and Master of the Wheels, Thou Ruler of us Elements, O Sire of them who stand beside Thee, from whom all things have the beginning of their increase and of their decrease, and into whom they cease again and have the end that is their due according to Necessity’s decree, O greatly honoured One, the godless rout of men doth dance upon my bosom. I hold in my embrace as well the nature of all things; for I, as Thou didst give command, not only bear them all, but I receive them also when they’re killed. But now am I dishonoured. The world upon the Earth though filled with all things [else] hath not a God. For having naught to fear they sin in everything, and from my heights, O Lord, down [dead] they fall by every evil art. And soaking with the juices of their carcasses I’m all corrupt. Hence am I, Lord, compelled to hold in me those of no worth. With all I bear I would hold God as well.

Bestow on Earth, if not Thyself, for I could not contain Thee, yet some holy Emanation of Thyself. Make Thou the Earth more honoured than the rest of Elements; for it is right that she should boast of gifts from Thee, in that she giveth all."

35. Thus spake the Elements; and God, fullfilling all things with the sound of His [most] holy Voice, spake thus: "Depart, ye Holy Ones, ye Children worthy of a mighty Sire, nor yet in any way attempt to innovate, nor leave the whole of [this] My World without your active service. For now another Efflux of My Nature is among you, and he shall be a pious supervisor of all deeds—judge incorruptible of living men and monarch absolute of those beneath the earth, not only striking terror [into them] but taking vengeance on them. And by his class of birth the fate he hath deserved shall follow every man." And so the Elements did cease from their complaint, upon the Master's order, and they held their peace; and each of them continued in the exercise of his authority and in his rule.

36. And Horus thereon said: How was it, mother, then, that Earth received God's Efflux?

And Isis said: I may not tell the story of [this] birth; for it is not permitted to describe the origin of thy descent, O Horus, [son] of mighty power, lest afterwards the way-of-birth of the immortal Gods should be known unto men,—except so far that God the Monarch, the universal Orderer and Architect, sent for a little while thy mighty sire Osiris, and the mightiest Goddess Isis, that they might help the world, for all things needed them. 'Tis they who filled life full of life. 'Tis they who caused the savagery of mutual slaughtering of men to cease. 'Tis they who hallowed precincts to the Gods their ancestors and spots for holy rites. 'Tis they who gave to men laws, food, and shelter. 'Tis they who will, says Hermes, learn to know the secrets of my records all, and will make separation of them; and some they will keep for themselves, while those that are best suited for the benefit of mortal men, they will engrave on tablet and on obelisk. 'Tis they who were the first to set up courts of law; and filled the world with justice and fair rule. 'Tis they who were the authors of good pledges and of faith, and brought the mighty witness of an oath into men's lives. 'Tis they who

taught men how to wrap up those who ceased to live, as they should be. 'Tis they who searched into the cruelty of death, and learned that though the spirit which goes out longs to return into men's bodies, yet if it ever fail to have the power of getting back again, then loss of life results. 'Tis they who learned from Hermes that surrounding space was filled with daimons, and graved on hidden stones [the hidden teaching]. 'Tis they alone who, taught by Hermes in God's hidden codes, became the authors of the arts, and sciences, and all pursuits which men do practise, and givers of their laws. 'Tis they who, taught by Hermes that the things below have been disposed by God to be in sympathy with things above,¹ established on the earth the sacred rites o'er which the mysteries in Heaven preside. 'Tis they who, knowing the destructibility of [mortal] frames, devised the grade of prophets, in all things perfected, in order that no prophet who stretched forth his hands unto the Gods, should be in ignorance of anything, that magic and philosophy should feed the soul, and medicine preserve the body when it suffered pain.²

38. And having done all this, my son, Osiris and myself perceiving that the world was [now] quite full, were thereupon demanded back by those who dwell in Heaven, but could not go above till we had made appeal unto the Monarch, that surrounding space might with this knowledge of the soul be filled as well, and we ourselves succeed in making our ascent acceptable [to Him]. . . . For that God doth in hymns rejoice.

Ay, mother, Horus said. On me as well bestow the knowledge of this hymn, that I may not remain in ignorance.

And Isis said: Give ear, O son!³

¹ [*Quod est inferius, est sicut id quod est superius?*]

² [This long list of the benefits bestowed on mankind by Isis and Osiris recalls the briefer account in Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* (which probably contains the exoteric teaching of the Græco-Egyptian Isis-cult of the 1st century C.E.) of the earthly reign of Osiris.]

³ [The excerpt breaks off here. If this text really did originate in a Mystery-cult, possibly a schism from the Græco-Egyptian "Mysteries of Isis," then perhaps the hymn was never written down but only communicated by the mystagogue in oral instruction.]

Excerpt XXVI
KORĒ KOSMOU (ii)

[Mead continues the paragraph numberings from the first excerpt and notes that in the edition of Patrizi there is no break between the excerpts. It is not clear how much material Stobæus skipped; Mead is of opinion that "the original text is broken only by the unfortunate omission of the Hymn of Osiris and Isis."]

39. Now if thou wouldst, O son of mighty soul, know aught beside, ask on!

And Horus said: O mother of great honour, I would know how royal souls are born?

And Isis said: Son Horus, the distinction which marks out the royal souls is somewhat of this kind. Four regions are there in the universe which fall beneath a law and leadership which cannot be transgressed—Heaven, and the Æther, and the Air, and the most holy Earth. Above in Heaven, son, the Gods do dwell, o'er whom with all the rest doth rule the Architect of all; and in the Ether [dwell] the Stars, o'er whom the mighty Light-giver the Sun holds sway; but in the Air [live] only souls, o'er whom doth rule the Moon; and on the Earth [do dwell] men and the rest of living things, o'er whom he who doth happen to be king holds sway.

40. The Gods engender, son, the kings it has deserved, to rule [the race] that lives on Earth. The rulers are the emanations of the king, of whom the nearer to him is more royal than the rest; for that the Sun, in that 'tis nearer than the Moon to God, is far more vast and potent, to whom the Moon comes second both in rank and power. The king, then, is the last of all the other Gods, but first of men;¹ so long as he is upon the Earth, he is divorced from his true godship, but hath something that doth distinguish him from men and which is like to God. The soul which is sent down to dwell in him, is from that space which is above those regions whence [the souls] descend to other men. Down from that space the souls are sent to rule for those two reasons, son.

¹ [This concept of divine kingship is probably genuinely Egyptian in origin, even if overlaid by Hellenic metaphysics.]

41. They who have run a noble, blameless race throughout the cycle of their lives, and are about to be changed into Gods, [are born as kings,] in order that by exercise of kingship they may train themselves to use the power the Gods enjoy; while certain souls who are already Gods, but have in some slight way infringed the rule of life which God inspired, are born as kings, in order that they may not, in being clothed in bodies, undergo the punishment of loss of dignity as well as nature, and that they may not, when they are enfleshed, have the same lot as other men, but have when bound what they enjoyed when free.

42. The differences which are, however, in the dispositions shown by those who play the part of kings, are not determined by distinguishing their souls, for these are all divine, but by the constitution of the angels and the daimons who attend on them. For that such souls as these descending for such purposes do not come down without a guard and escort; for Justice up above knows how to give to each what is its due estate e'en though they be made exiles from their country ever fair. When, then, my son, the angels and the daimons who bring down the soul are of a warlike kind, it has to keep firm hold of their proclivities, forgetting its own proper deeds, but all the more remembering the doings of the other host attached to it. When they are peaceful, then the soul as well doth order its own course in peace. When they love justice, then it too defends the right. When they are music-lovers, then it also sings. And when they are truth-lovers, then it also doth philosophize. For as it were out of necessity these souls keep a firm hold of the proclivities of those that bring them here; for they are falling down to man's estate, forgetting their own nature, and the farther they depart from it, the more they have in memory the disposition of those [powers] which shut them [into bodies].

43. Well hast thou, mother, all explained, said Horus. But noble souls,—how they are born, thou hast not told me yet.

As on the Earth, son Horus, there are states which differ one from other, so also is it in the case of souls. For they have regions whence they start; and that which starts from a more glorious place, hath nobler birth than one which doth not so. For just as among men the free is thought more noble than the

slave—for that which is superior in souls and of a ruling nature of necessity subjects what is inferior)—so also, son, . . .¹

44. And how are male and female souls produced?

Souls, Horus, son, are of the self-same nature in themselves, in that they are from one and the same place where the Creator modelled them; nor male nor female are they. Sex is a thing of bodies, not of souls. That which brings it about that some of them are stouter, some more delicate, is, son, that [cosmic] “air” in which all things are made. “Air” for the soul is nothing but the body which envelopes it, an element which is composed of earth and water, air and fire. As, then, the composition of the female ones has more of wet and cold, but less of dry and warm, accordingly the soul which is shut in a plasm of this kind, becomes relaxed and delicate, just as the contrary is found to be in case of males. For in their case there’s more of dry and warm, and less of cold and wet; wherefore the souls in bodies such as these are sturdy and more active.

45. And how do souls become intelligent, O mother mine? And Isis answered: The organ of the sight, my son, is swathed in wrappings. When these are dense and thick, the eye is dim; but when they’re thin and light, then is the sight most keen. So is it also for the soul. For it as well has envelopes incorporeal appropriate to it, just as it is itself incorporeal. These envelopes are “airs” which are in us. When these are light and thin and clear, then is the soul intelligent; but, on the contrary, when they are dense and thick and turbid, then [the soul], as in bad weather, sees not at distance but only things which lie about its feet.

46. And Horus said: What is the reason, mother, that the men outside our holiest land are not so wise of mind as our compatriots?

And Isis said: The Earth lies in the middle of the universe upon her back, like to a human being, with eyes turned up to heaven, and portioned out into as many regions as there are limbs in man. She turns her eyes to Heaven as though to her own Sire, that with his changes she may also bring about her

¹ [A lacuna occurs in the text, and the rest of the answer to Horus’ question is missing.]

own. She hath her head set to the south of all, right shoulder to south-east, left shoulder to south-west; her feet below the Bear, right foot beneath its tail, left under its head; her thighs beneath those that succeed the Bear; her waist beneath the middle [Stars].

47. A sign of this is that men in the south, who dwell upon her head, are fine about the head and have good hair. Those in the east are ready for a fight and archer folk—for this pertains to the right hand. Those in the west are steadier and for the most part fight with the left hand, and what is done by others with the right, they for their part attribute to the left. Those underneath the Bear excel in feet and have especially good legs. Those who come after them a little way, about the zone which is our present Italy and Greece, they all have well-made thighs and backs. . . .

Moreover, all these [northern] parts being whiter than the rest bear whiter men upon them. But since the holiest land of our forebears lies in the midst of Earth, and that the midst of a man's body serves as the precinct of the heart alone, and heart's the spot from which the soul doth start, the men of it not only have no less the other things which all the rest possess, but as a special thing are gifted with intelligence beyond all men and filled with wisdom, in that they are begotten and brought up above her heart.

48. Further, my son, the south being the receiver of the clouds which mass themselves together from the atmosphere . . .¹

For instance, it is just because there is this concentration of them in the south, that it is said our river doth flow thence, upon the breaking up of the frost there. For whensoever a cloud descends, it turns the air about it into mist, and sends it downward in a kind of fog; and fog or mist is an impediment not only to the eyes, but also to the mind. Whereas the east, O Horus, great in glory, in that 'tis thrown into confusion and made overhot by the continual risings of the sun, and in like fashion too, the west, its opposite, in that it suffers the same things through its descents, afford the men born in them no conditions for clear observation. And Boreas with his con-

¹ Something has evidently fallen out here, as the sentence is nowhere completed.

cordant cold, together with their bodies doth congeal the minds of men as well. Whereas the centre of all these being pure and undisturbed, foreknows both for itself and all that are in it. For, free from trouble, ever it brings forth, adorns and educates, and only with such weapons wars [on men], and wins the victory, and with consummate skill, like a good satrap, bestows the fruit of its own victory upon the vanquished.

49. This too expound, O lady, mother mine! For what cause is it that when men still keep alive in long disease, their rational part—their very reason and their very soul—at times becomes disabled?

And Isis answer made: Of living things, my son, some are made friends with fire, and some with water, some with air, and some with earth, and some with two or three of these, and some with all. And, on the contrary, again some are made enemies of fire, and some of water, some of earth, and some of air, and some of two of them, and some of three, and some of all. For instance, son, the locust and all flies flee fire; the eagle and the hawk and all high-flying birds flee water; fish, air and earth; the snake avoids the open air. Whereas snakes and all creeping things love earth; all swimming things [love] water; winged things, air, of which they are the citizens; while those that fly still higher [love] the fire and have their habitat near it. Not that some of the animals as well do not love fire; for instance salamanders, for they even have their homes in it. It is because one or another of the elements doth form their bodies outer envelope.

50. Each soul, accordingly, while it is in its body is weighted and constricted by these four. Moreover it is natural it also should be pleased with some of them and pained with others. For this cause, then, it doth not reach the height of its prosperity; still, as it is divine by nature, e'en while [wrapped up] in them, it struggles and it thinks, though not such thoughts as it would think were it set free from being bound in bodies. Moreover if these [frames] are swept with storm and stress, or of disease or fear, then is the soul itself tossed on the waves, as man upon the deep with nothing steady under him.¹

¹ [The excerpt breaks off abruptly here.]

Excerpt XXVII
From the Sermon of Isis to Horus

[In the *Physica* of Stobæus this excerpt is headed "Of Hermes: A Sermon of Isis to Horus." Patrizi runs this on from the end of the second *Korē Kosmou* excerpt without a break; Kingsford and Maitland represented it as a third part of the "Virgin of the World." The figure of Isis as mystagogue was likely suggested by Egyptian traditions representing her as possessing great magical powers, knowing the true name of Rē, &c. This tract clearly belongs to the same tradition as the *Korē Kosmou*, not merely on grounds of style or the *dramatis personæ*, but in terms of the subjects of concern and of the various doctrines about souls inculcated; Mead considers that the first paragraph specifically refers back to the teaching of the *K. K.*]

1. In wondrous fashion—(Horus said)—has thou explained to me, most mighty mother Isis, the details of God's wondrous soul-making, and I remain in wonder; but not as yet hast thou told me whereto the souls when freed from body go. I would then thank thee for being made initiate by word of mouth, into this vision of the soul, O only mother, deathless one!

2. And Isis said: Give ear, my son; most indispensable is this research. That which doth hold together, doth also have a place which doth not disappear. For this is what my sermon will set forth. O wondrous, mighty son of mighty sire Osiris, [the souls] when they go forth from bodies, are not confusedly and in a rush dissolved into the air, and scattered in the rest of boundless Breath, so that they cannot any more as the same [souls] return again to bodies; nor is it possible, again, to turn them back unto that place from which they came at first—no more than water taken from the bottom of a jar can be poured [back again] into the self-same place whence it was taken; nor does the same when taken take a place peculiar to it, but is mixed up with the whole mass of water. Not thus is it [with souls], high-minded Horus!

3. Now as I chance myself to be as though initiate into the nature which transcendeth death, and that my feet have crossed the Plain of Truth, I will explain to thee in detail how it is; and preface this by telling thee that water is a body void of reason condensed from many compound things into a fluid mass, whereas the soul's a thing of individual nature, son, and

of a royal kind, a work of God's [own] hands and mind, and of itself led by itself to mind. What then doth come from "one" and not from "other," cannot be mingled with a different thing; wherefore it needs must be that the soul's congress with the body is a concord wrought by God's necessity. But that they are not [all] confusedly and [all] at random and by chance sent up again to one and the same place, but each to its own proper region, is clear from what [the soul] doth suffer while still it is in body and in plasm, when it has been made dense against its proper nature. Now give good heed to the similitude recounted, Horus well-beloved!

4. Suppose in one and the same cage have been shut up both men and eagles, doves and swans, and swallows, hawks and sparrows, flies, and snakes, and lions, leopards, wolves, and dogs, and hares, and kine and sheep, and some amphibious animals, as seals and others, tortoises and our own crocodiles; then, that, my son, at one [and the same] moment they are [all] let out. They [all] will turn instinctively—man to his gathering spots and roofs; the eagle to the ether, in which its nature is to spend its life; the doves into the neighbouring air; the hawks [to that] above [the doves]; the swallows where men dwell; the sparrows round the fruit-trees; the swans where they may sing; the flies about the earth, [but only] so far from it as they can with [-out their losing] smell of man (for that the fly, my son, is fond of man especially and tends to earth); the lions and the leopards towards the hills; the wolves towards desert spots; the dogs after men's tracks; the kine to stalls and fields; the sheep to pastures; the snakes to earth's recesses; the seals and tortoises, with [all] their kind, unto the deeps and streams, so that they neither should be robbed of the dry land nor taken from their cognate water—each one returning to its proper place by means of its internal means of judgment. So every soul, both in a human form and otherwise incarnate on the earth, knows where it has to go,—unless some foolish¹ person come and say, my son, that it is possible a bull should live in water and a tortoise up in air!

¹ [The epithet in the Greek is specifically *Τυφώνιος*; Kingsford & Maitland have "some son of Typhon."]

5. And if this be the case when they are plunged in flesh and blood—that they do nothing contrary to what's appointed them, e'en though they are being punished (for being put in body is a punishment for them)—how much the more [is it the case] when they possess their proper liberty [and are set free] from punishment and being plunged [in body]? Now the most holy ordering of souls is on this wise. Turn thou thy gaze above, most noble natured son, upon their orders. The space from height of heaven to the moon devotes itself unto the gods and stars and to the rest of providence; the space, my son, from moon to us is dwelling place of souls. This so great air, however, has in it a belt to which it is our use to give the name of wind, a definite expanse in which it is kept moving to refresh the things on earth, and which I will hereafter tell about. Yet in no manner by its motion on itself does it become an obstacle to souls; for though it keeps on moving, souls can dart up or dart down, just as the case may be, free from all let and hindrance. For they pass through without immixture or adhesion as water flows through oil.

6. Now of this interval, Horus, my son, there are four main divisions and sixty special spaces. Of these [divisions] the first one upwards from the earth is of four spaces, so that the earth in certain of its mountain heights and peaks extends and comes so far, but beyond these it cannot in its nature go in height. The second after this is of eight spaces, in which the motions of the winds take place. Give heed, O son, for thou art hearing mysteries that must not be disclosed—of earth and heaven and all the holy air which lies between, in which there is the motion of the wind and flight of birds. For above this the air doth have no motion and sustains no life. This [moving] air moreover hath of its own nature this authority—that it can circulate in its own spaces and also in the four of earth with all the lives which it contains, while earth cannot ascend into *its* [realm]. The third consists of sixteen spaces filled with subtle air and pure. The fourth consists of two and thirty [spaces], in which there is the subtlest and the finest air; it is by means of this that [air] shuts from itself the heavens above which are by nature fiery.

7. This ordering is up and down in a straight line and has no overlapping; so that there are four main divisions, twelve inter-

vallic ones and sixty spaces. And in these sixty spaces dwell the souls, each one according to its nature, for though they are of one and the same substance, they're not of the same dignity. For by so much as any space is higher from the earth than any other, by so much do the souls in them, my son, surpass in eminence the one the other. What souls, however, go to each of them, I will accordingly begin again to tell thee, Horus, [son] of great renown, taking their order from above down to the earth.

CONCERNING THE INBREATHING AND
THE TRANSMIGRATION OF THE SOUL.¹

8. The [air] between the earth and heavens, Horus, is spaced out by measure and by harmony. These spaces have been named by some of our forefathers zones, by others firmaments, by others layers. And in them dwell both souls which have been set free from their bodies, and also those which have as yet been never shut in body. And each of them, my son, hath just the place it doth deserve; so that the godly and the kingly ones dwell in the highest space of all, those least in honour and the rest of the decadent ones [dwell] in the lowest space of all, while middling souls dwell in the middle space. Accordingly, those souls which are sent down to rule, are sent down, Horus, from the upper zones; and when they are set free [again] they go back to the same or even still more lofty ones, unless it be they still have acted contrary to their own nature's dignity and the pronouncement of the Law of God. Such souls as these the Providence above, according to the measure of their sins, doth banish down to lower spaces; just as with those which are inferior in dignity and power, it leads them up from lower [realms] to vaster and more lofty ones.

9. For up above [them all] there are two ministers of universal Providence, of whom one is the warder of the souls, the other their conductor. The warder [watches o'er the souls when out of body], while the conductor is dispatcher and distributor of souls into their bodies. The former keeps them, while the latter sends them forth according to the Will of God. For this cause (*logos*) then, my son, nature on earth according to the change of deeds

¹ This appears to be a heading inserted by Stobæus (*Phys.*, xli. 64) or some scribe; there seems to be no break in the text.

above doth model out the vessels and shape out the tents in which the souls are cast. Two energies, experience and memory, assist her. And this is memory's task, [to see] that nature guards the type of every thing sent down out of its source and keeps its mixture as it is above; while of experience [the work is this, to see] conformably to every one of the descending souls it may have its embodiment, and that the plasms may be made effective—that for the swift ones of the souls the bodies also may be swift, for slow ones slow, for active active ones, for sluggish sluggish ones, for powerful powerful, and for crafty crafty ones, and in a word for every one of them as it is fit.¹

10. For not without intention hath she clad winged things with plumage; and tricked out with senses more than ordinary and more exact those which have reason; and some of the four-footed things made strong with horns, some strong with teeth, some strong with claws and hoofs; while creeping things she hath made supple with bodies clad in easy-moving scales, which easily can glide away. And that the watery nature of their body may not remain entirely weak, she doth provide the sharpened fangs of some of them with power; so that by reason of the fear of death [they cause] they're stronger than the rest. The swimming things being timorous, she gives to dwell within an element where light can exercise nor one nor other of its powers, for fire in water gives nor light nor heat. But each of them, swimming in water clad in scales or spines, flees from what frightens it where'er it will, using the water as a means of hiding it from sight.

11. For souls are shut in each class of these bodies according to their similarity [to them]. Those which have power of judgment go down into men; and those that lack it into quadrupeds, whose [only] law is force; the crafty ones [go] into reptiles, for none of them attack a man in front, but lie in wait and strike him down; and into swimming things the timid ones or those which are not worthy to enjoy the other elements. In every class, however, there are found some which no longer use their proper nature.

¹ [Mead regards the text at various points in this section to be highly corrupt; much of this translation must thus be regarded as conjectural.]

How [meanest thou] again, my mother? Horus said.

And Isis answered: A man, for instance, son, o'ersteps his power of judgment; a quadruped avoids the use of force; and reptiles lose their craftiness; and birds their fear of men. So much [then] for the ordering of [souls] above and their descent, and for the making of their bodies.

12. In every class and kind of the above, my son, there may be found some regal souls; others also descend with various natures, some fiery, and some cold, some overbearing, and some mild, some skilled, some unskilled, some idle, some industrious, some one thing, some another. And this results from the arrangement of the regions whence the souls leap down to their embodiment. For from the regal zone they leap down [into birth], the soul of the like nature ruling them; for there are many sovereignties. Some are of souls, and some of bodies, and some of arts, and some of sciences, and some are of ourselves.

How [meanest thou] again, my mother, "of ourselves"?

For instance, son, it is thy sire Osiris who is [the ruler] of the souls of them born after us up to this time; whereas the prince of every race [is ruler] of their bodies; [the king] of counsel is the father and the guide of all, Thrice-greatest Hermes; of medicine Asclepius, Hephæstus' son;¹ of power and might again Osiris, and after him thyself, my son; and of philosophy Arnebeschēnis;² of poetry again Asclepius-Imuth.³

13. For generally, my son, thou'lt find, if thou inquirest, that there are many ruling many things and many holding sway o'er many. And he who rules them all, my son, is from the highest space; while he who rules some part of them, doth have the rank of that particulax realm from which he is. Those who come from the regal zone, [have] a more ruling [part to play; those from the zone of fire] become fire-workers and fire-tenders;

¹ [The Greek Asklēpios, as a divine figure, was more usually the son of Apollo; his Egyptian analogue Imhotep, after his deification, was represented as the son of Ptah and depicted with some of his attributes.]

² [Mead in his commentary identifies this little-known figure as "Har-nebeschēnis," i.e. *Heru-neb-Sekhem* (*hr-nb-shm*), Horus of Letopolis, a genuine if somewhat obscure Egyptian god; this very obscurity increases the likelihood that the "Isis to Horus" Hermetica were actually composed in Egypt rather than simply using "Egyptian" tropes as window-dressing.]

³ [See note to Excerpt XXV §3.]

those from the watery one live out their life in waters; those from the [zone] of science and of art are occupied with arts and sciences; those from the [zone] of inactivity inactively and heedlessly live out their lives. For that the sources of all things wrought on the earth by word or deed, are up above, and they dispense for us their essences by weight and measure; and there is naught which hath not come down from above, and will return again to re-descend.

14. What dost thou mean again by this, my mother? Tell me!

And Isis once again did make reply: Most holy Nature hath set in living creatures the clear sign of this return. For that this breath which we breathe from above out of the air, we send out up again, to take it in [once more]. And we have in us organs, son, to do this work, and when they close their mouths whereby the breath's received, then we no longer are as now we are, but we depart. Moreover, son of high renown, there are some other things which we have added to us outside the weighed-out mixture [of the body].

15. What, then (said Horus), is this mixture, mother?

It is a union and a blend of the four elements; and from this blend and union a certain vapour rises, which is enveloped by the soul, but circulates within the body, sharing with each, with body and with soul, its nature. And thus the differences of changes are effected both in soul and body. For if there be in the corporeal make-up more of fire, thereon the soul, which is by nature hot, taking unto itself another thing that's hot, and [so] being made more fiery, makes the life more energetic and more passionate, and the body quick and active. If [there be] more of air, thereon the life becomes both light and springy and unsteady both in the soul and body. And if there's more of water, then the creature also doth become of supple soul and easy disposition, and ready of embrace, and able easily to meet and join with others, through water's power of union and communion with the rest of things; for that it finds a place in all, and when it is abundant, doth dissolve what it surrounds, while if [there's] little [of it], it sinks into and doth become what it is mingled with. As for their bodies, by dampness and by sponginess they are not made compact, but by a slight attack of sickness are

dissolved, and fall away by little and by little from the bond which holds them severally together. And if the earthy [element] is in excess, the creature's soul is dull, for it has not its body-texture loosely knit, or space for it to leap through, the organs of sensation being dense; but by itself it stays within, bound down by weight and density. As for its body, it is firm, but heavy and inert, and only moved of choice by [exercise of] strength. But if there is a balanced state of all [the elements], then is the animal made hot for doing, light for moving, well-mixed for contact, and excellent for holding things together.¹

16. Accordingly those which have more in them of fire and air, these are made into birds, and have their state above hard by those elements from which they came. While those which have more fire, less air, and earth and water equal, these are made into men, and for the creature the excess of heat is turned into sagacity; for that the mind in us is a hot thing which knows not how to burn, but has intelligence to penetrate all things. And those which have in them more water and more earth, but moderate air and little fire, these are turned into quadrupeds, and those which have more heat are stronger than the rest. Those which have equal earth and water, are made into reptiles. These through their lack of fire lack courage and straightforwardness; while through their having water in them they are cold; and through their having earth they heavy are and torpid; yet through their having air, they can move easily if they should choose to do so. Those which have in them more of wet, and less of dry, these are made into fish. These through their lack of heat and air are timorous and try to hide themselves, and through excess of wet and earthy elements, they find their home, through their affinity, in fluid earth and water.

17. It is according to the share [they have] in every element and to the compass of that share, that bodies reach full growth [in man]; according to the smallness of their share the other animals have been proportioned—according to the energy which is in every element. Moreover, O my well-beloved, I say,

¹ [Mead comments (it is not clear if this applies to just the last sentence or the whole of this section): "The text is faulty, the language artificial, the analogy strained, and the sense accordingly obscure."]

that when, out of this state [of things], the blend based on the first commixture [of the elements in any case], and the resultant vapour from it, so far preserve their own peculiarity, that neither the hot part takes on another heat, nor [does] the aery [take] another air, nor [does] the watery part another wetness, nor [yet] the earthy [take] another density, then doth the animal remain in health.

18. But if they do not, son, remain in the proportions which they had from the beginning, but are too much increased—(I do not mean in energy according to their compass or in the change of sex and body brought about by growth, but in the blend, as we have said before, of the component elements, so that the hot, for instance, is increased too much or too much lessened, and so for all the rest)—then will the animal be sick.

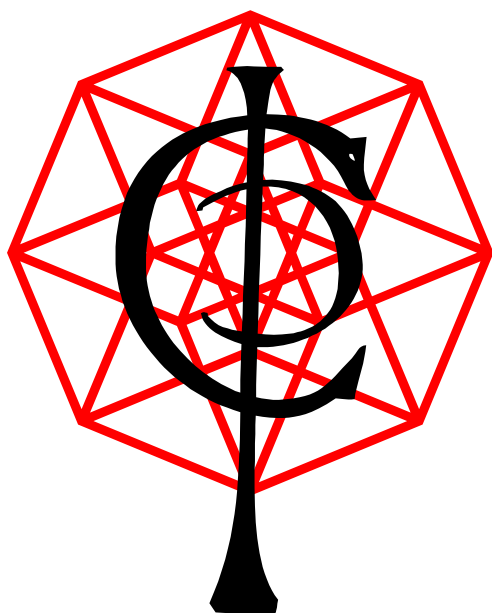
19. And if this [increase] doth take place in both the elements of heat and air, the soul's tent-fellows, then doth the creature fall into symbolic dreams and ecstasies; for that a concentration of the elements whereby the bodies are dissolved has taken place. For 'tis the earthy element itself which is the condensation of the body; the watery element in it as well is a fluidity to make it dense. Whereas the aery element is that in us which has the power of motion, and fire is that which makes an end of all of them.

20. Just then as is the vapour which ariseth from the first conjunction and co-blending of the elements, as though it were a kindling or an exhalation,—whatever it may be, it mingles with the soul and draws it to itself, so that it shares its nature good or bad. And if the soul remains in its original relationship and common life with it, it keeps its rank. But when there's added from without some larger share than what was first laid down for it,—either to the whole mixture, or to its parts, or to one part of it,—then the resulting change effected in the vapour doth bring about a change or in the disposition of the soul or of the body. The fire and air, as tending upward, hasten upward to the soul, which dwells in the same regions as themselves; the watery and the earthy elements, as tending down, sink down upon the body, which doth possess the self-same seat.

OTHER ELECTRONIC BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM
CELEPHAIS PRESS AND UNSPEAKABLE PRESS (LENG)

- Anonymous—"Nature Worship and Mystical Series" (10 vols).
Edwin Arnold (trans.)—*The Song Celestial (Bhagavadgita)*
H. P. Blavatsky—*The Voice of the Silence*
Richard Carlile—*Manual of Freemasonry*
A. Fabre d'Olivet—*Golden Verses of Pythagoras* (English translation by N. L. Redfield).
J.G.R. Forlong—*Rivers of Life, Short Studies in the Science of Comparative Religions, Faiths of Man: a Cyclopedic of Religions*
J.F.C. Fuller—*The Star in the West*.
Franz Hartmann—*Cosmology or Universal Science &c. &c. &c. (Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians)*
C.H. Hinton—*The Fourth Dimension, Scientific Romances* (1st and 2nd Series), *A New Era of Thought*
T. H. Huxley—*Humes, with helps to the study of Berkeley*.
Thomas Inman—*Ancient Pagan and Modern Christian Symbolism* (2nd edition), *Ancient Faiths and Modern*
Hargrave Jennings—*The Rosicrucians, their Rites and Mysteries* (4th edition), *Phallicism, Celestial and Terrestrial* (includes the Illustrations)
C.W. King—*The Gnostics and their Remains* (second edition)
Sidney T. Klein—*Science and the Infinite*
Richard Payne Knight, et al.—*A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus &c. &c. &c. (Two Essays on the Worship of Priapus)*
Gerald Massey—*The Natural Genesis, Gerald Massey's Lectures, Ancient Egypt*
S.L. "MacGregor" Mathers (ed. / trans.)—*The Kabbalah Unveiled*
G.R.S. Mead (trans.)—*Pistis Sophia*
Albert Pike—*Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite*
Sha Rocco—*The Masculine Cross*
Edward Sellon—*Annotations on the Sacred Writings of the Hindus*.
Herbert Spencer—*First Principles* (6th edition)
William Stirling—*The Canon*
N. Montfauçon de Villars—*Comte de Gabalis* ("Brothers" translation)
Swami Vivekananda—*Raja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga*
A. E. Waite—*Real History of the Rosicrucians*
John Yarker (ed. / trans.)—*Lectures of the Antient and Primitive Rite of Freemasonry*.

For latest updates and the full catalogue visit celephaispress.blogspot.com



Celephaïs Press

Ulthar - Sarkomand - Inquanok - Leeds

celephaïspress.blogspot.com