The Tradition of Hermes Trismegistus

Religions in the Graeco-Roman World

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The Tradition of Hermes Trismegistus

The Egyptian Priestly Figure as a Teacher of Hellenized Wisdom

By

Christian H. Bull

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Cover illustration: Stela of Thoth as ibis, ibis-headed human, and baboon, with Khonsu-Harpocrates (ca. 100–150 CE)
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Illustration on facing page (flyleaf): Detail from Book of the Dead of the Priest of Horus, Imhotep (Imuthes)
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ORPHÉE
Admirez le pouvoir insigne
Et la noblesse de la ligne:
Elle est la voix que la lumière fit entendre
Et dont parle Hermès Trismégiste en son Pimandre.

IBIS
Oui, j'irai dans l'ombre terreuse
O mort certaine, ainsi soit-il!
Latin mortel, parole affreuse.
Ibis, oiseau des bords du Nil.

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE, *Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d'Orphée* (1911)

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1 The project was funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013) / ERC Grant Agreement no. 283741.

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2 FRIPRO mobility grant, project 250781. Jointly funded by the Norwegian Research Council the Co-funding of Regional, National, and International Programmes (COFUND)—Marie Curie Actions.

Abbreviations

Commonly Cited Works

Ascl.	The *Asclepius*, the Latin translation of PD
CCAG	Franz Cumont and Franz Boll, eds., *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*. 12 vols. Brussels: Lamertin, 1898–1953
CH	*Corpus Hermeticum*, in NF vols. 1–2
DH	*Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius*. In HHE vol. 2
FH	*Fragmenta Hermetica*, in NF vol. 4
FR	André-Jean Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*. 4 vols. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1944–1954
HHE	Jean-Pierre Mahé, *Hermès en haute-Égypte*. 2 vols. BCNH.C 3 & 7. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1978–1982
KK	The *Korê Kosmou* = SH XXIII
NF	Arthur D. Nock and André-Jean Festugière. *Hermès Trismégiste: Corpus Hermeticum*. 4 vols. Paris, 1942–1953
PD	The *Perfect Discourse*
PGM	Karl Preisendanz, *Papyri graecae magicae. Die griechischen Zauberpapyri.* 3 vols. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1928–1973
PGMT	Hans D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation. Including the Demotic spells*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986
Scott	Walter Scott, *Hermetica: the ancient Greek and Latin writings which contain religious or philosophic teachings ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1924–1936
SH	*Stobaei Hermetica*, in NF vols. 2–3

Journals and Book Series

Act. Hung.	*Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*
AEJ	*Asia Europe Journal*
AIPhO	*L'Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales*
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Edited by J.B. Pritchard. 3d ed. Princeton, 1969
AO	*Acta orientalia*
APF	*Archiv für Papyrusforschung*
ARG	*Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*
ARW	*Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*

ASAE	*Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte*
ASP	American Studies in Papyrology
BASP	*Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*
BdE	Bibliothèque d'étude, IFAO
BIE	*Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*
BIFAO	*Le Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*
BSEG	*Bulletin de la Société d'Egyptologie, Genève*
BSFE	*Bulletin de la Société française d'Égyptologie*
BzA	Beiträge zur Altertumskunde
CB	Coniectanea Biblica
CB	*The Classical Bulletin*
CBC	Cahiers de la bibliothèque copte
CdÉ	*Chronique d'Égypte*
CJ	*The Classical Journal*
CN	*Conjectanea Neotestamentica*
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*
CP	*Classical Philology*
CRBL	Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres
EAC	Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique
EQÄ	Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie
EPRO	Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain
EVO	*Egitto e Vicino Oriente*
GM	*Göttinger Miszellen*
GO	Göttinger Orientforschungen
HFS	Historisk-filosofiske Skrifter
HR	*History of Religions*
HSCP	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
HTR	*The Harvard Theological Review*
IFAO	L'institut français d'archéologie orientale
IJPT	*The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition*
JAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JEA	*The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JEH	*Journal of Egyptian History*
JHS	*The Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JRitSt	*Journal of Ritual Studies*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*

JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism*
JSSEA	*The Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities*
JWCI	*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Henry G. Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry S. Jones. A Greek-English Lexicon. 9th ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992
MnS	Mnemosyne, Supplements
Mon. Piot	Monuments Piot
MRÉ	Monographies Reine Élisabeth
MS	Monograph Series
NGC	*New German Critique*
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLoP	*Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*
OPGSMT	Opuscula Graecolatina-Supplementa Musei Tusculani
P. L. Bat.	Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava
RA	*The Rationalist Annual*
RevA	*Revue Archéologique*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RdE	*Revue d'Égypte*
REA	*Revue des Études Arméniennes*
REG	*Revue des Études Grecques*
RFIC	*Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica*
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des religions*
RHPR	*Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*
RGRW	Religions of the Greco-Roman World
RP	*Revue de Philologie, de litterature et d'histoire anciennes*
RSR	*Revue des sciences religieuses*
SAK	*Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur*
SAM	Studies in Ancient Monarchy
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
SMSR	*Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni*
SO	*Symbolae Osloensis*
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum

STAR	Studies in Theology and Religion
StudAeg	*Studia Aegyptiaca*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VP	*Vivre et Penser. Recherches d'exégèse et d'histoire*
WGRW	Writings of the Greco-Roman World
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
YES	Yale Egyptological Studies
ZÄS	*Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Kultur*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigrafik*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

A Note on the Translations

All translations from the *Stobaei Hermetica* and the Coptic Hermetica are my own. As for the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Asclepius*, I have in part followed the translations of Brian P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), though where my opinion differs from his I have supplied my own translations. This is noted in the footnotes in each case. A difficult question presenting itself to every scholar dealing with the Hermetica is how to translate and understand νοῦς. "Mind," "intellect," "understanding," or "consciousness" might all be good translations. I have for the most part opted for "mind", though sometimes I merely transliterate nous, especially in cases where the term seems more technical. Likewise problematic is of course λόγος, where I also sometimes keep the term transliterated, and other times translate it as "word" or "reason."

Though I do not claim expertise in Hieroglyphic or Demotic Egyptian, nor Syriac or Armenian, I have consulted the original texts of the sources used to the degree it has been feasible, and in these cases reproduce the editions used.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In Greco-Roman Egypt there circulated a number of treatises in Greek attributed to the god or divine sage, Hermes Trismegistus. The epithet Trismegistus, "thrice greatest," was used to identify the Greek god Hermes, the son of Zeus and Maya and messenger of the Olympian gods, with the Egyptian Thoth, the god of scribes, wisdom, and magic. The god Thoth, whom the Egyptians portrayed as an ibis, a man with the head of an ibis, or a baboon, is already attested in the *Pyramid Texts*, some of the oldest religious texts in existence (2353–2107 BCE), where he helps the deceased king take his place among the gods in heaven.[1] Thoth remained an important deity in Egypt until the Christian Emperors closed down the temples, mainly in the fourth and fifth century. Although the Hermetic treatises were written in Greek, they thus professed to originally have been authored by an ancient Egyptian god, or rather a man who had become a god. In the Hellenistic age the rationalizing philosopher Euhemerus taught that the gods were in fact originally human beings, kings, lawgivers, and inventors, who had been made into gods after their deaths. This teaching became quite popular and also informed the Hermetica, where Hermes Trismegistus in many treatises appear to be human.

The Greeks recognized that the Egyptian civilization was far older than their own, and were impressed with the temple archives of the priests, so full of ancient records.[2] This Greek fascination with Egyptian antiquities is most famously reflected in Plato's dialogue, the *Timaeus*, where there is a story of a priest of Saïs in Egypt who taught Solon, the Athenian lawmaker, that the Greeks are "ever children": "You are young, the old priest replied, young in soul every one of you. Your souls are devoid of beliefs about antiquity handed down by ancient tradition. Your souls lack any learning made hoary by time."[3] The

1 James P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 1.

2 Herodotus (*Hist.* 2.143) reports the encounter between Hecataeus of Milet and the priests of Thebes, who could show statues of priests going back 345 generations. Cf. Ian S. Moyer, "Herodotus and an Egyptian Mirage: The Genealogies of the Theban Priests," *JHS* 122 (2002): 70–90.

3 Plato, *Tim.* 22b: Ἕλληνες ἀεὶ παῖδές ἐστε… νέοι ἐστέ, εἰπεῖν, τὰς ψυχὰς πάντες· οὐδεμίαν γὰρ ἐν αὐταῖς ἔχετε δι' ἀρχαίαν ἀκοὴν παλαιὰν δόξαν οὐδὲ μάθημα χρόνῳ πολιὸν οὐδέν. Trans. Donald J. Zeyl in John M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: The Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1230.

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priest goes on to say that Athens is actually older than Saïs, but due to periodical catastrophes it has lost its records of antiquity, which are now only preserved inscribed on the temple-walls in Saïs. Beliefs (δόξα) and teachings (μάθημα) handed down from the ancients are thus, according to Plato's Egyptian priest, necessary to make the soul mature, and therefore their antiquity would naturally bestow prestige and authority on such teachings. Plato also elsewhere claims to have access to ancient Egyptian teachings, when he relates a dialogue between Thoth and king Ammon set in Thebes.[4] Even if Plato might have made up these Egyptian narratives himself,[5] we find quite early on a tradition that claimed that Pythagoras and Plato had both been to Egypt, and that they had been educated by the priests there.[6] The genius of these philosophers was thus explained by their access to the authoritative teachings of the ancients. The authors of the Hermetic treatises made use of this tradition by attributing teachings culled from Platonic, Stoic, and Neopythagorean sources to Hermes Trismegistus, who was considered to be the inventor of Egyptian philosophy, arts, and sciences, and therefore the supposed source of the philosophy of Pythagoras and Plato. Even though the Hermetic treatises were written centuries after Plato, they were commonly assumed to be Greek translations of much older, Egyptian wisdom. The antiquity of the Egyptian civilization was thus utilized to appropriate Greek philosophical teachings for the Egyptian tutelary deity of wisdom.[7]

The treatises attributed to Hermes are normally subdivided into two groups, depending on their contents: the first group consists of astrological, medico-botanical, alchemical, and magical treatises, which are referred to as technical Hermetica.[8] The astrological treatises are the oldest attested

4 *Phaedr.* 274c–275b; *Phileb.* 18b–c.

5 Luc Brisson seems to accept that Solon really did converse with a priest in Saïs, even if the fantastic story of the ancient battle between Athens and Atlantis is obviously mythical. Cf. Luc Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker* (trans. Gerard Naddaf; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 25–31, 36–37.

6 Peter Kingsley, "From Pythagoras to the *Turba Philosophorum*: Egypt and the Pythagorean Tradition," *JWCI* 57 (1994): 1–13.

7 This is not to say that Greek philosophers were not influenced by Egyptian cosmological speculations, but the extent to which such "borrowings" might have taken place lies beyond the scope of the present investigation.

8 André-Jean Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste I: L'astrologie et les sciences occultes, II: Le dieu cosmique, III: Les doctrines de l'âme, IV: Le Dieu inconnu et la gnose* (4 vols.; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1944–1954; hereafter FR), vol. 1; id., *Hermetisme et mystique païenne* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967); 30ff.; Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 75–94.

writings attributed to Hermes, some going back at least to the first century BCE, and possibly even the second or third.[9] The second and most well-known group contains religio-philosophical treatises related to Platonic, Stoic, and Neopythagorean teachings of the early Roman Empire. These texts are mainly dialogues between Hermes Trismegistus and his disciples, Tat, Asclepius and Ammon. Hermes here outlines a philosophical way of life, referred to as the way of Hermes by modern scholars, which he claims may ultimately lead the devotee to a spiritual rebirth and a visionary ascent beyond the borders of the physical cosmos. Many of the treatises contain theoretical expositions on the relationship between human beings, the world, and God (CH VIII; X; *Ascl.*; DH; SH XI), and more specialized topics such as the nature of the soul (CH X), the nature of space (CH II), and solar theology and demonology (CH XVI). Other treatises contain mythological accounts (CH I; IV, 1–6; SH XXIII) or revelatory dialogues (CH I; CH XIII; *Disc.8–9*). The diversity of topics covered and doctrines espoused have led earlier scholars to see little internal coherence among the Hermetic treatises.[10] However, in the last three decades scholars have increasingly tended to see conflicting teachings in the texts to represent different stages of teaching on the way of Hermes, rather than doctrinal incoherence.[11]

The Hermetic treatises are attributed to either Hermes or his disciples, which means that we do not know who actually wrote them. This places the Hermetica in the genre of pseudepigrapha, in which we find texts that are attributed to mythical figures such as Orpheus, Musaeus, Enoch, and Seth, or erroneously attributed to historical (but sometimes semi-legendary) figures such as Zarathustra, Homer, Pythagoras, Jesus, and his apostles. A persistent challenge facing scholars of Hermetism has therefore been to attain a clearer picture of who wrote the Hermetica and put the Hermetic teachings and rituals into practice. It will be the aim of the present contribution to throw light

9 Festugière followed Gundel in positing a second or third century origin (FR 1:120–21), whereas Fowden (*Egyptian Hermes*, 3) points out that our only unambiguous testimony is from the first century BCE.

10 Cf. Thaddeus Zielinski, "Hermes und die Hermetik I," *ARW* 8 (1905): 322–72; id., "Hermes und die Hermetik II," *ARW* 9 (1906): 25–60 at 26, 57; Wilhelm Bousset, review of Josef Kroll, *Die Lehren des Hermes Trismegistos*, *GGA* 76 (1914): 697–755; Festugière, *Hermetisme et mystique païenne*, 35–38; FR 4:54.

11 Jean-Pierre Mahé, *Hermès en haute-Égypte* (2 vols.; Québec: Les presses de l'Université Laval, 1978–1982; hereafter HHE), 2:455f.; id., "L'hermétisme alexandrin," in *Le Grand Atlas des Religions* (ed. Charles Baladier; Paris: Encyclopedia Universalis, 1988), 344–45; id., "La voie d'immortalité à la lumière des *Hermetica* de Nag Hammadi et de découvertes plus récentes," *VC* 45 (1991): 347–75; Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 97–104, 111f.

on this issue, through consecutively analyzing the Hermetic myths, the way of Hermes, and the religious context of the treatises.

1.1 The Status Quaestionis

Since several scholars have already compiled comprehensive bibliographies of Hermetism,[12] I will in the following limit myself to a brief discussion of the main positions on my stated topic, namely the identity of the authors behind the Hermetica and the practitioners of the way of Hermes.

Richard Reitzenstein is commonly considered to have inaugurated modern academic studies of Hermetism, with his 1904 book *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur*.[13] Reitzenstein belonged to the group of German scholars who became known as the History of Religions School ("Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule"), who were concerned with illuminating the origins of Christianity and its relationship with other contemporary and prior religious phenomena, such as the cults of mysteries.[14] The main thesis of Reitzenstein was that Hermetism originated in a community devoted to Poimandres ("Poimandres-gemeinde"), the revelatory god of CH I,[15] and that this community had been formed by a priest of the god Ptah in Memphis, who had Hellenized an Egyptian teaching about a primordial, divine human and

12 Antonio González Blanco, "Hermetism. A Bibliographical Approach," *ANRW* 17.4:2240–81; HHE 2:3–32; Anna van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès: Pratiques rituelles et traités hermétiques* (NHMS 77; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 2–18 (the adaptation of the author's doctoral dissertation, "Pratiques rituelles et traités hermétiques," [Ph.D. diss., École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2005], 23–33).

13 Richard Reitzenstein, *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1904). There were forerunners of Reitzenstein, such as Richard Pietschmann, *Hermes Trismegistos nach ägyptischen, griechischen und orientalistischen Überlieferungen* (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1875), and Louis Ménard, *Hermès Trismegiste. Traduction complète, précédée d'une étude sur l'origine des livres hermétiques* (Paris: Didier, 1866), though these were not nearly as influential nor methodical.

14 Cf. Carsten Colpe, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule: Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961); Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), 77–78 n. 35; John H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, "XV. The birth of Late Antiquity," in *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity: Religion, Barbarians and their Historiography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 1–18 at 5f.

15 Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 146.

combined it with astrology.[16] This conclusion was reached through extensive comparisons made with the Greek Magical Papyri, as well as the Egyptological material available at that time.[17] Later, the community was supposedly absorbed by other Hermes-communities, a process that Reitzenstein described with surprising confidence:

> Die Geschichte der Ἄνθρωπος-Lehre in Ägypten läßt uns mit einiger Wahrscheinlichkeit auf die Zeit um Christi Geburt raten. Begründer der Sekte war ein ägyptischer Priester, welcher eine Lehre von der Weltschöpfung durch Ptah mit einer vom Osten eindringenden Verkündigung von der Knechtschaft und Befreiung des Menschen zu einem gnostischen System verband. Die Gemeinde breitete sich aus und wirkte schon um Beginn des zweiten Jahrhunderts selbst nach Rom herüber. In ihrer Lehre steigert sich im Laufe der Zeit der mystische Grundzug und mit ihm das ägyptische Element. Das Prophetentum tritt im Laufe des zweiten Jahrhunderts immer stärker hervor. Eben dadurch näherte sich die Gemeinde wieder den zahlreichen Hermes-Gemeinden, um endlich im Laufe des dritten Jahrhunderts völlig in sie aufzugehen. Kraft und Bedeutung des Prophetentums scheinen dann wieder abzunehmen und zugleich die jüdischen Einflüsse zu wachsen. Mit dem vierten Jahrhundert entschwindet die Gemeinde unserem Blick. Das ist im Grunde alles.[18]

Although Reitzenstein here presents a compelling scenario, there is in reality not sufficient evidence for such a detailed history of a hypothetical community, and he was attacked by Theodor Zielinski within a short time of the publication of his volume as being the victim of "Ägyptomanie."[19] Zielinski argued instead that the "higher Hermetism" of the philosophical treatises had nothing to do with Egypt or the magical papyri, that it was entirely Greek in origin, and that the fundamentally different worldviews—dualistic versus

16 Ibid., 114: "… so sicher scheint mir erwiesen, auch der nicht-ägyptische Teil der Poimandreslehre eine Einheit bildet, und damit zugleich dargelegt, wie das älteste gnostische System, das wir kennen, entstand. Seine Grundlage bildete zunächst eine Volksreligion, oder genauer, die hellenisierte Lehre der Ptahpriester in Memphis. Aber mit ihr verband der Gründer der Gemeinde eine ähnlich hellenisierte, aus einem andern Volk nach Ägypten dringende, Lehre, welche in dem Anschluss an die Astrologie und in dem Sehnen weiter Kreise nach Befreiung von ihrem Druck die werbende Kraft besaß."

17 Ibid., 266 n. 2.

18 Ibid., 248.

19 Zielinski, "Hermes und die Hermetik I," 322.

pantheistic—of the various Hermetic treatises excluded the existence of a Hermetic community.[20] Although Zielinski was in turn criticized and corrected on several points, the scholarly consensus would remain, for nearly eighty years, that the philosophical Hermetica were entirely products of Greek authors who were not part of any Hermetic community. Reitzenstein himself later turned away from his original thesis, and hypothesized that the Hermetic mysteries were in fact "Lesemysterien," reading-mysteries that effectuated a transformation in the mind of the reader akin to that of the initiatory rites of the mystery-cults, without the need for ritual action.[21] He also came to postulate a thoroughgoing Iranian influence upon the Hermetica, a hypothesis which gained few followers.[22]

Scholarly attention after Reitzenstein's *Poimandres* largely focused on delineating the doctrinal contents of the various treatises, as to whether they had an optimistic, monistic worldview, or a pessimistic, dualistic one.[23] The connection between Gnosticism and the dualistic treatises, and in particular the

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20 Zielinski, "Hermes und die Hermetik II," 27, 29, 60. Zielinski also authored a Polish monograph, *Hermes Trismegistos: studjum z cyklu współzawodnicy chrzecijastwa* (Zamość: Zygmunt Pomarańskispólka, 1920), which I have not been able to consult.

21 Richard Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen nach ihren Grundgedanken und Wirkungen* (3d ed.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1927), 51–52, 64; criticized by Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 149.

22 Richard Reitzenstein, *Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium: Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Bonn a. Rh.: A. Marcus & E. Weber, 1921), 41, 96–97, 159–65, 239–40; Richard Reitzenstein and Hans H. Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1926).

23 Wilhelm Kroll, "Hermes Trismegistos," PW VIII/1:792–823; Josef Kroll, *Die Lehren des Hermes Trismegistos* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928); Bousset, review of Kroll; Walter Scott, *Hermetica* (4 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924–1936). For a survey of the doctrinal debates, cf. Tage Petersen, "'Alt kommer jo på øjet an, der ser': En analyse af kosmologien i de såkaldt dualistiske tekster i *Corpus Hermeticum*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Copenhagen, 2003), 3–16. One exception is the Egyptologist W.M. Flinders Petrie, "Historical References in the Hermetic writings," *Transactions of the Third International Congress of the History of Religions* (2 vols.; ed. Percy S. Allen; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 1:196–225; id. *Personal Religion in Egypt before Christianity* (London: Harper, 1909), vii, 38–58, who dates the Hermetica to 500–200 BCE. He was followed later by Bruno H. Stricker, "The Corpus Hermeticum," *Mnemosyne* 2 (1949): 79–80: "The Corpus Hermeticum has been composed by the Egyptian priesthood at the command of king Ptolemy I Soter." Cf. id., *De brief van Aristeas: de Hellenistische codificaties der praehelleense godsdiensten* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1956). These suggestions have largely been ignored in the scholarly literature.

Poimandres (CH I), was also a main concern of scholars such as Hans Jonas, whereas C.H. Dodd affirmed the dependence of some Hermetic treatises on the Septuagint.[24]

The scholar who more than anyone else has influenced modern Hermetic studies is arguably Andre-Jean Festugière, a Dominican friar who wrote prolifically on Hermetism and contemporary religious and philosophical currents.[25] Perhaps most importantly, he edited and translated what is still the standard critical edition of the Hermetica, together with Arthur Darby Nock, who collated the manuscripts and established the Greek text.[26] At about the same time, Festugière also wrote his magnum opus, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, which remains a treasure trove not only for students of Hermetism, but also for Greek philosophy, mysticism, and "the occult sciences."[27] Festugière followed his predecessors in seeing the philosophical Hermetica as written by Greeks, and he considered the doctrinal diversity to exclude any religious community. Instead, Festugière proposed that the Sitz im Leben of the texts was a small school circle:

> Examinant le genre littéraire auquel appartient le *logos* hermétique, nous avons vu que, dérivant en première ligne de Platon, il témoigne de certaines habitudes scolaires propres à un petit cercle intime où un maître cherche à convertir ses disciples à la vraie vie de l'âme: c'est une leçon privée (trois élèves au plus), qui se tourne en direction spirituelle.[28]

Although Festugière was critical of Reitzenstein's thesis of Egyptian priests being involved in the production of the philosophical Hermetica,[29] he admitted that they were active in the writing of astrology[30] and magical papyri,[31]

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24 Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist: Die mythologische Gnosis* (2 vols.; 3d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1964 [1934]), 1:344; Charles H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), 97–248. Cf. id., *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 10–53.

25 Cf. Henri D. Saffrey, "Le Père André-Jean Festugière, O.P. (1898–1982): Portrait," and "Bibliographie," in *Mémorial André-Jean Festugière: Antiquité païenne et chrétienne* (ed. Enzo Lucchesi and Henri D. Saffrey; Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1984), vii–xxxiv.

26 Arthur D. Nock and André-Jean Festugière, *Hermès Trismégiste: Corpus Hermeticum* (4 vols.; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1945–1954; hereafter NF).

27 Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* (hereafter FR).

28 FR 2:50.

29 FR 1:81–87.

30 FR 1: 85 n. 1, 102, 115–18, 121, 128.

31 FR 1:348ff.

some of which he considered to be related to the philosophical treatises.[32] Festugière thus affirmed the view of most of his predecessors, that the Hermetica are the products of Greeks with philosophical pretensions, though in fact of mediocre culture ("moyenne culture").[33]

The discovery of new Hermetic treatises in Nag Hammadi Codex VI was announced while Festugière was working on his *La révélation*, but did not have an impact on it.[34] Indeed, in the additions to the second edition of volume one, published in 1950, Festugière brushed aside the discovery of "une jarre d'Égypte," claiming that: "Elle prouve simplement que certains milieux coptes étaient friands d'hermétisme. Les papyrus magiques nous l'avaient appris déjà."[35] Festugière probably here refers to Papyrus Mimaut, the Greek magical papyrus that contains the Hermetic Prayer of Thanksgiving and also includes some spells in Old Coptic. It is not clear if Festugière ever consulted the Nag Hammadi Hermetica before they became publically available in the 1971 publication of Martin Krause and Pahor Labib,[36] or before his own death in 1982, and one wonders what he would have made of the only hitherto unknown Hermetic treatise in the Nag Hammadi Codices, the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* (NHC VI,*6*), which is of great importance for our current conception of Hermetism.

The most important contribution to our stated topic before the publication of the Nag Hammadi treatises was arguably an article of Philippe Derchain, in which he reasserted the authenticity of the Egyptian inspiration behind the Corpus Hermeticum.[37] However, he did not treat the Sitz im Leben of the Hermetica as such, but rather discussed some motifs for which he can find

32 FR 1:296–308.

33 FR 3:2.

34 Jean Doresse and Togo Mina, "Nouveaux textes gnostiques coptes découverts en haute-Égypte: La bibliotheque de Chenoboskion," *VC* 3 (1949): 129–41 at 137. Doresse wrongly identifies the *Authoritative Teaching* (NHC VI,*3*) and *Concept of Our Great Power* (NHC VI,*4*) as Hermetic. He does not seem to consider the Plato fragment (NHC VI,*5*: not yet identified as such) and the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (NHC VI,*7*) as independent texts.

35 FR 1:427.

36 Martin Krause and Pahor Labib, *Gnostische und hermetischen Schriften aus Codex II und Codex VI* (Glückstad: J.J. Augustin, 1971). See also Martin Krause, "Ägyptisches Gedankengut in der Apocalypse des Asclepius," in *XVII. Deutscher Orientalistentag, vom 21. bis 27. Juli 1968 in Würzburg, Vorträge, Teil I* (ed. Wolfgang Voigt; ZDMG Suppl. 1; Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1969), 48–57.

37 Philippe Derchain, "Sur l'authenticité de l'inspiration égyptienne dans le *Corpus Hermeticum*," *RHR* 161 (1962): 174–98.

Egyptian parallels, namely the theory of royalty, the demiurgic function of the sun, the theory of living statues, and the general theory of rituals.[38]

Jean-Pierre Mahé's two-volume edition of the Nag Hammadi Hermetica marks a new stage in the direction of Hermetic studies.[39] Mahé had realized the importance of the new treatise, the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* (NHC VI,*6*), for the discussion of Hermetic rituals and communities, as well as the degree of Egyptian influence on Hermetism. Furthermore, Mahé provided an edition of the Armenian translation of a Hermetic collection of aphorisms, *The Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius*, the Greek original of which he postulated to date from the first century CE, or perhaps the first century BCE.[40] Greek fragments of this same text was later discovered in the Bodleian library,[41] together with some other Hermetic excerpts.[42] The Hermetic collection of aphorisms enabled Mahé to offer the hypothesis that the Hermetic treatises had developed as elaborations on such aphorisms, by demonstrating that many of the sayings were repeated verbatim in Hermetic treatises, such as the *Poimandres*.[43] Chronologically, the collections of sayings must therefore be prior to the treatises, though sayings were not supplanted by treatises, but continued to play a role in Hermetic spiritual formation.

Mahé also demonstrated parallels between the Hermetic sayings and the sayings from Egyptian sapiential literature,[44] the Egyptian origins of the prediction of the twilight of the gods in the *Perfect Discourse*,[45] and the Egyptian influences on the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth*.[46] Yet Mahé avoids the

38 Ibid., 183.

39 HHE. Besides the edition of Krause and Labib, Mahé was also preceded by an English edition of *Disc.8–9*: Lewis S. Keizer, *The Eighth reveals the Ninth: A New Hermetic Initiation Discourse* (MS 1; Seaside, Calif.: Academy of Arts & Humanities, 1974).

40 HHE 2:278. For an English introduction and translation, cf. Jean-Pierre Mahé, "The Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius," in *The Way of Hermes* (ed. Clement Salaman; London: Duckworth, 1999), 99–122.

41 Joseph Paramelle and Jean-Pierre Mahé, "Nouveaux parallèles grecs aux Définitions hermétiques arméniennes," *REA* 22 (1990–1991): 115–34.

42 Joseph Paramelle and Jean-Pierre Mahé, "Extraits hermétiques inédits d'un manuscrit d'Oxford," *REG* 104 (1991): 108–39.

43 HHE 2:416–36. Fowden (*The Egyptian Hermes*, 69–74) dismissed the theory as a "grand Darwinian design," but in my view misrepresents Mahé, who briefly answered the critique in "La voie hermétique," 367 n. 20, 368 n. 30.

44 HHE 2:278–308.

45 HHE 2:68–113.

46 HHE 1:33–38.

charges of Egyptomania by readily admitting Greek and Jewish influences.[47] The Hermetism portrayed by Mahé is largely a literary phenomenon. The aphorisms, he claimed, belong largely in a school context, though they were also used by a "Gnostic" group, a *Poimandresgemeinde*, that practiced the "sacraments" reflected in CH I, XIII, and *Disc.8–9*:

> Rien n'empêche donc, comme le veut R. Reitzenstein, qu'il ait existé une *Poimandresgemeinde*, dont les croyances et les pratiques se révèlent d'une façon assez cohérente à travers *CH I* (*Poimandrès*) et les deux autres textes [CH XIII; *Disc.8*–9] qui lui sont apparentés. Seulement il faut se garder de croire que ce fut là l'essence de l'hermétisme. Le seul point commun entre les trois écrits hermétiques de cette secte et l'ensemble des enseignement philosophiques d'Hermès que nous connaissons par ailleurs, c'est le commentaire des sentences de Trismégiste, dont la tradition préexiste à la formation de la *Poimandresgemeinde* et perdure vraisemblablement en dehors d'elle, suivant des traditions qui n'ont rien de gnostique.[48]

At the time he wrote this, Mahé considered the Gnostic *Poimandresgemeinde* to be behind the dualistic, pessimistic initiatory treatises, while the monistic, optimistic treatises were scholastic and probably not related to this group, as Festugière had claimed earlier. Later, however, Mahé came to consider the monistic treatises as the earliest stage of the way of immortality, where the disciple would initially be taught that the material world was good, so as to ease him or her into a more spiritual life. As the disciples progressed they would become stronger and have less and less use for the material world, and at that stage of spiritual maturity they would be instructed to despise the body and the material world, focusing exclusively on the spiritual existence.[49] The group that practiced this way of spiritual formation was still considered by Mahé to be Gnostic.

The progress from monism to dualism in the Way of Hermes was also upheld by Garth Fowden, in his *The Egyptian Hermes*, first published in 1986. If Mahé's approach had been largely literary, Fowden concentrated more on socio-intellectual context than on the Hermetic treatises themselves. Fowden tried to surpass the essentializing dichotomy between what is "authentically Egyptian" and "authentically Greek," and instead described "modes of cultural

47 HHE 2:445–48.

48 HHE 2:442–45 at 444.

49 Mahé, "La voie d'immortalité."

interaction" in Greco-Roman Egypt.[50] It was in such a mixed milieu, he proposed, that the followers of the way of Hermes progressed from monistic *epistēmē* to dualistic *gnōsis*,[51] in groups resembling the Gnostics: "small, informal circles of the literate but not (usually) learned gathered round a holy teacher and given up to study, asceticism and pious fellowship."[52] Egyptian priests may have been involved with such groups, though Fowden remained tentative on this point:

> We quite often encounter representatives of the native clergy teaching grammar or philosophy in late antique Alexandria. Such men will naturally have been well disposed towards a doctrine which associated the traditions of Egypt and the magical and astrological interests of its temple-dwellers with the fashionable Platonism of the age; and we may easily imagine them among the audience and perhaps even the authors of the Hermetic books.

To some degree Fowden thus rehabilitated the old hypothesis of Reitzenstein, though with a question mark instead of Reitzenstein's exclamation point. The works of Mahé and Fowden may be said to have altered the scholarly consensus, and none of the major subsequent contributions to the field of Hermetism have seriously challenged their hypothesis of a way of Hermes.[53]

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50 Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 13–74.

51 Ibid., 75–153 at 102–3.

52 Ibid., 193. Fowden's view of the Gnostics (ibid., 191) is based on Hans G. Kippenberg, "Versuch einer soziologischen Verortung des antiken Gnostizismus," *Numen* 17 (1970): 211–31.

53 Significant publications after Mahé and Fowden include Erik Iversen, *Egyptian and Hermetic Doctrine* (OPGSMT 27; Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1984); Jörg Büchli, *Der Poimandres: Ein paganisiertes Evangelium* (WUNT 2/27; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987); Thomas McAllister Scott, "Egyptian Elements in Hermetic Literature," (Th.D. diss., Harvard University, 1987); Jens Holzhausen, *Der "Mythos vom Menschen" im hellenistischen Ägypten. Eine Studie zum "Poimandres" (CH I) zu Valentin und dem gnostischen Mythos* (Theophaneia 33; Bodenheim: Hain, 1993); Carsten Colpe and Jens Holzhausen, *Das Corpus Hermeticum deutsch* (2 vols.; Stuttgart: Frommann Holzboog, 1997); Gebhard Löhr, *Verherrlichung Gottes durch Philosophie: Der hermetische Traktat II im Rahmen der antiken Philosophie- und Religionsgeschichte* (WUNT 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Gnosis and Hermeticism: From Antiquity to Modern Times* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Roelof van den Broek, Gilles Quispel and Cis van Heertum (eds.), *From Poimandres to Jacob Böhme: Gnosis, Hermetism and the Christian Tradition* (Pimander 4; Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 2000); Alberto Camplani, *Scritti ermetici in copto* (Brescia:

1.2 The Aim of the Present Contribution

I will in the present contribution affirm the tentative suggestion of Fowden, that Egyptian priests may have been the authors of the Hermetica, or at least of a core group of Hermetica. This is in my view made likely by the key testimony of Iamblichus of Chalcis, the Neoplatonic philosopher.[54] When Porphyry wrote an attack on Egyptian ritual practices addressed to one Anebo, otherwise unfamiliar to us, Iamblichus wrote a response under the *nom de plume* Abammon, an Egyptian prophet, that is, high priest (Gr. προφήτης = Eg. *ḥm-nṯr*).[55] This lengthy treatise opens with the following words:

Paideia, 2000); Andreas Löw, *Hermes Trismegistos als Zeuge der Wahrheit: Die christliche Hermetikrezeption von Athenagoras bis Laktanz* (Theophaneia 36; Berlin: Philo, 2002); Jonathan Peste, "The Poimandres Group in Corpus Hermeticum: Myth, Mysticism and Gnosis in Late Antiquity," (Ph.D. diss., University of Göteborg, 2002); Tage Petersen, "'Alt kommer jo på øjet an, der ser," (Ph.D. diss., Copenhagen University, 2003); J. Peter Södergård, *The Hermetic Piety of the Mind: A Semiotic and Cognitive Study of the Discourse of Hermes Trismegistus* (CB 41; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003); van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*.

54 John M. Dillon, "Iamblichus of Chalcis (c. 240–325 AD)," *ANRW* 36.2:862–909 at 863–75; Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell, *Iamblichus: On the Mysteries* (WGRW 4; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), xviii–xxvi.

55 Iamblichus, *The Response of Abammon*; this work is usually referred to as *De mysteriis*, but this is the title given to it by Marsilio Ficino, the fifteenth century humanist. I have for convenience's sake followed the convention of abbreviating the title as "*Myst.*" Philippe Derchain, "Pseudo-jamblique ou Abammon? Quelques observations sur l'égyptianisme du *De mysteriis*," *CdÉ* 38 (1963): 220–26, argues that Abammon was likely an Egyptian priest and not a pseudonym of Iamblichus, since the theogony he presents is authentically Egyptian. He is followed by David Klotz, *Caesar in the City of Amun: Egyptian Temple Construction and Theology in Roman Thebes* (MRÉ 15; Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 403 n. 1. However, there is nothing that prevents the assumption that Iamblichus may have been familiar with the Theban theogony, and I tentatively accept the authorship of Iamblichus, which is vouchsafed by Proclus. An explanation of why Porphyry and Iamblichus use the Egyptian names Anebo and Abammon in their letters is offered by Michèle Broze and Carine van Liefferinge, "L'*Hermès commun* du prophète Abamon. Philosophie grecque et théologie égyptienne dans le prologue du *De mysteriis* de Jamblique," in *Religions méditerranéennes et orientales de l'Antiquité. Actes du colloque des 23–24 avril 1999 à Besançon* (ed. Françoise Labrique; BdE 135; Cairo: IFAO, 2002), 35–44; Alain P. Segonds and Henri D. Saffrey, *Jamblique: Réponse à Porphyre* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2012), lxi–lxxii; id., *Porphyre: Lettre à Anébon l'Égyptien* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2012), xix–xxxix.

θεὸς ὁ τῶν λόγων ἡγεμών, Ἑρμῆς, πάλαι δέδοκται καλῶς ἅπασι τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν εἶναι κοινός· ὁ δὲ τῆς περὶ θεῶν ἀληθινῆς ἐπιστήμης προεστηκὼς εἷς ἐστιν ὁ αὐτὸς ἐν ὅλοις· ᾧ δὴ καὶ οἱ ἡμέτεροι πρόγονοι τὰ αὑτῶν τῆς σοφίας εὑρήματα ἀνετίθεσαν, Ἑρμοῦ πάντα τὰ οἰκεῖα συγγράμματα ἐπονομάζοντες.

Hermes, the god who presides over rational discourse, has long been considered, quite rightly, to be the common patron of all priests; he who presides over true knowledge about the gods is one and the same always and everywhere. It is to him that our ancestors in particular dedicated the discoveries of their wisdom, attributing all their own writings to Hermes.[56]

Hermes was indeed commonly considered to be the god of rational discourse, logos, among the Greeks, but Iamblichus in addition claims that all the ancestors of Abammon, that is, all the ancient Egyptian priests, dedicated all the discoveries they made and attributed all their writings to him. This corresponds well to Thoth's role as "lord of divine words" and inventor of script, language, and literature in Egyptian theologies.[57] Iamblichus speaks here of ancient Egyptian books, and not the Greek Hermetica, but later he also claims that Hermes is responsible for Egyptian books written in the idiom of Greek philosophy: "Those documents, after all, which circulate under the name of Hermes contain Hermetic doctrines (ἑρμαϊκὰς δόξας), even if they often employ the terminology of the philosophers; for they were translated from the Egyptian tongue by men not unversed in philosophy."[58] Iamblichus seems to counter an accusation of Porphyry, that the use of Greek philosophical terms disproves the alleged high antiquity and Egyptian provenance of the Hermetic treatises, by saying that this is due to the priestly translators' familiarity with Greek philosophy.

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56 Iamb., *Myst.* 1.1. Trans. Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell, slightly modified. Cf. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 136.

57 Patrick Boylan, *Thoth the Hermes of Egypt: A Study of Some Aspects of Theological Thought in Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), 92–106; Georges Nagel, "Le dieu Thot d'après les textes égyptiens," *Eranos* 9 (1942): 108–40 at 127–30; Jaroslav Černý, "Thoth as Creator of Languages," *JEA* 34 (1948): 121–22; Jan Assmann, "La théorie de la 'parole divine' (*mdw nṯr*) chez Jamblique et dans les sources égyptiennes," in *Images et rites de la mort dans l'Égypte ancienne: L'apport des liturgies funéraires* (Paris: Cybele, 2000), 107–27.

58 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.4: τὰ μὲν γὰρ φερόμενα ὡς Ἑρμοῦ ἑρμαϊκὰς περιέχει δόξας, εἰ καὶ τῇ τῶν φιλοσόφων γλώττῃ πολλάκις χρῆται· μεταγέγραπται γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς αἰγυπτίας γλώττης ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν φιλοσοφίας οὐκ ἀπείρως ἐχόντων. Trans. Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell. Cf. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 137.

We can distinguish between two assertions made in this response: 1) The books are "Hermetic," meaning that they derive from the Egyptian Hermes himself, or were written by priests inspired by Hermes, and then attributed to him; 2) the books of Hermes were translated into Greek by priests conversant with Greek philosophy.[59] Even though we can discount the claim that the Hermetic books were translated from Egyptian, a claim that is also found in the Hermetica (CH XVI, 1; *Disc.8–9* [NHC VI 61,18–20]), the assertion that they were written by priests conversant with Greek philosophy, and then attributed to Hermes, is not historically unlikely. Iamblichus must have had access to Greek literature on the doctrines of the Egyptian priesthoods, and indeed he cites Manetho and Chaeremon, two Egyptian priests writing in respectively the third century BCE and the first century CE, to whom we will return. Fowden rightly states that in addition to these, Iamblichus must have read Hermetic books that he thought had been translated from Egyptian: "Iamblichus may have been mistaken in his belief that the Hermetica had been written by ancient Egyptian priests; but both that belief, and the fact that he himself saw fit to expound the doctrines of Hermes in the guise of a *prophētēs*, are indicative of what seemed probable and reasonable in late antiquity."[60] But there is no reason to assume that Iamblichus was mistaken in believing that Egyptian priests were behind the Hermetica; we shall see below that the Hermetic teaching he recounts is in line with the Egyptian theology of Thebes.[61] Furthermore, the Roman geographer Strabo, around the turn of the Common Era, confirms that the Egyptian priests in Thebes were considered astronomers and philosophers, and that "they attribute to Hermes all wisdom of this particular kind."[62]

In order to demonstrate the hypothesis that the Hermetica were authored by Egyptian priests, I will divide my analysis into three main parts. In the first part, I will consider the myths of Hermes Trismegistus, first from external attestations and then from within the Hermetica. The reason for this focus is the assumption that adherence to a certain set of myths will disclose something about the self-image of the authors using those myths.

The second part will concern the rituals and spiritual exercises of the way of Hermes. I will here question the thesis of both Mahé and Fowden, that there

59 Although in the passage cited Iamblichus only mentions "men" (ἀνδρῶν) versed in philosophy, it clearly transpires from other passages that priests are intended; cf. ibid. 1.1, 8.1.

60 Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 136–37, 168.

61 See below, chap. 3.6.

62 Strab., *Geo.* 17.1.46: λέγονται δὲ καὶ ἀστρονόμοι καὶ φιλόσοφοι μάλιστα οἱ ἐνταῦθα ἱερεῖς· … ἀνατιθέασι δὲ τῷ Ἑρμῇ πᾶσαν τὴν τοιαύτην μάλιστα σοφίαν. Trans. Horace L. Jones, *The Geography of Strabo VIII* (LCL 267; London: William Heinemann, 1932; rev. ed. 1949).

is a progression from monism to dualism in the way of Hermes. I will argue instead that the progress goes in the opposite direction: at the early stage the disciple is asked to alienate himself from his body and from the physical world, in order to free his soul from the bodily passions.[63] Only then will he be able to undergo the initiatory rite of rebirth, after which he is once again reintegrated with the world and goes on to praise the creator god. The teachings at the early stage may thus be described as pedagogical dualism, which will eventually give way to a monistic teaching of the one god who is all.

In the third and last part I will contextualize the myths and rites of Hermes, in order to arrive at a plausible Sitz im Leben for the Hermetic treatises. The texts will successively be considered in light of philosophy, magic, and traditional Egyptian cult. The intention is to demonstrate that all of these contexts point in the direction of a priestly milieu at the heart of Hermetism. Before turning to this analysis, however, some theoretical assumptions that form the basis of the three main parts of the monograph should be considered.

1.3 Theoretical Considerations

1.3.1 *Hermetic Myths: Hermes as Model Author and Figure of Memory*

The authorial attribution to Hermes Trismegistus is one of the most important common features in the variety of texts called Hermetic, even if some of the texts are ascribed to his disciples, who then make due reference to their teacher (CH XVI–XVIII; SH XXIII–SH XXVII). My assumption is that authorial ascription to this figure is not a superficial varnish, lending an exotic aura to the treatise; rather, the name of the author provides legitimacy, connects the treatise to other treatises of the same author, and informs how the text is read. This discursive importance of authorship has been emphasized by Michel Foucault, who wrote:

> Hermes Trismegistus did not exist, nor did Hippocrates—in the sense that Balzac existed—but the fact that several texts have been placed under the same name indicates that there has been established among them a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, authentification of some texts by the use of others, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilization. The author's name serves to characterize a certain mode of being of

63 Shortly after the appearance of my dissertation, Zlatko Pleše, "Dualism in the Hermetic Writings," *Chora* h.-s. (2015): 261–78, argued individually that the main tendency of the Hermetica is that the tension of dualism is resolved into monism.

> discourse: the fact that the discourse has an author's name, that one can say "this was written by so-and-so" or "so-and-so is its author", shows that this discourse is not ordinary everyday speech that merely comes and goes, not something that is immediately consumable. On the contrary, it is a speech that must be received in a certain mode and that, in a given culture, must receive a certain status.[64]

Even though Hermes Trismegistus did not exist historically, his name creates a certain relationship between the treatises ascribed to him, and his prestige demands that the texts should be read with a certain reverence. In Foucault's *L'Archéologie du savoir*, authorship is treated as a classifying principle, or a "principle of rarefaction," within a particular discursive formation, that is to say that it sets certain parameters for which statements it is possible to utter "within the true" of the discourse. In other words, the authorial attribution to Hermes places certain limits on what the actual author can meaningfully write, and creates certain expectations and presuppositions in the reader who picks up the work. The text must "be received in a certain mode and … in a given culture, must receive a certain status." The Hermetica lay claim to a quite elevated status, namely as primordial Egyptian wisdom first spoken by the divine sage Hermes himself, inspired by revelations of the transcendent One God. We can assume that the proper mode to receive the Hermetic message would be the way that the disciples of Hermes are described as behaving in the treatises, that is, in a state of expectant contemplation and unquestioning trust. This is the mode of revelatory dialogues, in contrast to Socratic dialogues where the reader or listener is invited to question the assertions of the teacher.[65]

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64 Michel Foucault, "What is an author?" in *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (ed. Robert C. Davis and Ronald Scheifer; 3d ed.; New York: Longman, 1994), 262–75. The passage is also quoted by Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 96; Södergård, *The Hermetic Piety of Mind*, 12f. Cf. also Michel Foucault, "L'ordre du discours," translated in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith; New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 215–38 at 221: "Not, of course, the author in the sense of the individual who delivered the speech or wrote the text in question, but the author as the unifying principle in a particular group of writings or statements, lying at the origins of their significance, as the seat of their coherence."

65 Cf. Einar Thomassen, "Revelation as Book and Book as Revelation: Reflections on the *Gospel of Truth*," in *The Nag Hammadi Texts in the History of Religions: Proceedings of the International Conference at the Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters in Copenhagen, September 19–24, 1995, on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Nag Hammadi Discovery* (ed. Søren Giversen, Tage Petersen, and Jørgen Podemann Sørensen; HFS 26; Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2002), 35–45.

But the imperative that the discourse *must* be received in a certain way in a given culture, in this case the Greek-speaking world and in particular Egypt, does not necessarily mean that it *was* received as such. Even though the Church Fathers who read the Hermetica accepted their claim to represent age-old Egyptian wisdom, they subordinated them to the sacred scriptures, and could have critical objections with regards to the idolatry espoused in some of the texts.[66]

The distinction that Iamblichus is making, between Hermes as author and Egyptian priests as the actual writers, could well be elucidated by Umberto Eco's literary theory of the model author as opposed to the empirical author.[67] The model author, according to Eco, is a textual strategy, emerging from the text itself, whereas Eco argues for the relative unimportance of the empirical author for the meaning of the text. For historical analysis, however, the empirical authors of the Hermetica are far from unimportant, and if we take Iamblichus' statement at face value, we are told that the empirical authors are Egyptian priests, writing as their model author, the god of writing and speech himself, Hermes-Thoth. The model author of Eco functions in a similar way as the Foucauldian author, as a principle of coherence and unity, even though Eco largely doesn't relate to Foucault, whose analysis he considers post-modern.[68] Closely connected to the concept of model author is the model reader, who is also distinct from an empirical reader. Shortly put, the model reader is also a textual strategy and according to Eco constitutes the meaning of the text.[69] That is, the meaning emerges when a text is read in the manner it demands from its reader. All other readings constitute uses of the text to the reader's own purposes.[70] Thus, an empirical reader of the Hermetica would no doubt constitute a model reader if he or she identifies with the disciple of Hermes, trying to grasp the essentials of his teaching.

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66 Cf. Claudio Moreschini, *Hermes Christianus* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

67 Cf. Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Advances in Semiotics; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 7–11; id., *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 8–10. In fact, Eco does not introduce the term Model Author in the former work, only the Model Reader, while his use of "author" refers only to "textual strategy" (ibidem).

68 Umberto Eco, *Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 46.

69 The concept is similar the "implied reader" (impliziter Leser), who is described as a structure inscribed in the texts by Wolfgang Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens: Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung* (München: Fink, 1976), 60.

70 Umberto Eco et al., *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (ed. Stefan Collini; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 45–66.

Hermes Trismegistus as a model author evoked for all his readers in antiquity the wisdom of Egypt, but this was not so much the real Egypt of farmers tilling the earth when the Nile recedes as an imaginary Egypt, the dwelling place of the gods and the temple of the world (*Ascl.* 24). This Egypt exercised a particular allure on the Greeks and the Romans, which have persisted in some form until the present day as what the Egyptologist Erik Hornung refers to as "Egyptosophy," the idea that the Egyptians possessed the wisdom of the gods.[71] This myth of Egypt is a particular memory that was cultivated, and we can consider Hermes Trismegistus and his myths as an important part of this memory.

The pioneer in modern memory studies was Maurice Halbwachs, who emphasized the social dimension as a *sine qua non* of memory: "Collective frameworks are … the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society."[72] Collective memory is not a given, then, but must be reconstructed continuously and is thus subject to the whims and interests of the society which reconstructs it. This perspective is interesting for our Hermetic texts, written in Roman Egypt in a time of massive changes, where the attitude of the subjected Egyptians has been characterized as one of alternately "assimilation and resistance."[73] The situation is poignantly expressed in Hermes' prediction of the end-times in the *Perfect Discourse*, where foreign invasion and decline in temple cult are lamented: "On that day, the land that is more religious than all lands shall become irreverent. It will no longer be full of temples, but it will be full of tombs; nor will it be full of gods, but of corpses. O Egypt! Egypt, ⟨your religion⟩ will become like myths, and your divinities will not be believed in."[74] The end of temple worship is thus conceived of as the

71 Erik Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West* (trans. David Lorton; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1, 3, 80, cf. 48–54 on Hermetism. Cf. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 13–21; Peter Ucko and Timothy Champion (eds.), *The Wisdom of Egypt: Changing Visions Through the Ages* (London: UCL Press, 2003); Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); id., *Weisheit und Mysterium: Das Bild der Griechen von Ägypten* (München: C.H. Beck, 2000).

72 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (trans. Lewis A. Coser; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 40; partial translation of *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: Libraire Alcan, 1925; repr. Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1994).

73 David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roan Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998).

74 NHC VI 70,30–71,1: ⲛ̄ϥⲟⲟⲩ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲧⲭⲱⲣⲁ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲙ̄ⲛⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡⲁⲣⲁ ⲛ̄ⲭⲱⲣⲁ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲥⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲥⲉ ⲛ̄ⲁⲥⲉⲃⲏⲥ· ⲟⲩⲕⲉⲧⲓ ⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩϩ ⲛ̄ⲣ̄ⲡⲉ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩϩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲫⲟⲥ· ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩϩ ⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ϩⲉⲛⲕⲱⲱⲥ· ⲱ ⲕⲏⲙⲉ ⲕⲏⲙⲉ ⟨ⲛⲉⲕⲏⲛ̄ⲧⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ⟩ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓϣⲃⲱⲱⲥ·

demise of living memory, which will only survive as faint fables. The role of the land and the temples brings to mind Halbwach's conception of mnemotopes, places that anchor memory.[75] In our Hermetic passage, we see that shrines and temples are the places that constitute the sacredness of Egypt, and once they cease to function it becomes full of tombs and corpses.

Beside geographical locations, however, *lieux de mémoire* can also consist of persons, memorial days, texts or actions. Paraphrasing Pierre Nora, Astrid Erll writes: "Paris, Versailles, and the Eiffel Tower are sites of memory, but so are Joan of Arc, the French flag, July 14, the Marseillaise, and Descartes's *Discours de la méthode*."[76] Thoth, reconceptualised as Hermes Trismegistus in the Hellenistic era, is then certainly such a *lieu de mémoire*, both for Egypt—and in particular the cities whose tutelary god he is—and of course for Hermetism. Thoth is omnipresent in Egyptian priestly literature, appearing in popular tales, such as the Setne Khamwas cycle, in ritual texts, in temple decorations, and on amulets. He was the patron deity for magicians, scribes, and ritual experts in general, and as vizier of Osiris and Horus he was closely connected to royal ideology. He is what the Egyptologist and cultural theorist Jan Assmann calls a "figure of memory," without historical existence but with a particular life of his own through the commemorations of him through time.[77]

Jan and Aleida Assmann are two of the main figures within the field of cultural memory, a modification of Halbwachs' collective memory, emphasizing

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ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲉⲕⲑⲉⲓⲟⲛ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲛ̄[ϩⲟ]ⲩⲧⲟⲩ ⲁ̣[ⲛ] = *Ascl.* 24: *tunc terra ista sanctissima, sedes delubrorum atque templorum, sepulcrorum erit mortuorumque plenissima. O Aegypte, Aegypte, religionum tuarum solae supererunt fabulae, eaque incredibiles posteris tuis*. My trans. Greek and Latin text in HHE 2:173–75. Throughout I follow Mahé's edition of the Coptic Hermetica.

75 Halbwachs explored how places in the holy land were identified with locations mentioned in the Bible by crusaders. Even though many of these identifications have later been deemed false or unlikely by historical research, they have remained sacred for believers, demonstrating both how easily places can be appropriated as mnemotopes and how tenacious they are once thus designated. Cf. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 191–235; translation of the conclusion of *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en terre sainte: Étude de mémoire collective* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1941). See also Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French past* (ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman; trans. Arthur Goldhammer; 3 vols.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1996–1998).

76 Astrid Erll, "Regional integration and (trans)cultural memory," *AEJ* 8 (2010): 308–15 at 310.

77 Cf. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*. Assmann treats Moses as a figure of cultural memory, and traces "the Moses-discourse" through the centuries. In fact, the Moses-discourse is related to the Hermes-discourse, because in some pro-Egyptian versions of it Moses is seen as Hermes' pupil or master, or is even directly identified with Hermes.

commemoration through cultural artifacts.[78] Here, cultural memory is differentiated from communicative memory, where the former is formalized and objectified in monuments, doctrines, and festal days, whereas the latter is closer to Halbwachs' conception, for everyday use, although both forms of memory inform each other.[79]

Thoth-Hermes is, then, primarily a figure of cultural, not communicative everyday memory. Assmann's figures of memory are conceived as the fixed points of cultural memory, "fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)."[80] Assmann also claims that groups and societies derive their cohesion from identifying themselves with their store of cultural memories, which constitutes its horizon of reflexivity; how it views itself and in turn is viewed by others. Furthermore, societies with complex stores of cultural memory tend to develop institutions responsible for cultivating it, transmitting, interpreting, and mediating the knowledge that achieves status as valuable within the system. Thus, adhesion to the myth of Hermes Trismegistus, as a figure of memory, tends to point towards group formation, though it does not prove it. When we move on to Hermetic practices, which indeed presupposes some sort of group formation, we will consider the concept of "tradition," which is a specific form of memory maintenance.

1.3.2 *The Tradition of Hermes*

The notion of tradition is important in order to approach the connection between memory and ritual. In the second part of this monograph, we will consider the propagation of Hermetic teachings and rituals in what is explicitly referred to as a tradition, a "handing over" (παράδοσις; CH XIII, 22), which presupposes a social formation. The concept of tradition has been the subject of many cultural theories, some of which we will consider below.

It has not been uncommon to see the concept of tradition as the opposite of enlightenment or science, as the stagnant dead weight to be overcome by progressive thinking. Something similar can even be found in the New Testament, where Jesus opposes the word of God to the tradition of the elders (Mt 15:2–6). However, Karl Popper pointed out in his 1949 essay, "Towards a Rational Theory of Tradition," that even anti-traditional thinkers rely on a tradition of their own,

78 See Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: C.H. Beck, 1992).

79 Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *NGC* 65 (1995): 125–33.

80 Ibid., 129.

since nobody can begin from a tabula rasa.[81] Popper's conception of tradition is quite wide, in effect comprising everything that constitutes a given in society, such as wearing one's watch on the left wrist. Such a wide concept is not very useful, and later theorists have distinguished between custom and tradition, where the latter can be said to be a memory or custom which has become historically self-aware and given normative value.[82] The very word tradition, from Latin *traditio*, is rooted in Roman inheritance law,[83] designating what is to be handed down from parents to children. In current parlance too, tradition is often associated with "cultural inheritance," often used with vague points of reference to something precious but intangible, that allegedly constitutes the very identity of the group within which it is handed over.[84] The perceived departure of western society from tradition is not infrequently associated with nostalgia and a sense of loss.[85]

In Halbwachs' framework, tradition is used to denote that sense of continuity which Foucault opposes; tradition is ideas or practices handed over from the past and remembered collectively in the present.[86] It is opposed to individual thought and lived memory, and in religious contexts it is associated with dogmas.[87] Present concerns can compel innovations, which however tend to

81 Karl Popper, "Towards a Rational Theory of Tradition," in *RA* 66 (1949): 36–55, repr. in *Conjectures and Refutations* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 161–82. Cf. also Edward Shils, *Tradition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), who deals critically with the purported opposition tradition–reason.

82 Nora, *Realms of memory*, 2: ix; cf. Aleida Assmann, *Tid och tradition: Varaktighetens kulturella strategier* (trans. Peter Jackson; Nora: Nya Doxa, 1999), 96 (paraphrasing Gilbert Murray). Assmann sees communication as the transmission of a message through space, while tradition is the transmission of a message through time.

83 Peter Jackson, "Retracing the Path: Gesture, Memory, and the Exegesis of Tradition," *HR* 45 (2005): 1–28; Walter Magaß, "Tradition—Zur Herkunft eines rechtlichen und literarischen Begriffs," *Kairos* 24 (1982): 110–20.

84 Assmann, *Tid och tradition*, 114, claims that tradition is a cultural construction of identity focused on duration.

85 Cf. Gilbert Durand, *Science de l'homme et tradition: Le nouvel esprit anthropologique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1979), who advocates a return to tradition in the guise of a Hermetic philosophy.

86 Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, e.g., 178: "L'histoire ancienne des peuples, telle qu'elle vit dans leur traditions …"; 206: "Il connait Christ par la tradition; au moment où il pense au Christ, il se souvient."

87 Ibid., 208.

be reformulated in the framework of tradition.[88] Though not explicitly stated, it seems that tradition is treated as non-textual, or at least para-textual.[89]

The relationship between literary and oral transmission is highly significant for ritual traditions, where the correct understanding of authoritative texts is often secured through oral instructions. Robert Redfield's influential conception of great traditions and little traditions in complex societies assigns literacy to the former and oral transmission to the latter, though with a good deal of interaction between the two.[90] Jan Assmann describes how early literate cultures developed scribal institutional frameworks for the copying, circulation, and archiving of a "stream of tradition" (borrowing an expression of Leo Oppenheim), gradually leading to a "great tradition."[91] Some texts may not enter into tradition, and are thus not part of cultural memory, but their very medium permits them to be stored and rediscovered later, as opposed to oral lore which disappears altogether if it falls out of tradition; thus variation belongs to what Assmann calls "textual coherence," whereas repetition is the hallmark of "ritual coherence."[92] Although Hermetism is clearly a literate, educated, and somewhat sophisticated tradition, it is not a "great tradition" in the sense that it does not possess a cultural hegemony which it filters down to the illiterate masses. Hermetism was not a part of any official state ideology, although Thoth was an important deity in the royal ideology still perpetuated, though weakening, under the Roman emperors. If Egyptian priests wrote at least a core group of Hermetic treatises, then these priests would navigate between two great traditions: that of the Egyptian temples, and that of Greek philosophy. Their social position would be determined by the former tradition, while their upward social mobility would depend on their ability to navigate the latter tradition, which had become hegemonic.

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88 Ibid., 186.

89 E.g., 209: "Car, la tradition écartée (sur les points au moins où il innove), quels témoignages du passé lui reste-t-il, sinon les textes?"

90 Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

91 Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 92–93. Canon and tradition are the two subdivisions of cultural memory, where canon is that which is chosen from the stock of tradition to become normative, sacred, etc. (pp. 120–21).

92 Ibid., 103. The objectification of tradition as text made memorization unnecessary, created a new sense of history, and, according to Assmann, made it possible for individuals to put themselves outside of tradition, "the inherited conglomerate," so as to allow for innovations (pp. 99–100). However, sacred texts are integral to ritual coherence, and must not be changed.

We can conceptualize the Hermetic tradition better with reference to Jan Vansina's *Oral Tradition* (1965), which does not deal with Redfield's thesis at all, instead substituting a divide between official and private oral traditions.[93] Vansina counts another category, which can be either private or official, namely the esoteric tradition, which "is of necessity preserved and transmitted through the medium of institutions," and "while it may be widely known by outsiders, it can never be transmitted by them."[94] Unfortunately, Vansina does not go into much detail concerning this category of tradition, but it is nevertheless clearly the one to which Hermetism belongs. The Hermetic texts constantly emphasize that they are esoteric (e.g., CH XIII, 15, 22), meant only for insiders, despite the fact that they were read by outsiders at least by the second century CE. Consequently, the claim to represent an esoteric tradition is usually discounted as a pseudepigraphic trope in scholarly literature. However, it is a widely attested fact cross-culturally that esoteric groups may persist in their reticence to the uninitiated even if their teachings are widely known.[95] In order to preserve the image of retaining esoteric knowledge unavailable to outsiders, we find in the Hermetic treatises the motif that written texts are valid only as propaedeutic tools, while initiations to deeper levels of knowledge comes only by being led by a spiritual guide (e.g., CH VII, 2; *Disc.8–9*, 62,33–63,6). Edward Shils, in his book *Tradition* (1981), comments upon this function of orality:

> Its status as the only acceptable form of tradition for a text … is perhaps to be accounted for by reference to a requirement of secrecy and for

93 Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (trans. H.M. Wright; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 49–50, 78, 84–85, 129; cf. p. xi: Oral traditions are "all oral testimonies concerning the past which are transmitted from one person to another."

94 Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, 34. Cf. Paul Valliere, "Tradition," in *Encyclopedia of Religion* (2d ed.; ed. Lindsay Jones; 15 vols.; Detroit: Macmillan/Thomson Gale, 2005), 13:9267–81 at 9269 (oral vs. written tradition) and 9277–78 (esoteric tradition).

95 Mikael Rothstein, "Religiøse hemmeligheder i hellenistisk-romersk tid og i dag," in *Nye religioner i hellenistisk-romersk tid og i dag* (ed. Per Bilde and Mikael Rothstein; Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 1999), 82–108 at 95–102; Walter Burkert, "Der geheime Reiz des Verborgenen: Antike Mysterienkulte," in *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions* (ed. Hans G. Kippenberg and Guy G. Stroumsa; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 79–100 at 91; Cf. Christian H. Bull, "Hemmelig tekst: Fra nedgravde steintavler til bestselger i pocketformat," in *Religion i skrift* (ed. Lisbeth Mikaelsson and Ingvild S. Gilhus; Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2013), 171–83.

> hermetic retention except in the presence of qualified persons … The superiority of the mnemonic form of storage and of the oral mode of transmission was not derogated if the uninitiated read the sacred works; reading did not give them access to the right form of the sacred work under the right circumstances.[96]

Shils further defines a tradition as something which has exemplars or custodians, which is handed down, and which existed or is believed to have existed in the past by those who accept it.[97] Despite Foucault's aversion to the term "tradition," he describes something similar with his concept of a fellowship of discourse "whose function is to preserve or to reproduce discourse, but in order that it should circulate within a closed community, according to strict regulations, without those in possession being dispossessed by this very distribution."[98] Speaking of ancient Rhapsodists, he states: "Apprenticeship gained access both to a group and to a secret which recitation made manifest, but did not divulge."[99] In other words, secret transmission of discourse is formative for a closed community, where the ritual manifestation of the secret, or even its publication to outsiders, did not fully divest it of its status as secret, privileged knowledge.

Shil's point that a tradition must be believed to have existed in the past by those who accept it is worth dwelling on: the Hermetica were clearly believed to have existed in the ancient Egyptian past, although most of the treatises were probably written in the first centuries CE. The difference between an emic claim to possess an unchanging tradition and the scholarly etic description of the process of tradition should always be kept in mind.[100] The emic

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96 Shils, *Tradition*, 93; cf. Assmann, *Tid och tradition*, 134–35.

97 Ibid., 13.

98 Foucault, "The Discourse of Language," 225.

99 Ibid., 225–26.

100 Cf. Armin W. Geertz and Jeppe S. Jensen, "Tradition and Renewal in the Histories of Religions: Some Observations and Reflections," in *Religion, Tradition, and Renewal* (ed. Armin W. Geertz and Jeppe S. Jensen; Århus: Århus Universitetsforlag, 1991), 11–27 at 21; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "On the Construction of 'Esoteric Traditions,'" in *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion* (ed. Antoine Faivre and Wouter J. Hanegraaff; Gnostica 2; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 11–62 at 12f. The conflict between a projected atemporal order and the changing conditions of the real world is described as "the inner conflict of tradition" by Jan C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985). Here the emic claim of a universal and unchanging dharma is accepted as a reality recreated in Vedic sacrifice, in line with Eliade's phenomenology of a ritual *illo tempore*. Even though unchanging

claim could be described as *The Invention of Tradition*, to utilize the title of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's seminal anthology.[101] Several of the previously mentioned works on tradition had already pointed out that traditions are not static, but this anthology broke new ground by focusing on relatively modern inventions of traditions which contain only a patina of pastness. Hobsbawm saw tradition not so much as the *tradita*, that which is transmitted, as a set of practices "which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past." This puts tradition firmly within the grasp of ritual studies.[102] Several other scholars have critiqued the pejorative implication of Hobsbawm's term "invention," as implying fabrication and fraud, and prefer the more neutral "formation" or "construction" of tradition.[103] Catherine Bell follows Hobsbawm, but sees tradition as constructed—rather than invented—by ritual, and claims that the very power of ritual lies in the prestige of this tradition, and that the consensus of a shared past generates a group identity delineated from others.[104]

The past consented upon in the Hermetica is that of belonging to an exclusive chain of transmission, going back to when Hermes himself lived in Egypt. It is typical for religious traditions that the transmission of sacred knowledge is presented in two stages: first from a transcendent source, such as Poimandres, the mind of the sovereign power (CH I, 1), and then between human recipients down to the present day.[105] The first stage of transmission belongs to the realm

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atemporal order is inherent in the very word dharma, as historians of religion we should not accept this claim, but rather study the diachronic differences and continuities in the understandings of the concept.

101 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

102 Cf. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 118–24; Pascal Boyer, *Tradition as Truth and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 142–44; Michael Pye, "Religious Tradition and the Student of Religion," in Geertz and Jensen, *Religion, Tradition, and Renewal*, 29–36.

103 Marcel Sarot, "Counterfactuals and the Invention of Religious Traditions," in *Religious Identity and the Invention of Tradition: Papers read at a NOSTER conference in Soesterberg, January 4–6, 1999* (ed. Jan W. van Henten and Anton Houtepen; STAR 3; Assen: Royal van Gorcum, 2001), 21–40; Paul Post, "The Creation of Tradition: Rereading and Reading beyond Hobsbawm," ibidem, 41–59; id., "Rituals and the Function of the Past: Rereading Eric Hobsbawm," *JRitSt* 10 (1996): 85–107.

104 Ibid., 120–21.

105 James R. Lewis and Olav Hammer (eds.), *The Invention of Sacred Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2.

of religious truths, which cannot be evaluated historically, but the second stage is open to historical assessment, and can tell us to what degree there is any continuity with the past. Those scholars who emphasize the pseudepigraphal aspect of the Hermetica tend to see the evocation of Egyptian antiquities as a mere literary trope, designed to give an exotic flavor. However, Yael Zerubavel points out that "invented tradition can be successful only as long as it passes as tradition, with little or no concern about its relatively new origins. An awareness of its deliberate construction inevitably undermines its acceptance as tradition."[106]

Applying this logic to the case of Hermetism, we could say that if the texts were the literary artifacts of Greeks with philosophical pretensions, who used Egyptian motifs as a mere varnish on their brand of Platonism, as Festugière claimed, then we should speak of an invented tradition. If, on the other hand, we can trust the claims of the Hermetica, Iamblichus, and others, that the texts were written by Egyptian priests well versed in Greek philosophy, then we should rather speak of the reinvention or the reconstruction of a tradition. This latter view does not imply that we need to see the Hermetica as representing the perennial wisdom of the Pharaohs; rather, it indicates that important concerns, in Egypt under Roman imperial rule, dictated how the cultural memory of Egypt was recalled, or how the tradition was changed in the process of handing over, reception, and mediation. We should note that both options involve modifications of great traditions, in Redfield's terms. The great tradition of Greek philosophy had since its beginning been fascinated with barbarian wisdom, and according to some scholars were increasingly co-opted by it under the Empire, as witnessed by the influence of the Hermetica and the *Chaldean Oracles* among the Neoplatonists after Plotinus. Conversely, indigenous great traditions were also strongly influenced by Greek philosophy after the conquests of Alexander. Despite drastic changes, however, we should note that a reformed or reconstructed tradition might serve the same sociological and intellectual functions as before.[107] That is not to say that Hermetism replaced the priestly tradition of the Egyptian temples. Our hypothetical priestly authors would have been bilingual, educated in Egyptian priestly writings in the temples, and also in "secular" Greek grammar and culture.[108] Their literary

106 Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 232.

107 Geertz and Jensen, "Tradition and Renewal in the Histories of Religions," 22.

108 Compare the authors of the magical papyri in Greek and Demotic: "bilingual scribes who had been trained in Egyptian temple scriptoria and were equally conversant with Greek

output in Greek would enter into the discourse of Greek philosophy, although their appeal to ancient Egyptian tradition would serve to imbue the treatises with the authority of antiquity, a stratagem we saw was employed by Solon's priestly interlocutor in Plato's *Timaeus*, and again six hundred years later by Iamblichus, writing under the pseudonym of the prophet Abammon.

1.3.3 *The Term Hermetism*

In the third and final part of the monograph, we shall illuminate the social context of the way of Hermes, by relating Hermetism to philosophy, magic, and the Egyptian temples. It will be demonstrated that philosophy and magic are both used as terms of self-identification in Hermetism, and that both terms can be related to the idealized picture of the priests of the Egyptian temples. In this connection it might be appropriate to make a note on the term "Hermetism." As Kevin van Bladel has pointed out—à propos the Arabic Hermetica, but his point is also valid for the scholarship on the ancient Hermetica—the term Hermetism has been used in a bewildering array of ways.[109] Thus, for example, Claudio Moreschini in his recent book, *Hermes Christianus*, describes the Church Fathers' use of Hermetic literature as "Late Antique Christian Hermetism,"[110] and later refers to the fifteenth century humanist Ludovico Lazzarelli as a Hermetist, because of his enthusiasm for and elaboration of the Hermetic teachings.[111] However, we shall in the following agree with van Bladel in considering *Hermetism* to be a designation for the ritual tradition of the way of Hermes, a *Hermetist* is one who adheres to this ritual tradition, while the adjective *Hermetic* can be used in a looser sense, so that for example the Church Fathers can partake in the Hermetic discourse when they utilize the myths or teachings attributed to Hermes. Iamblichus also partakes in the Hermetic discourse when he uses books of Hermes in order to validate theurgy in the Neoplatonic school, though his alter ego Abammon seems to identify himself as a Hermetist. Indeed, Polymnia Athanassiadi has suggested

religion, mythology, philosophy, and literature," whose writings in Greek and Demotic were "marketed for different audiences." Raʿanan Boustan, Jacco Dieleman, and Joseph E. Sanzo, "Introduction: Authoritative Traditions and Ritual Power in the Ancient World," *ARG* 16 (2015): 3–9 at 4. Cf. below, chap. 8–9.

109 Kevin van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 17–22.

110 Moreschini, *Hermes Christianus*, chap. 2.

111 Ibid., 160.

that Iamblichus may have been initiated into Hermetism on a trip to Egypt.[112] Although this cannot be proven, it is not inherently unlikely, and it is possible that Iamblichus had a foot in many different cults and philosophical circles, a common phenomenon cross-culturally in what Colin Campbell refers to as the "cultic milieu."[113]

Another contemporary religious current, to which many earlier scholars have related Hermetism, is that which has been dubbed Gnosticism. Hermetism has indeed often been referred to as a form of "pagan Gnosticism."[114] The term "Gnosticism" has been much criticized in the last decades, and many scholars now follow Michael Williams and Karen King in discarding the term,[115] while others still see a use for it.[116] I will not enter into this debate here, only notice that while Hermetic texts may fruitfully be compared with texts usually designated Gnostic, there has been a tendency to make inferences regarding Hermetism based on highly uncertain presuppositions taken from the category "Gnosticism." One example, pointed out by Tage Petersen, is the postulate in scholarly literature of a Hermetic dualism, which has largely been inferred from the presupposition of a Gnostic dualism.[117] For this reason, I will largely avoid using "Gnosticism" as a comparandum.

Likewise, although the Jewish influence on some Hermetic texts has been demonstrated—though possibly exaggerated—by such prominent scholars as C.H. Dodd, Birger Pearson, and Marc Philonenko, mainly on the basis of resemblances to Septuagint motifs and language, we shall not enter into the question

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112 Polymnia Athanassiadi, *La lutte pour l'orthodoxie dans le platonisme tardif: De Numénius à Damascius* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2006), 162–66.

113 Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization," in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization* (ed. Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Lööw; Walnut Creek: Altamira, 2002), 12–25.

114 Cf. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 113–15.

115 Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003). Cf. Morton Smith, "The History of the Term Gnostikos," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism II: Sethian Gnosticism* (ed. Bentley Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 796–807.

116 E.g., David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

117 Petersen, "Alt kommer jo på øjet an, der ser," passim; id., "Hermetic Dualism? CH VI against the Background of Nag Hammadi Dualistic Gnosticism," in *The Nag Hammadi Texts in the History of Religions* (ed. Søren Giversen, Tage Petersen and Jørgen Podemann Sørensen; Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2002), 95–105.

of the relationship between Hermetism and Judaism presently.[118] Jewish influence, to the degree it can be detected, does not exclude the hypothesis that Egyptian priests were the authors, since several of the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri written by Egyptian priests also contain a host of Jewish sacred names, most prominently Iao and Sabaoth. By the time the Hermetica were authored, there was a long history of interaction and cohabitation with Judaism in Egypt.[119]

Finally, it may be pointed out that the term "Hermetism" can be traced back to the Greek adjective *hermaïkos*, which means "pertaining to Hermes." The adjective is most often used in astrology regarding the motions and influences of the planet Mercury, the Latin name for Hermes, but Iamblichus also uses it to describe Hermetism: he speaks of Hermetic doctrines (8.4: ἑρμαϊκαί δόξαι),

118 On the relationship between Hermetism and Judaism, cf. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks,* 97–248; Marc Philonenko, "Le Poimandres et la liturgie juive," in *Les syncrétismes dans les religions de l'Antiquité, Colloque de Besançon (22–23 octobre 1973)* (ed. Françoise Dunand and Pierre Lévêque; EPRO 46; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 204–11; id., "Une allusion de l'Asclépius au livre d'Henoch," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty* (ed. Jacob Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 161–63; id., "La plainte des âmes dans la Korē Kosmou," in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm, August 20–25, 1973* (ed. Geo Widengren and David Hellholm; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1977), 153–56; id., "Une utilization du Shema dans le Poimandrès," *RHPR* (1979): 369–72; id., "La Koré Kosmou et les 'Paraboles' d'Hénoch," in *Hellénismos: Quelques jalons pour une histoire de l'identité grecque. Actes du colloque de Strasbourg 25–27 octobre 1989* (ed. Suzanne Said; Leiden: Brill, 1991), 119–24; id., "L'*Hymnode secrete* du *Corpus Hermeticum* (13, 17) et le Cantique de Moïse (*Deutéronome* 33)," in *L'hymne antique et son public* (ed. Yves Lehmann; Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 291–99; id. "Hermétisme et Judaïsme: De la rubrique de la *Prière d'action de graces* aux banquets des thérapeutes," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi: Histoire des religions et approches contemporaines* (ed. Jean-Pierre Mahé, Paul-Hubert Poirier, and Madeleine Scopello; Paris: De Boccard, 2010), 11–22; Birger A. Pearson, "Jewish Elements in Corpus Hermeticum I," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (ed. Roelof van den Broek and Maarten J. Vermaseren; EPRO 91; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 336–48. An example of the exaggeration of Jewish influence can be found in Philonenko, "Hermétisme," where he claims that the reference to a "pure meal without blood" in the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (NHC VI,7) must be derived from the Therapeutae described by Philo (*Vita cont.*), who allegedly converted to Hermetism after the repression of Jews in Egypt after the revolt of 115–117 CE. Philonenko ignores that the Egyptian priest Chaeremon, around the same time as Philo, portrayed his own group as vegetarian ascetics who abstained from blood (fr. 11 van der Horst).

119 Joseph Mélèze-Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian* (trans. Robert Cornman; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

Hermetic systems (8.4: ἑρμαϊκά διατάξεις), Hermetic concepts (8.6: ἑρμαϊκά νοήματα), and Hermetic books (10.7: ἑρμαϊκαί βίβλοι).

To sum up: by the term "Hermetism" we speak of a social formation of people who gathered in order to practice the ritual tradition that they believed derived ultimately from Hermes Trismegistus, who had received divine revelations and become divine himself. This tradition they believed had been transmitted from ancient times by Egyptian priests, and it is likely that priests took an active part in the rituals of the groups, as we shall argue. Hermes Trismegistus was a figure of cultural memory whose myths made him the patron of Egyptian priests, wisdom, and magic. His name was used as the model author of the Hermetic treatises, and thus lent them legitimacy and provided a sense of internal cohesion among the texts.

PART 1

Who is Hermes Trismegistus?

Introduction to Part 1

In order to understand how Hermes Trismegistus worked as a model author in antiquity, how he was used as a textual strategy and, in Foucauldian terms, as a point of discursive cohesion, it is necessary to elucidate his status in the society in which the Hermetic texts were written. The commonly held view is that the philosophical Hermetica were written between the 2nd and 3rd century CE, but it is necessary to consider the prior evolution of the twice, and later thrice-great Egyptian Thoth to Hermes Trismegistus. A complete picture would involve going back to the earliest Egyptian records in the Old Kingdom, but for our purposes it will be sufficient to take as our point of departure the time shortly before the Macedonian conquest of Egypt. The Greeks knew of Thoth before this time and identified him with Hermes, as witnessed by Herodotus, but the distinguishing epithet "thrice greatest" seems not yet to be known to the Greeks. It has by now been conclusively proven that the epithet indeed has Egyptian origins. I do not pretend to have anything new to contribute to the Egyptological side of this debate, but since there have recently surfaced new important finds, I think it worthwhile to review the evidence for the early evolution of the epithet and to provide a survey of the various publications. In the following I will therefore first consider our earliest attestations of a thrice great(est) Thoth-Hermes in Egyptian and Greek sources. Considerable attention will be paid to a letter attributed to Manetho, since this provides an important testimony to the myth of the Egyptian Hermes. The second half of part one will concern itself with the myth of Hermes as it appears in the philosophical Hermetica, as well as in some external testimonies to the astrological Hermetica. This investigation will indicate that there were in fact philosophical Hermetica in circulation already at the turn of the common era.

CHAPTER 2

The Myth of Hermes Trismegistus

2.1 The Egyptian Pre-History of the Thrice-Greatest Thoth

We find mention of a twice great Thoth as early as the 26th dynasty (664–525 BCE),[1] and most famously in the trilingual Canopus decree in honor of Ptolemy IV (238 BCE).[2] In the Hibis temple from the time of Darius I (ca. 550–486 BCE) we find Thoth as "the twice great lord of Hermopolis, the great god," from which the way is short to thrice great.[3] The earliest mention of a thrice great Thoth found so far is in a hieroglyphic inscription of the Edfu temple, from the reign of Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204–181 BCE): "Thoth the great, great, great(est) lord of Hermopolis" (*Ḏḥwty ꜥꜥꜥ wr nb Ḫmnw*).[4] Later inscriptions on the same temple contain variants of the same epithet.[5] The last word for

1 George R. Hughes, "A Demotic Letter to Thoth," *JNES* 17 (1958): 8, referring to Henri Wild, *Antiquités égyptiennes de la collection du Dr. Widmer* (Lausanne: Musée cantonal des beaux-arts, 1956), pl IV. On the later stela of Nectanebo, cf. Jacques Parlebas, "L'origine égyptienne de l'appellation 'Hermès Trismégiste,'" *GM* 13 (1974): 25–28, referring to Günther Roeder, "Zwei hieroglyphische Inschriften aus Hermopolis," *ASAE* 52 (1952): 315–442 at 310–12. For an overview and bibliography on Thoth, cf. Christian Leitz, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen* (7 vols.; OLA 110–116; Leuven: Peeters, 2002–2003), 7:639ff.

2 Henri Gauthier and Henri Sottas, *Un décret trilingue en l'honneur de Ptolémée IV* (Cairo: IFAO, 1925), 72. For an overview of the epithets, cf. Jan Quaegebeur, "Thot-Hermès, le dieu le plus grand?" in *Hommages à François Daumas* (2 vols.; Montpellier: Publication de la recherché, 1986), 2:525–44. For epithets of Thoth relating to his functions as "counter of time", "intellectual-ritualist", and "functionary-scribe" in offering scenes of Late Egyptian temples, cf. Maria-Theresia Derchain-Urtel, *Thot à travers ses épithètes dans les scenes d'offrandes des temples d'époque gréco-romaine* (Rites égyptiens 3; Bruxelles: Fondations égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1981).

3 Dieter Kessler, "Hermopolitanische Götterformen im Hibis-Tempel," in *Es werde niedergelegt als Schriftstück: Festschrift für Hartwig Altenmüller zum 65. Geburtstag* (Hamburg: H. Buske, 2003), 211–23 at 217.

4 Emile Chassinat, *Le temple d'Edfou* (8 vols.; Cairo: IFAO, 1892–1933), 6:230. On Thoth and Hermopolis as *lieu de mémoire*, cf. Martin Stadler, *Weiser und Wesir. Studien zu Vorkommen, Rolle und Wesen des Gottes Thot im ägyptischen Totenbuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 66–115. Stadler has little to say on Thoth and Hermes Trismegistus (ibid., 34–35).

5 Chassinat, *Edfou*, 3:120 (Ptol. VII), 6:56 (Ptol. XI), 7:322 (Ptol. XI). Cf. Parlebas, "L'origine égyptienne," 25–26, for a survey. Parlebas also provides other elements pointing to the Hermopolitan origin of the epithet.

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"great" (*wr*) can also be interpreted as an adverb, transforming the two preceding adjectives (𓏛) into superlatives, thus "twice greatest." This would seem to be supported by a much later inscription from the temple of Esna, built during the early Severan dynasty. Here, three adjectives for "great" are followed by the modifying adverb, thus yielding "thrice greatest" (*Ḏḥwty 𓏛 𓏛 𓏛 wr nb Ḫmnw*).

Ostraca found in the archive of Hor, in Saqqara around 168 BCE, by a stroke of good fortune yield both a Demotic and a Greek version of the epithet (*Ḏḥwty p𓏛 𓏛 p𓏛 𓏛 p𓏛 𓏛*,[6] and μέγιστος καὶ μέγιστος θεός μεγάλος Ἑρμῆς).[7] This proves that the adjective "great" (*p𓏛 𓏛*) can be interpreted as a superlative in Greek, even without the modifying adverb. Hor was an official of the ibis-cult of the Saqqara necropolis, and as such had a special connection to Thoth, whose theriomorphic form was the ibis. Hor only makes reference to Hermopolis once in the preserved material, where Thoth was probably designated thrice greatest lord of Hermopolis.[8] Additional inscriptions were recently published from the animal necropolis of Saqqara. These are of uncertain date, but mostly Ptolemaic, with at least some material from the third century BCE.[9] Here, we have a twice great Thoth, and a thrice greatest Seker-Thoth, both lords of Hermopolis.[10] We also find the thrice greatest Thoth, lord of Hermopolis, as the author of a *Book of Breathing*, a mortuary text meant to secure a place for the deceased among the gods in the afterlife.[11] The papyrus belonged

6 John D. Ray, *The archive of Hor* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1976), 15.

7 Theodore C. Skeat and Eric G. Turner, "An Oracle of Hermes Trismegistus at Saqqâra," *JEA* 54 (1968): 199–208 at 202–4.

8 Ray, *Archive of Hor*, 97: *Ḏḥwty 𓏛 𓏛 nb Ḫmnw* […]. The lacuna most probably held *nṯr 𓏛*, cf. Chassinat, *Edfou* 3:120.

9 John D. Ray, *Demotic Ostraca and Other Inscriptions from the Sacred Animal Necropolis, North Saqqara* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2013), 163.

10 Ray, *Demotic Ostraca*, 315 (L8): *Ḏḥwty 𓏛 𓏛 nb Ḫmnw*. Ibid., 69–70 (C 13): *Skr Ḏḥwty 𓏛 𓏛 𓏛 wr nb Ḫmnw*. Ray translates the latter epithet as "thrice great and great," disregarding the Esna parallel, even though he cites Philippe Derchain and Maria-Theresia Derchain-Urtel, "Noch einmal 'Hermes Trismegistos,'" *GM* 15 (1975): 7–10.

11 Robert K. Ritner, "The Breathing Permit of Hôr among the Joseph Smith Papyri," *JNES* 62 (2003): 161–80 at 172 (Pap. Jos. Smith IV/5–6): "Thoth], the Thrice [Great]est, Lord of Hermopolis ([*Ḏḥwty 𓏛*] *sp-2 wr nb Ḫmnw*), [has come to you.] He has writ[ten] for you a Breathing Document with his own fingers, so that [your *ba*-spirit] may breathe [forever, and that you might regain the fo]rm that you had on earth among the living, since you are divine together with the *ba*-spirits of the gods." This papyrus is the basis for the paracanonical *Book of Abraham* of the Mormons. Cf. the identical edition in Robert K. Ritner, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition. P. JS 1–4 and the Hypocephalus of Sheshonq* (Salt Lake City: The Smith Pettit Foundation, 2013), 146–47.

to another Hor, this one from Thebes, some time in the Ptolemaic or early Roman era.[12]

It is only later in the second century BCE that we find the epithet attested in Hermopolis itself, interestingly enough in Egyptian transliterated into Greek characters (ΩΩΩ νοβ Ζμουν).[13] Jacques Parlebas, however, informs us that prior to World War II, Jacques Schwartz saw a great number of jars containing mummified ibises, with Demotic inscriptions mentioning both twice- and thrice-greatest Thoth, that had been found near the tomb of Petosiris in the Hermopolitan necropolis. These have unfortunately disappeared after the war. Petosiris himself was the chief prophet of the twice great Thoth, an office that bore the title "the Great of Five of the House of Thoth," around the beginning of the Ptolemaic period.[14] This epithet, "the Great of Five," is also used of Thoth himself, who can also be called "the father of the Great of Five." Its meaning has been variously explained; either Thoth is the fifth, ruling over the four pairs of gods who comprise the Ogdoad, or he is "older than the Five," i.e. the five last gods of the Helipolitan cycle—Osiris, Isis, Seth, Nephthys and Horus.[15]

It is possible that the epithet twice greatest is connected to Thoth's role as lord of Hermopolis, and that when this twice greatest Thoth is also called "the great god,"[16] a common epithet for all Egyptian gods, we have our thrice greatest god *in nuce*. However, this neat development from a twice great to thrice greatest Thoth is complicated by the Flinders-Petrie papyrus, first pointed out by Robert K. Ritner, where we find a five-times greatest Thoth already in the third century BCE.[17] Furthermore, in the second tale of Setne Khamwas, from the Roman era, we even find a Thoth who is somewhere between the five and nine times greatest lord of Hermopolis, depending on how a lacuna is restored.[18] Francis L. Griffith has plausibly suggested that five-times greatest

12 Ritner, "The Breathing Permit of Hôr," 164.

13 Victor Girgis, "A New Strategos of the Hermopolite Nome," *MDAIK* 20 (1965): 121.

14 Gerard P.F. Broekman, "The 'High Priests of Thot' in Hermopolis in the Fourth and Early Third Centuries B.C.E.," *ZÄS* 133 (2006): 97–103.

15 Ibid., and cf. Alain Fortier, "Les *Cinq dieux* à Tôd et Médamoud," in *Documents de Théologies Thébaines Tardives* (ed. Christophe Thiers; Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 2009), 19–27 at 24.

16 Chassinat, *Edfou*, 3:120: *ꜥ ꜥ nb Ḥmnw nṯr ꜥ*, cf. Parlebas, "L'origine égyptienne," 25. But cf. Derchain and Derchain-Urtel, "Noch einmal 'Hermes Trismegistos,'" 8, who wish to separate the "great god" epithet from the "twice great." However, their hypothesis that the threefold superlative τρισμέγιστος can only derive from *ꜥ ꜥ ꜥ wr* is disproved by the Hor-texts later published by John Ray.

17 Robert K. Ritner, "Hermes Pentamegistos," *GM* 49 (1981): 73–75.

18 Id., "Additional Notes to Hermes Pentamegistos," *GM* 50 (1981): 67–68.

should be read, and that this refers to his cultic Hermopolitan epithet, "the Great One of Five."[19] We thus have a god who is twice, thrice or five-times great, and lord of the city of Eight (Shmun), that is, Hermopolis Magna. Except for the last numeral, which refers to the eight primeval gods of Hermopolis, we simply do not yet know the meaning behind these Egyptian epithets of Thoth. Several interpretations would later be offered by Neoplatonists (Hermes came to know himself in his third incarnation), Christians (Hermes knew about the Trinity), and Renaissance authors (Hermes was the greatest priest, philosopher, and king).

2.2 Greek Sources for the Egyptian Hermes

It is often stated that Athenagoras (late 2nd c. CE) is the first Greek witness to the epithet Trismegistus, but this is inaccurate. We find the epithet already in the early first century CE, in the *Pinax* of Thrasyllus, the famous astrologer of Tiberius and editor of the Platonic dialogues. Here, he refers to Trismegistus regarding the dodecatemorion, the twelve parts of the natal chart: "He [= Thrasyllus] also examines in which manner the one who is called Hermes Trismegistus thought that one should call and evaluate each of the twelve parts of the natal chart, declaring that the Horoscopos is at the helm, indicative of fortune and soul and manner of life, and furthermore that the same is significant for siblings."[20] Later in the first century CE, Dorotheus of Sidon, a compiler of astrological doctrines, seems also to have used the work of Trismegistus. Much of what is preserved of Dorotheus in Greek is found in Hephaestion of Thebes,[21] who writes:

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19 Francis L. Griffith and Herbert Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1921), 30–31. Ritner simply sees the epithet as highly fluid.

20 Epitome of the *Pinax* of Thrasyllus in *CCAG* 8.3:101 ln. 16ff.: διαλαμβάνει δὲ καὶ καθ' ὃν τρόπον ὁ λεγόμενος Τρισμέγιστος Ἑρμῆς ἕκαστον δωδεκατημόριον τοῦ διαθέματος ἡξίου καλεῖν τε καὶ νομίζειν, οἷον τὸν μὲν ὡροσκόπον οἴακα καὶ τύχης καὶ ψυχῆς καὶ τρόπου ζωῆς δηλωτικὸν ἀποφαίνων, ἔτι δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ ἀδελφῶν εἶναι δηλωτικόν. My trans. Although this is a later epitome, it appears from the wording that Thrasyllus mentioned Hermes Trismegistus. Cf. Harold Tarrant, *Thrasyllan Platonism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 7–11, for an overview of what we know of Thrasyllus, and 244–46 for the Greek text of the epitome of the *Pinax*.

21 Cf. Jacques Schwartz, "Héphestion de Thèbes," in *Livre du centenaire, 1880–1980* (ed. Jean Vercoutter; Cairo: IFAO, 1980), 311–21.

ὅτι ἐπὶ πάσης καταρχῆς δεῖ τοὺς δ′ κλήρους θεωρεῖν—τύχης, δαίμονος, ἀνάγκης, ἔρωτος. καὶ ἄπορον πότερον κατὰ τὸν Τρισμέγιστον Ἑρμῆν δεῖ τὴν ἀνάγκην καὶ τὸν ἔρωτα διεκβάλλειν ἢ καθὼς ἐν τῷ δ′ βιβλίῳ Δωρόθεος ἱστορεῖ τὴν τῶν Αἰγυπτίων δόξαν ἢ ὡς ὁ αὐτὸς Δωρόθεος λέγει, ἀπὸ Σελήνης ἐπὶ Ἑρμῆν καὶ τὰ ἴσ(α) ἀπὸ ὡροσκόπου καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ καὶ νυκτὶ τὸν κλῆρον τῆς φιλίας τινὰς λαμβάνειν

Because in every nativity it is necessary to consider the four lots—Fortune, Demon, Necessity, Love. And at any difficult juncture one should calculate Necessity and Love according to Hermes Trismegistus, either such as Dorotheus sets out the doctrine of the Egyptians in his fourth book, or as the same Dorotheus says, "(calculate) from the Moon to Mercury, and (add) the equal number from the Ascendant, at day or night, and you shall find out the lot of any sympathy."[22]

It is uncertain if the reference to Trismegistus derives from Dorotheus or if Hephaestion added it. However, Dorotheus refers to "the honored [and] praiseworthy by three natures, Hermes, the king of Egypt" in the parts of *Carmen astrologicum* preserved in Arabic.[23] It therefore seems likely that he really did refer to Trismegistus in the work used by Hephaestion. Another witness to Trismegistus before Athenagoras, in either the first or second century, is Philo of Byblos, who mentions Hermes Trismegistus as the counsellor and magician of Cronus.[24] Thus, at least as early as the first century CE, the epithet Trismegistus was familiar to a Greek audience as an Egyptian astrological authority, divine counsellor, and magician. However, knowledge of the Egyptian

22 Doroth. Sid., fr. Heph. *Apotel.* 2e,3. My trans. Greek text in David E. Pingree, *Dorothei Sidonii carmen astrologicum* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1976), 433–34. These four lots are treated in the *Panaretos* of Hermes Trismegistus (Paul Alex., *El. Apotel.* 47ff.), where also another three are added—one lot for each planet. Perhaps the *Panaretos* was the source of Dorotheus? It seems likely that Hephaestius has mistaken Mercury for the Sun. The distance between the Sun and the Moon added to the Ascendant determines both the Lot of Demon and Fortune, which all other Lots are based on. Cf. Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque* (Paris: Leroux, 1899), 288–310; Roger Beck, *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology* (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 89–90.

23 David E. Pingree, *Dorotheus of Sidon: Carmen Astrologicum* (Abingdon: Astrology Classics Publisher, 2005), 64, cf. also vii–xiii.

24 Philo Byb., *Phoen.* 2.810 Baumgarten (= Euseb., *Praep. ev.* 1.10.17): εἰς ἄνδρας δὲ προελθὼν ὁ Κρόνος Ἑρμῇ τῷ τρισμεγίστῳ συμβούλῳ καὶ βοηθῷ χρώμενος, οὗτος γὰρ ἦν αὐτοῦ γραμματεύς. Cf. Albert Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos: A Commentary* (EPRO 89; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 16, 192 (where Baumgarten wrongly states that this is the earliest attestation of the epithet).

Hermes among the Greeks far precedes the first attestations of the epithet Trismegistus. Some important early references to this Egyptian Hermes should be mentioned.

As was already mentioned, Herodotus identified the Egyptian Thoth with Hermes in his book on Egypt, although he has very little to relate about him, essentially saying only that ibises were brought to Hermopolis to be buried (2.67), and that Hermes had a temple in Bubastis (2.138).[25] An important piece of information for the later tradition of the Egyptian Hermes is that Herodotus speaks of ritual taboos against wool, "observances which are called Orphic and Bacchic, though they are really Egyptian and Pythagorean."[26] The passage has been much debated, but it seems most likely to me that Herodotus is here deriving Orphism from Pythagoreanism, and the mysteries of Dionysos from those of Osiris, into which Herodotus elsewhere implies that he has been initiated (2.171). Later tradition is quite unison in ascribing the origins of Pythagoras' doctrine of metempsychosis to Egypt, even though the idea of metempsychosis seems to have been unknown there until the Hellenistic period. Pythagoras himself is reported to have claimed to be the reincarnation of Aethalides, the son of Hermes, who could not forget anything, even after death. This Hermes is nowhere stated to be the Egyptian one, however. As we shall see, the doctrine of metempsychosis is quite crucial to the myth of Hermes Trismegistus, and the teaching of royal souls.

2.2.1 *Plato's Egyptian Myth of Theuth*

Plato knew about the Egyptian Hermes, but calls him Theuth (*Phaedr.* 274c–e), and provides the information that his sacred bird was the ibis, and that he invented numbers, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, draughts, dice, and letters. It is the invention of letters which is the subject of the dialogue between Theuth and king Thamus of Thebes, the city of Ammon.[27] Theuth displays

25 Kamal S. Kolta, "Die Gleichsetzung ägyptischer und griechischer Götter bei Herodot" (Ph.D. diss.; Everhard-Karls-Universität zu Tübingen, 1968), 134–39.

26 Herod., *Hist.* 2.81, cf. Jan N. Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife: The 1995 Read-Tuckwell lectures at the University of Bristol* (London: Routledge, 2002), 15.

27 It is possible that Thamus should be identified with Ammon, if we follow the emendation of Felix Scheidweller, "Zum Platonischen Phaidros," *Hermes* 83 (1955):120–22 at 120: οἱ Ἕλληνες Αἰγυπτίας Θήβας καλοῦσι, καὶ τὸν ⟨Θαμοῦν⟩ θεὸν Ἄμμωνα. Most modern editions follow Postgate in replacing θεὸν with Θαμοῦν. Cf. also van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 99; Mario Vegetti, "Dans l'ombre de Thoth. Dynamiques de l'écriture chez Platon," in *Les Savoirs de l'écriture en Grèce ancienne* (ed. Marcel Détienne; Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1988), 387–419; Aikaterina Lefka, "Pourquoi des dieux égyptiens chez Platon?" *Kernos* 7 (1994): 159–68.

his inventions, claiming that the letters are "an elixir of memory and wisdom" (μνήμης τε γὰρ καὶ σοφίας φάρμακον). Thamus disagrees, and claims they are instead an "elixir of reminding" (ὑπομνήσεως φάρμακον), since those who read without instruction will only appear to be wise. Plato later refers to this as the oracle of Ammon (275c: τὴν Ἄμμωνος μαντείαν).

Now, the question is from where Plato has this mythic account. Phaedrus in the dialogue accuses Socrates of making up Egyptian stories as he goes along, and commentators have therefore assumed that the myth of Theuth is a creation of Plato's.[28] However, since Theuth reappears in the *Philebus*, giving a more detailed account of his creation of letters, it is unlikely that he is an ad-hoc creation of Plato.[29] In this text, there is already confusion as to whether he was a "god or godlike man" (18b: εἴτε τις θεὸς εἴτε καὶ θεῖος ἄνθρωπος). It is highly significant that Plato uses his Egyptian name, for the first time in Greek literature. Plato must therefore have had access to some independent source unknown to us. In the *Phaedrus,* Socrates introduces the mythic tale as a saying (ἀκοήν) of the ancients: "Now, I heard concerning (περὶ) Naucratis of Egypt, that one of the ancient gods was born around there, whose sacred bird is the one they call an ibis."[30] The sentence is ambiguous, since περὶ can either mean that Socrates heard the tale in the region of Naucratis, or concerning Naucratis, or that Theuth was born in the vicinity of Naucratis. Socrates had certainly never been to Egypt (cf. *Phaedr.* 230d; *Crit.* 52b), so the meaning is likely to be "concerning," but when Socrates goes on to say that a god was born "there" (ἐκεῖ), the meaning must also be "in the vicinity" (περί), for it would be an absurdity to say that one of the ancient Egyptian gods was born in a Greek colony, which was only founded in the seventh century.[31] On the other hand, Aelius Aristides did understand Plato to mean that Naucratis was the birthplace, and criticized this error:

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28 Perceval Frutiger, *Les mythes de Platon* (Paris: Alcan, 1930), 233; Franco Trabattoni, "Myth and Truth in Plato's *Phaedrus*," in *Plato and Myth: Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths* (ed. Catherine Collobert, Pierre Destrée and Francisco J. Gonzalez; MnS 337; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 305–21 at 306. Cf. also Christopher Moore, "The Myth of Theuth in the *Phaedrus*," ibidem, 279–303, who has nothing to say about the origins of the myth.

29 David Frankfurter, "The Magic of Writing and the Writing of Magic," *Helios* 21 (1994): 189–221 at 203–5; Henri Joly, "Platon égyptologue," *Revue philosophique* 2 (1982): 255–66.

30 *Phaedr.* 274c: ἤκουσα τοίνυν περὶ Ναύκρατιν τῆς Αἰγύπτου γενέσθαι τῶν ἐκεῖ παλαιῶν τινα θεῶν, οὗ καὶ τὸ ὄρνεον ἱερὸν ὃ δὴ καλοῦσιν Ἶβιν. My trans.

31 This is however the view of Ernst Heitsch, *Phaidros: Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 189.

> Or again if someone should be persuaded that the Egyptian god Theuth—For thus he has expressed his name—'was born at Naucratis in Egypt', and would be unwilling to concede that he is Hermes in Greek, and that it is no few days sailing up river from Naucratis to the city named after him and where all the Egyptians agree that he was born? Then if Plato is very much the first of the Greeks, still Naucratis and Hermopolis are not the same; nor again must it be thought that Hermes was born at Naucratis, and not in his own city.[32]

Aristides is thinking of Hermopolis Magna, the most famous of the eponymous cities, but if we take Socrates to say that Theuth was from the vicinity of Naucratis, we find nearby, on the Canopic arm of the Nile, both the eponymous Hermopolis Mikra, which must surely be the intended birthplace,[33] but also Saïs, where Plato elsewhere has Solon hear the account of Atlantis (*Tim.* 21e). From the remark of Socrates, it seems likely that the source of Plato, whether it was a written treatise or an oral account, stems from the meeting of educated Greeks and Egyptian priestly informants near Naucratis. The dialogue between Phaedrus and Socrates is at this point quite jocular, so it has been suggested that Plato himself made up the oracle of Ammon, as a parody.[34] In that case, however, he would still have had to be familiar with some similar text at which to direct his gibes. The narrative framework of a vizier speaking in front of his king is known from several Egyptian texts, and was not a Greek

32 Ael. Arist., *Or.* 3.287.23–288.2 Dindorf: ἢ εἴ τις αὖ πείθοιτο τὸν Αἰγύπτιον δαίμονα τὸν Θεῦθ, οὕτω γὰρ αὐτὸς εἴρηκε τοὔνομα αὐτοῦ, τοῦτον περὶ Ναύκρατιν τῆς Αἰγύπτου γενέσθαι, καὶ μὴ ἐθέλοι συγχωρεῖν ὅτι ἐστὶ μὲν Ἑλλήνων Ἑρμῆς φωνὴ, ἀπὸ δὲ Ναυκράτιδος εἰς τὴν ἐπώνυμον πόλιν αὐτοῦ καὶ οὗ πάντες αὐτὸν ὁμολογοῦσιν Αἰγύπτιοι γενέσθαι ἀνάπλους ἡμερῶν ἐστιν οὐκ ὀλίγων; οὐ τοίνυν εἰ Πλάτων πολὺ πρῶτος τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ταυτόν ἐστι Ναύκρατίς τε καὶ Ἑρμοῦ πόλις, οὐδ' αὖ περὶ Ναύκρατιν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ πόλει δεῖ δὴ τὸν Ἑρμῆν γεγενῆσθαι δοκεῖν. Trans. Charles A. Behr, *P. Aelius Aristides: The Complete Works. Volume I: Orations I–XVI* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 260.

33 François Daumas, "L'origine égyptienne du jugement de l'âme dans le Gorgias de Platon," in *Roger Godel: De l'humanisme à l'humain* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1963), 187–91 at 189f.; Frédéric Mathieu, "Voyage de Platon en Égypte," *ASAE* 71 (1987): 153–67 at 158. Cf. Boylan, *Thoth*, 149, who states that it is uncertain which Hermopolis is the more ancient one, but the city in the Delta is in the nome of ibis, while the Upper Egyptian city is in that of the hare. According to the geospatial tool Orbis (http://orbis.stanford.edu), it is six days sailing upriver to Hermopolis Magna, corresponding to Aristides' "no few days sailing."

34 Cf. Reginald Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 157 n. 2.

invention.[35] Perhaps Plato had read or heard of a dialogue in which Theuth was praised for his many inventions, and decided to give it a novel and humorous twist through his hero Socrates? At any rate, it seems unlikely that an Egyptian priestly treatise would deride the invention of sacred writing in this way.[36] This raises the question if any Egyptian writings at all were available to Greeks at that time, or if they were wholly dependent on Egyptian informers.

Neither Plato nor Herodotus mentions any Egyptian authors. The contemporary dialogue of Isocrates, the *Busiris*, makes use of a pseudo-Egyptian narrative, though it likely did not depend on written Egyptian sources in its depiction of the Pharaonic villain.[37] On the other hand, Diogenes Laertius plausibly informs us that Eudoxus spent time in Egypt, studying under the Heliopolitan priest Chonouphis,[38] and that he wrote "Dialogues of Dogs" that some people said were translated from Egyptian originals.[39] John Gwyn Griffiths has proposed that this tale might have been something like what we find in Papyrus Jumilhac, where Thoth and his adversary Baba, both in the shape of dogs, debate each other in front of Re.[40]

The possibility remains that Plato might have come to know a dialogue between Thoth and Thamus/Ammon during a visit to Egypt.[41] In recent years, there has been a series of publications taking a more nuanced view of the matter of intellectual exchange between Greeks and the Orient. Walter Burkert,

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35 Cf. *The Maxims of Ptahhotep*, in William K. Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, and Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 139ff.; *The Prophecies of Neferty*, ibid., 214ff. Also in *The Neferhotep Stela,* the king asks the scribes to see the "primeval writings of Atum," ibid., 340. Cf. CH XVI, from Asclepius to king Ammon.

36 See for example the number of texts extolling the profession of scribe as the most excellent one, Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 431ff.

37 Cf. Niall Livingstone, *Commentary on Isocrates' Busriris* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

38 Diog. Laert., *Vit.* 8.90: συνεγένετο ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Χονούφιδι τῷ Ἡλιουπολίτῃ.

39 Diog. Laert., *Vit.* 8.89: φησὶ δ' Ἐρατοσθένης ἐν τοῖς Πρὸς Βάτωνα καὶ Κυνῶν διαλόγους συνθεῖναι· οἱ δε, γεγραφέναι μὲν Αἰγυπτίους τῇ αὐτῶν φωνῇ, τοῦτον δὲ μεθερμηνεύσαντα ἐκδοῦναι τοῖς Ἕλλησι.

40 John Gwyn Griffiths, "A Translation from the Egyptian by Eudoxus," *CQ* 15 (1965): 75–78 at 77–78. Cf. Dieter Kurth, "Bebon und Thoth," *SAK* 19 (1992): 225–30.

41 Cf. Mathieu, "Voyage de Platon," 153–54, who cites as credible testimonies Hermodorus, apud Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 3.6, and Cic., *Fin.* 5.29.87; *Resp.* 1.10.16; *Tusc.* 4.19.44; cf. however Carl A. Huffman, *Philolaus of Croton: Pythagorean and Presocratic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 5, who calls the notion "absurd," perhaps because Diogenes says Euripides went with Plato. Huffman accepts the rest of Hermodorus' story, that Plato travelled to Cyrene and Italy. Mathieu explains the reference to Euripides as a mythic accretion ("on dit") to the authentic story of Hermodorus.

for example, has demonstrated the common cosmological concerns of Ionic natural philosophy and Near Eastern priestly teachings, and the dependence of the former on the latter, while simultaneously emphasizing the degree of innovation on the part of the Ionians.[42] Even though the priestly hierarchies of Mesopotamia and Egypt had millennia of scholarly tradition to draw upon at the time of Plato, and could therefore condescendingly refer to the Greeks as "children,"[43] the Greeks had the advantage of being intellectually free from any such hierarchical institution.[44] Thus, even if we do concede that Plato went to Egypt, and perhaps was influenced by the priestly teachings he heard there, this does not necessarily detract from his originality; whatever he might have appropriated, such as the post mortem judgment of souls, was put into a novel context. If Plato did indeed visit Egypt, he apparently did not approve of everything he saw there, as the *Laws* shows (2.657). The Athenian, who acts as Plato's mouthpiece, certainly gives the appearance of having first hand knowledge of Egypt, and while he praises their educational policies in the arts of painting and music—which he attributes to Isis (2.656d–657b)—he is critical of their mode of sacrifice, apparently because it is performed in secret.[45] Inscriptions on temples from the Ptolemaic era are explicit that "no Phoenician should approach it, no Greek enter it, no Bedouin tread it,"[46] which could be taken to indicate that foreign visitors were indeed eager to take a peek inside.

Plato is never explicit about any visit of his to Egypt, nor is this to be expected from an author who so consistently hides behind his interlocutors. It is

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42 Walter Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004). It is more common to look towards the Near East than Egypt for influences: e.g. Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern influence on Greek culture in the early archaic age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Martin L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

43 Plato, *Tim.* 22b.

44 Ironically, it is just this strict adherence to tradition in Egypt that is praised by Plato in *Laws* 2.656e.

45 Plato, *Leg.* 12.953d–e: τούτοις δὴ τοῖς νόμοις ὑποδέχεσθαί τε χρὴ πάντας ξένους τε καὶ ξένας ἐξ ἄλλης χώρας καὶ τοὺς αὑτῶν ἐκπέμπειν, τιμῶντας ξένιον Δία, μὴ βρώμασι καὶ θύμασι τὰς ξενηλασίας ποιουμένους, καθάπερ ποιοῦσιν νῦν θρέμματα Νείλου, μηδὲ κηρύγμασιν ἀγρίοις. The sacrifices are uncongenial because foreigners—and indeed all uninitiated people—are expelled from them (ξενηλασία), not because Egyptian sacrificial practice was inherently noxious to Greek sensibilities, as many translators claim. Godel, *Platon à Héliopolis*, 28 n. 2, suggests a personal misadventure of Plato here.

46 Robert K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magic* (SAOC 54; Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993), 203 and n. 940, for references to similar interdictions.

the subsequent tradition that places him in Egypt, some time after the death of Socrates.[47] Plato's successor Hermodorus ascribes this trip to him (Diog. Laert., *Vit.* 3.6),[48] Cicero was told about Plato's Egyptian voyage when visiting Athens (*Fin.* 5.29.87; *Resp.* 1.10.16), and Strabo was even shown the cell in which both Plato and Eudoxus were said to have stayed in Heliopolis (17.1.29). The Egyptian voyage had thus become an established part of Plato's biography, and fragments from a third century CE papyrus even contains an astrological dialogue between Plato and Peteese, prophet of Heliopolis.[49]

The interest of Plato in Egyptian astrology was perhaps inferred from the Pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis*. A passage of this treatise implies that Hermes was the first to observe the planets, albeit in a very convoluted way. The author, whom tradition identifies as Philippus of Opus, speaks of the sun and the two spheres closest to it, of which one is the morning star. As for the other planet, "I cannot call by name since its name is not known. The reason is that the first person to observe them was a foreigner. Egypt and Syria have a marvelously beautiful summer season. In consequence it was an ancient practice there that led people to reflect on these matter for the first time."[50] The unnamed planet

47 Mathieu, "Voyage de Platon," 156–57, suggests that he arrived around 394–393, associating Plato's mention of the dependence of Egyptian kings on the priests, and the need for illegitimate Pharaohs to use force (*Pol.* 290d–e), with the accession of the illegitimate Achoris in 393. Mathieu also connects the tradition that Plato brought with him oil to sell in Egypt (Plut., *Sol.* 2.8; Greg. Naz., *Carm. mor.* 702–703) with his comments on Egyptians as stingy (*Resp.* 4.436a; *Leg.* 5.747c), and his knowledge of the fare from Athens to Egypt (2 drachmas, *Gorg.* 511d–e).

48 Most commentators scoff at this part of the voyage, because of the anachronistic detail that he went in the company with Euripides, e.g. Huffman, *Philolaus of Croton*, 5. But as Godel and Mathieu point out, Diogenes Laertius first relates the testimony of Hermodorus, that Plato went to Egypt, while *they* say (φασι), i.e. some other people, that Euripides went with him.

49 Colin H. Roberts, John D. Johnson, and Arthur S. Hunt, *Catalogue of the Greek papyri in the John Rylands Library, Manchester* (4 vols.; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1911–1952), 2:2–3; Wilhelm Gundel and Hans G. Gundel, *Astrologumena: die astrologische Literatur in der Antike und ihre Geschichte* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1966), 81. On Petese, cf. Kim Ryholt, *The Story of Petese, Son of Petetum, and Seventy Other Good and Bad Stories* (*P. Petese*) (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1999); Joachim F. Quack, "Die Spur des Magiers Petese," *CdÉ* 77 (2002): 76–92.

50 [Plato,] *Epin.* 986e–987a: ὡς μὲν ὀνόματι φράζειν οὐκ ἔστιν διὰ τὸ μὴ γιγνώσκεσθαι, τούτου δ' αἴτιος ὁ πρῶτος ταῦτα κατιδὼν βάρβαρος ὤν· παλαιὸς γὰρ δὴ τρόπος ἔθρεψεν τοὺς πρώτους ταῦτα ἐννοήσαντας διὰ τὸ κάλλος τῆς θερινῆς ὥρας, ἣν Αἴγυπτός τε Συρία θ' ἱκανῶς κέκτηται, φανεροὺς μὲν ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἀστέρας ἀεὶ σύμπαντας καθορῶντας, ἅτε νεφῶν καὶ ὑδάτων ἀπόπροσθεν ἀεὶ τοῦ κόσμου κεκτημένους, ὅθεν καὶ πανταχόσε καὶ δεῦρ' ἐξήκει, βεβασανισμένα

is later said to be that of Hermes, while a "Syrian lawgiver" gave the name "morning star" (ἑωσφόρος) to the planet of Aphrodite. The implication is thus that an Egyptian gave the unpronounceable name to Hermes. The assertion that the fair weather of Egypt facilitates astronomical observations was also made by the Theban priests according to Diodorus Siculus (1.50).

Plato's familiarity with a dialogue between Thoth and a king, his story of Atlantis, revealed to Solon by Egyptian priests, his praise of the Egyptian regularity of painting and music, and his supposed stay in Egypt, are all central elements in the subsequent tradition of Egypt as the cradle of perennial wisdom and the importance of Thoth-Hermes in this tradition. Later authors were convinced of the historicity of the Egyptian visits. Plutarch and Proclus gives us the names of the Egyptian priests that Solon learned from,[51] while Tertullian and Iamblichus were convinced that Plato had learnt from the Egyptian Hermes, and even placed him in the same chain of tradition.[52] The historical Plato is thus an important witness to the early existence of Greek traditions relating to the Egyptian Hermes, while the Plato of later tradition is placed in a Hermetic framework by several authors, so that Hermes in turn can deliver divinely revealed Platonic teachings. G.R. Boys-Stones has demonstrated that Post-Hellenistic philosophy came to consider Plato as the authoritative source of primeval wisdom, since he was thought to have privileged access to the teachings of the ancients.[53] At a time when many philosophers were engaged in reconstructing the ancient teachings through allegorical readings of Plato, the Hermetic teachings professed to offer the *ipsissima verba* of Plato's Egyptian source.

χρόνῳ μυριετεῖ τε καὶ ἀπείρῳ. Trans. Richard D. McKirahan in Cooper, *Plato: Complete Works*, 1628.

51 Plut., *Sol.* 26.1: Psenophis of Heliopolis and Sonchis of Saïs; Procl., *In Tim.* 1.101: Pateneït of Saïs, Ochaäpi of Heliopolis, and Ethemon of Sebennytos. Proclus states that his source is the tradition of the Egyptians, whereas Plutarch seems to refer to a writing of Solon (possibly a pseudepigraphon?).

52 Tert., *An.* 2.1: *Visa est quidem sibi et ex sacris, quas putant, litteris hausisse, quia plerosque auctores etiam deos existimauit antiquitas, nedum diuos, ut Mercurium Aegyptium, cui praecipue Plato adsueuit*; Iamb., *Myst.* 1.1–2.

53 George R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

2.2.2 *Aristoxenus' Thoth*

Our next testimony comes from a fragment of Aristoxenus' *On Arithmetic* in Stobaeus' anthology, our only testimony to this work.[54] The fragment seems likely to be the introductory statement to a popular history of arithmetic. Aristoxenus first extols Pythagoras, who "seems to have valued the science of numbers most of all and to have advanced it," and then goes on to speak of the Egyptian Hermes:

τά τε γὰρ ἄλλα ἀριθμὸς ἔχει καὶ λόγος ἐστὶ πάντων τῶν ἀριθμῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους. Αἰγύπτιοι δὲ Ἑρμοῦ φασὶν εὕρημα, ὃν καλοῦσι Θώθ· οἱ δὲ ἐκ τῶν θείων περιφορῶν ἐπινοηθῆναι.

For number contains all else, and there is a ratio between all the numbers to each other. The Egyptians, moreover, say that it [sc. the ratio] is an invention of Hermes, whom they call Thoth, and they say that it was discovered from the orbit of the divine luminaries.[55]

The last sentence is problematic; I take οἱ δὲ to refer back to the Egyptians, even though this is not grammatically satisfying. Comparison with Aristoxenus' *Elementa harmonica* and *Elementa rhythmica* show that the most regular use of οἱ δὲ is as a contrast to οἱ μὲν.[56] But there is no μὲν in our passage, and it makes for a poor contrast to say that the Egyptians (Αἰγύπτιοι δὲ) attribute the invention of the ratio to Hermes, whereas some anonymous other people (οἱ δὲ) say that it was discovered from the planetary orbits. This would mean that the Egyptians say who discovered the ratio, but not how, and the anonymous others say how the ratio was discovered but not by whom. The Chaldeans

54 Fritz Werhli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles: Aristoxenos* (Basel: Benno Schwabe, 1945), 54, denies that the fragment stems from Aristoxenus at all, but Leonid Zhmud, *The Origin of the History of Science in Classical Antiquity* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 218ff., convincingly argue that it does, since Stobaeus elsewhere reports the titles of his Aristoxenus-excerpts quite dutifully.

55 Aristox., fr. 23 Wehrli, who followed Diels & Meineke in postulating a lacuna after ἀλλήλους, and a full stop after Θώθ. My trans. I follow the punctuation of Curt Wachsmuth and Otto Hense, *Ioannis Stobaei Anthologium* (5 vols.; Berlin: Weidmann, 1884–1912), 1:20 (Joh. Stob., *Ecl.* 1. Prooem. 6), since otherwise the fragment does not yield much sense, cf. the translation of Zhmud, *The Origin of the History of Science*, 218: "For number contains all else as well, and there is a ratio between all the numbers to each other ⟨…⟩ The Egyptians, for their part, believe numbers to be the invention of Hermes, whom they call Thoth. And *others* derived numbers from the circular paths of the divine luminaries" (my emphasis).

56 Aristox., *El. har.* 9.16; 41.2; 79.11; μὲν … δὲ: 40.4; 40.13–41.4; 44.1–3; *El. rhyt.* fr. 1.3.7; 2.21.20.

could of course be credited with the discovery of astronomical ratios, and thus be the anonymous others, but then why does Aristoxenus not name them explicitly? I therefore find it most likely that the meaning of the passage is that the Egyptians say that Hermes discovered the ratio by observing the planetary orbits. Moreover, we find a parallel in the *Refutation of All Heresies* attributed to Hippolytus, who says that the Egyptians "calculate the power of God and the intervals of the astronomical degrees," that is, the divisions of the zodiac or of the decans.[57] Since both this text and the Aristoxenus fragment immediately go on to speak of the relation between the monad and numbers, it does not seem at all implausible that "Hippolytus" used Aristoxenus as one of his sources.

It must be pointed out that Pythagoras is not designated as the inventor of arithmetic, but is only said to have advanced it,[58] and the implication seems to be that he learned it from the Egyptians; at least Aristoxenus makes no effort to distinguish the arithmetic of Thoth and Pythagoras. Furthermore, the source of Aristoxenus is unlikely to be Plato,[59] since the orthography of the Egyptian name is quite different: Plato has Θεύθ, versus Aristoxenus' Θώθ. At some point between Plato and Aristoxenus, then, another authoritative source must have provided the latter spelling, which became more or less fixed as the standard of subsequent Greek.[60] Hecataeus of Milet or Eudoxus would be good candidates for introducing the orthography Θώθ.

From both Plato, Aristoxenus, and Phillipus of Opus—if he is the author of the Epinomis—we see that Hermes-Thoth is conceived of as an inventor of the arts, a civilizing hero similar to Prometheus or Palamedes of the Greeks. He is a first inventor (πρῶτος εὑρετής), and it is in particular his invention of letters and arithmetic that is extolled. Plato makes him a councilor of the divine king, and either a god or a divine human himself, while Aristoxenus provides the link with Pythagoras.

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57 [Hipp.], *Ref.* 4.43.4: τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δύναμιν ψηφίσαντες τά τε διαστήματα τῶν μοιρῶν. My trans. Cf. LSJ s.v. μοῖρα, and below, pp. 143–46, 287–88.

58 *Pace* Zhmud, *The Origin of the History of Science*, 221, who pays no attention to Thoth in the fragment.

59 *Pace* Zhmud, *The Origin of the History of Science*, 224.

60 Variations include Θωὺθ(ος) and Θοὺθ (diacritics vary). Cf. Michèle Mertens, *Zosime de Panopolis: Mémoires authentiques* (Les alchimistes grecs 4.1; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995; repr. 2002), 1:87.

2.2.3 *The Letter of Manetho to King Ptolemy II Philadelphus*

We now move on to an important but contested testimony of the myth of Hermes Trismegistus, which must be discussed at some length. In his *Chronographia*, the eighth century Byzantine monk George Syncellus has transmitted to us several fragments of the Egyptian history of Manetho, known in antiquity to be a Heliopolitan prophet from the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.[61] Among the authentic Manethonic passages, however, we also find some contested fragments from the so-called *Book of Sothis*, and it is in one of these that we find the most developed genealogy, or perhaps rather series of incarnations, of Thoth and Hermes Trismegistus.

Syncellus provides a letter, supposedly written by Manetho, to Ptolemy II Philadelphus, and prefaces the letter with an explanatory note on several Egyptian Hermeses.[62] In *The Book of Sothis*, he says, Manetho claimed to have consulted monuments lying in the "Seriadic land," a name for Egypt that is clearly derived from Isis and Osiris' connection with the Dog Star, Sothis or Sirius (Σείριος):[63]

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61 But cf. Erik Hornung, Rolf Krauss, and David A. Warburton, *Ancient Egyptian Chronology* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 34–35, who claim that Manetho's work postdates Diodorus Siculus, since it contains glosses to the list—first found in Herodotus and Diodorus—and anti-semitism, unattested before the Maccabeans. I find this wholly unconvincing. Since Manetho knew of Herodotus, he could easily have accomodated his style to "write back" (cf. Ian S. Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 103), and if the Septuagint was started under the auspices of Philadelphus, then Manetho would surely respond to the "antiegyptianism" (excuse the neologism) found in this work. Cf. Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 17–21; William F. McCants, *Founding Gods, Inventing Nations: Conquest and Culture Myths from Antiquity to Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 99; Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 117–36. That Manetho is seldomly cited by subsequent authors proves nothing. We would, for example, know nothing of Philodemus without the chance survival of his writings in Herculaneum. On the name Manetho, cf. Donald Redford, "The Name Manetho," in *Egyptological Studies in Honor of Richard A. Parker* (ed. Leonard H. Lesko; Hanover: University Press of New England, 1986), 118–21, who proposes *Mry-nṯr-ꜥ*, "beloved of the great god," while Heinz-Josef Thissen, "Der Name Manetho," *Enchoria* 15 (1987): 93–99, opts for *Mnjw-tꜣ-ḥwt*, "guardian of the temple." Cf. John Dillery, "The First Egyptian Narrative History: Manetho and Greek Historiography," *ZPE* 127 (1999): 93–116.

62 Cf. Charles Burnett, "The Legend of the Three Hermes," *JWCI* 39 (1976): 231–34.

63 Σηριαδικῇ γῇ. The claim that this refers to China is clearly mistaken, cf. Gerrit J. Reinink, "'Seiris' (Sir) und das Volk der Serer," *JSJ* 6 (1975): 72–85 at 78–79. Cf. also Guy G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (NHS 24; Leiden: Brill, 1984), 138, who claims

ἱερᾷ φησι διαλέκτῳ καὶ ἱερογραφικοῖς γράμμασι κεχαρακτηρισμένων ὑπὸ Θῶθ τοῦ πρώτου Ἑρμοῦ, καὶ ἑρμηνευθεισῶν μετὰ τὸν κατακλυσμὸν ἐκ τῆς ἱερᾶς διαλέκτου {εἰς τὴν Ἑλληνίδα φωνὴν} γράμμασιν ἱερογλυφικοῖς, καὶ ἀποτεθέντων ἐν βίβλοις ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀγαθοδαίμονος υἱοῦ, τοῦ δευτέρου Ἑρμοῦ, πατρὸς δὲ τοῦ Τὰτ ἐν τοῖς ἀδύτοις τῶν ἱερῶν Αἰγύπτου.

He said they were inscribed in a sacred language and priestly characters by Thoth, the first Hermes, and translated after the flood from the sacred language {into the Greek tongue} with hieroglyphic characters. They were committed to books by the son of Agathodaimon, the second Hermes, father of Tat, in the inner sanctuaries of the temples of Egypt.[64]

In the letter itself, Manetho talks about "holy books composed by our forefather Hermes Trismegistus," whom Syncellus afterwards identifies with the second Hermes.[65] The statement that the books were translated "into the Greek tongue with hieroglyphic characters" is clearly a mistake; perhaps this comment has been misplaced from a few sentences further down, where Syncellus says that Manetho wrote the book to Ptolemy, obviously in the Greek language.[66] The myth of Hermes is in substantial agreement with

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that Hermes = Seth, and Seirias is the "Sethites' land," Seir, in Josephus (see below). Scott (3:492 n. 4) more plausibly suggests γῆ Ὀσιριάς or Ὀσιριακή, though Reitzenstein (*Poimandres*, 183) had already pointed out that Isis was from the land of Seirias: cf. IG VII, 3426 (Chaironeia, 3rd c. CE): ἱέρειαν διὰ βίου τῆς ἀπὸ Σειριάδος Εἴσιδος.

64 Sync. 41. The translations of Syncellus are by William Adler and Paul Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos: A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 54, here modified to make the second Hermes son of Agathodaimon, not vice versa, as the placing of the article shows. Already Böckh and Lepsius realized this. Cf. also William G. Waddell, *Manetho* (LCL 350; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 209, who makes the same mistake. Festugière felt that the letter, though a forgery, has to predate Varro, because of a distinction made between two Mercuries in Aug., *Civ.* 18.3 & 8.

65 Sync. 41: ἱερὰ βιβλία γραφέντα ὑπὸ τοῦ προπάτορος τρισμεγίστου Ἑρμοῦ. This disproves the translation of Adler and Tuffin, as well as that of Waddell, that the books were written by Agathodaimon and not the second Hermes. Cf. Jean-Pierre Mahé, "Paliggenesia et structure du monde supérieur dans les Hermetica et la traité d'Eugnoste de Nag Hammadi," in *Deuxième journée d'études coptes. Strasbourg 25 mai 1984* (CBC 3; Louvain: Peeters, 1986), 137–49 at 137, who sees in this introduction an identification between Trismegistus and a third Hermes, but no such third Hermes is actually mentioned in the text.

66 Cf. Scott 3:491 n. 2, who plausible suggests that the words were first forgotten by a copyist, and placed in the margins, and then replaced into the text, but in the wrong location, by a subsequent copyist. Cf. however Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 31 n. 108; August Böckh, *Manetho und die Hundssternperiode: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Pharaonen* (Berlin: Veit

the information we find in the Hermetica, as we shall see later, and it is therefore of great importance to determine if the letter is a forgery, as all modern commentators agree it is, or if in fact Manetho could have prefaced his work with such a myth. For this reason, we must go into some detail on the Manethonic question, which still for the most part rests on foundations laid in the nineteenth century.

Syncellus claimed that the dedicatory letter to Philadelphus was attached to the *Book of Sothis*, in which Manetho had translated the above-mentioned stelae of Hermes. This has prompted scholars to reconstruct this *Book of Sothis* from three different parts of Syncellus' work: the letter of Manetho (Sync. 42) is placed before a list of gods who were the first kings of Egypt, found earlier in the text (Sync. 19), which is also attributed to Manetho by Syncellus. These two passages were then supposedly followed by a list of eighty-six Egyptian kings from Mestraïm to Amosis, interspersed with contemporary king-lists from other countries (Sync. 102–249). This list, however, is nowhere attributed to Manetho, as we shall see.[67] The letter, along with these lists of gods and kings, have thus been artificially united and identified as the Pseudo-Manethonic *Book of Sothis* by nineteenth century scholars, a reconstruction that remains unchallenged until today. In the following we shall reevaluate the evidence for such a pseudepigraphic work, and argue that the letter may in fact very well be authentic. Indeed, the *Book of Sothis* referred to in the letter most likely is another name for the authentic work of Manetho, which we know only as the *Aigyptiaka*, since Manetho's calculation of the dynastic reigns, which has puzzled scholars for years, is based on the chronological scheme of Sothic cycles. The king-lists of Manetho have relevance for the myth of Hermes in two ways: First, if the letter should prove to be authentic it would give us our earliest reference to the myth of two Hermeses, one a primeval god and the other his descendant. This myth recurs in the Hermetica. Second, the Egyptian kingship ideology will be seen to play an important role in the cosmogonical and anthropogonical Hermetic myths, a fact that until now has been largely overlooked.

2.2.3.1 The Letter of Manetho to Ptolemy II Philadelphus

The letter has been declared a later forgery mainly on two grounds: First, the presence of the epithet Trismegistus, which is said to have become current

& Comp, 1845), 16 n. 1, who follows Jørgen Zoëga in suggesting that Syncellus replaced κοινὴν with Ἑλλενίδα.

67 This hypothetical book was even reconstructed by Richard Lepsius, *Die Chronologie der Aegypter* (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1849), 441–45.

only after Manetho, and second, the anachronistic epithet Sebastos given to Ptolemy.[68] This vocabulary would seem to indicate that the letter is a forgery of the imperial period, and as a consequence scholarship on Manetho has distinguished between the authentic epitomes of Africanus and Eusebius, and the pseudepigraphic *Book of Sothis*. All of these are preserved in the *Chronography* of Syncellus, though the epitome of Eusebius is also extant in an Armenian translation of his *Chronicle.* The objections to the authenticity of the letter of Manetho are not very strong:

1) As we have already seen, the epithet Trismegistus is not attested as early as the reign of Philadelphus, but we do find the Egyptian version of the epithet in the reign of Ptolemy V Epiphanes, half a century later. However, the epithet cannot be seen as a decisive factor. If we imagine that Manetho would have written something like Ἑρμῆς ὁ μέγας καὶ μέγας, as on the Rosetta stone (ln. 19), that may well have been altered to τρισμέγιστος by a copyist or epitomist by Roman times, or at least before the text reached Syncellus.
2) Sebastos was the Greek translation of Augustus, and accordingly not used before the Imperial era. However, it may very well be that Manetho is using the word here in an idiosyncratic manner. In one of the few preserved passages from the full version of Manetho's work, transmitted by Josephus, he calls the sacred animals of Egypt σεβαστευόμενα,[69] using a verb which occurs only here, instead of the common σέβομαι. Since the passages in Josephus are essentially the only direct quotations of Manetho that we have,[70] there is no way of knowing how often Manetho used the verb, but that he might also have used the adjectival form σεβαστός is certainly not too long a stretch of the imagination. Manetho simply states that Philadelphus is worthy of religious awe, σέβας, since he was a living

68 William Adler, *Time Immemorial: Archaic History and Its Sources in Christian Chronography from Julius Africanus to George Syncellus* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989), 58; Lepsius, *Chronologie*, 414. Both simply refer to Böckh, *Manetho*, 15ff., who argues that the letter could not have been written before the 3rd century CE. There is however little argument in Böckh, who simply refers to Antoine J. Letronne, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines de l'Égypte* (Paris: Impr. royale, 1842–1848), who again simply refers to Zoëga. The influential article of Richard Laqueur, "Manetho," PW XIV/1:1060–1101, also merely points out these two anachronisms.

69 Jos., *C. Ap.* 1.249: τῶν σεβαστευομένων ἱερῶν ζῴων (Manetho, fr. 54).

70 Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 38.

> image of the gods, just like the animals of the sacred enclosures: They are both σεβαστευόμενα.[71]

If we decide that these two matters of vocabulary are insufficient proof that the text is a later forgery there is really nothing in the letter of Manetho that is out of place, either as an introduction to his work, or as a letter to the king. Dedicating literary works to kings was a good marketing ploy, and if we can put any stock in the foundation myth of the Alexandrian cult of Sarapis,[72] it seems that Manetho could in fact consider the king a patron. Indeed, commentators often assume that the *Aigyptiaka* was commissioned.[73]

It is the reference to hidden stelae that has given editors a nearly instinctual certainty that the letter must be false: "When seeking to determine the existence of fraud, little confidence is inspired in a manuscript reported to have been hidden for thousands of years in a library or a temple shrine."[74] This could be an argument against the veracity of the claim of the letter, but it does not invalidate Manetho's authorship. There is nothing to preclude that Manetho himself could have made use of such a literary device.[75] The motif of a priest who demonstrates magical powers or esoteric wisdom to a king is not *only* a Hellenistic exoticizing device, but was also commonplace in Egyptian religion. Ian Moyer points out that the oldest example of this motif seems to be the Middle Kingdom Westcar Papyrus, where the magician Djedi is brought before king Khufu in order to tell him about the number of secret chambers in the sanctuary of Thoth.[76] More than a millennium later, in the Ptolemaic era, we find a similar story in the famous Setne cycle, where Setne brings word to the king of the Book of Thoth, which he has found buried with the ancient

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71 Böckh, *Manetho*, 15, adds that the double use of despota is anachronistic. Cf. also Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 1.15.68, who says that barbarian philosophers were objects of veneration (σεβασθῆναί); and Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism*, 118–19 n. 121, on Greek and Egyptian titles.

72 Cf. Sydney H. Aufrère, "Dualism and Focalization in Alexandrian Religious Thought in Egypt at the Beginning of the Ptolemaic Period: Manetho of Sebennytos and the Argive Myth," in *Light Against Darkness: Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 36–54 at 42–43.

73 Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 24.

74 Ibid., 58. The literary motif is treated in Wolfgang Speyer, *Bücherfunde in der Glaubenswerbung der Antike: Mit einem Ausblick auf Mittelalter und Neuzeit* (Hypomnemata 24; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970).

75 Cf. Donald B. Redford, *Pharaonic King-Lists, Annals and Day-Books: A Contribution to the Study of the Egyptian Sense of History* (Mississauga: Benben, 1986), 65–67.

76 Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism*, 244.

sage Naneferkaptah.[77] In the Roman era, likewise, a Demotic tale of the priest Petese has him discover an astrological book of Imhotep, son of Ptah, which he then presents to the king.[78] The motif is not only found in popular tales. The rubrics of the individual spells of the *Book of the Dead* often claim that they have been copied from stelae located in prestigious temples, as do spells of the Greek Magical Papyri.[79] Perhaps the most pertinent parallel would be the so-called *Famine Stela*, probably from the early Ptolemaic period, and thus nearly contemporary with Manetho.[80] The narrative describes a seven-year drought in the reign of Khufu, which makes the king send the chief lector-priest, the famed Imhotep, of the "staff of the Ibis," to the libraries of Hermopolis, in order to find out which god to appease. This turns out to be Khnum of Elephantine, and the Famine stela was probably engraved in order to make the Ptolemies uphold the earlier privileges granted to the temple of Khnum. Thus, ancient "Hermetic" knowledge from the temple archives is here made use of for propagandistic purposes and written down on a stela.

Similarly, the Shabaka stone, written under the homonymous king of the Ethiopian dynasty, which contains a Memphite cosmogony, claims to have been engraved in order to replace a crumbling manuscript found by the king.[81] Here the trope is inverted: a stela is inscribed on the basis of a papyrus manuscript. The claim may be true or false, but it clearly demonstrates that the motif of recovered ancient texts was common in royal propaganda, well before the time of Manetho. The claim to transcribe ancient knowledge, hidden on stelae, is often spurious, but not always so. After all, where else would Manetho have had access to his information, if not from temple-literature, which by its very nature was esoteric, in the sense that it was cordoned off from outsiders?

Another indication that Manetho claimed to have translated his work from sacred stelae is found in Josephus, the only author who quotes fragments of the *Aigyptiaka*, and not just the epitome. In his *Against Apion*, we are told that

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77 Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (3 vols.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973–1980; repr. 2006), 3:127.

78 Kim Ryholt, *The Petese Stories II* (*P. Petese II*) (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006), 13; id., *Narrative Literature from the Tebtunis Temple Library* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum press, 2012), 134–36; Joachim F. Quack, *Einführung in die altägyptische Literaturgeschichte* (3 vols.; 2d ed.; Münster: Lit, 2009–2012), 73. The tale is contained on the unpublished P. CtYBR 422v and P. Lund 2058v.

79 Cf. the rubrics of spell 30A, B, 64 & 137A; PGM VIII.41–43, XXIVa.2–5, CXXII.1–4.

80 Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 386–91. Egyptian text and commentary in Paul Barguet, *La stéle de la famine á Séhel* (IFAO 34; Cairo: IFAO, 1953).

81 James P. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt. The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (YES 2; New Haven: Yale University, 1988), 42–47.

Manetho presented his work as derived from sacred writings.[82] This would indicate that the work of Manetho originally did have an introduction such as the letter to Philadelphus, where he accounts for the origins of the holy books from which he quotes. Another treatise of Josephus is also highly instructive with regard to the letter: In the *Jewish Antiquities* we are told about Seth and his descendants, who attained astrological knowledge which they inscribed on two stelae, one of brick and one of stone, since Adam had presaged the destruction of the world by fire and by flood.[83] The flood of Noah would then have destroyed the stela of brick, leaving only the pillar of stone, which "remains in the land of the Seiriad to this day."[84] The interpretations of the land of Seiriad have been many,[85] but in my view it most likely refers to Egypt, since Seirios is the

82 Jos., *C. Ap.* 1.73: ἐκ δέλτων ἱερῶν; 1.91: ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς αὐτῶν βίβλοις; 1.228: ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων; 1.287: ταῖς ἀρχαίαις ἀναγραφαῖς.

83 Cf. George H. Van Kooten, "Enoch, The 'Watchers,' Seth's Descendants and Abraham as Astronomers. Jewish Applications of the Greek Motif of the First Inventor (300 BCE–CE 100)," in *Recycling Biblical Figures: Papers Read at a NOSTER Colloquium in Amsterdam, 12–13 May 1997* (ed. Athalya Brenner and Jan W. van Henten; STAR 1; Leiden: Deo, 1999), 292–316 at 307ff.

84 Jos., *Ant.* 1.67–71: σοφίαν τε τὴν περὶ τὰ οὐράνια καὶ τὴν τούτων διακόσμησιν ἐπενόησαν. ὑπὲρ δὲ τοῦ μὴ διαφυγεῖν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τὰ ηὑρημένα μηδὲ πρὶν εἰς γνῶσιν ἐλθεῖν φθαρῆναι, προειρηκότος ἀφανισμὸν Ἀδάμου τῶν ὅλων ἔσεσθαι τὸν μὲν κατ' ἰσχὺν πυρὸς τὸν ἕτερον δὲ κατὰ βίαν καὶ πλῆθος ὕδατος, στήλας δύο ποιησάμενοι τὴν μὲν ἐκ πλίνθου τὴν ἑτέραν δὲ ἐκ λίθων ἀμφοτέραις ἐνέγραψαν τὰ εὑρημένα, ἵνα καὶ τῆς πλινθίνης ἀφανισθείσης ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπομβρίας ἡ λιθίνη μείνασα παράσχῃ μαθεῖν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ ἐγγεγραμμένα δηλοῦσα καὶ πλινθίνην ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἀνατεθῆναι. μένει δ' ἄχρι δεῦρο κατὰ γῆν τὴν Σειρίδα. Cf. Albertus F.J. Klijn, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature* (NTSup 46; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 23–25. Klijn thinks that Josephus says that the earth will first be raked by fire, and then by water, but if that were the case, none of the stelae would remain. Josephus lists the disasters in that order, but that does not imply chronological sequence (τὸν μὲν… τὸν ἕτερον δὲ), and the sequence is likely, as in *Life of Adam and Eve* 49–50, first the flood, and in the future a conflagration. In his Appendix I, p. 124, Klijn briefly mentions the stelae of Hermes, and considers an Egyptian source for Josephus likely.

85 But cf. Birger Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 73; William Adler, "Materials Relating to Seth in an Anonymous Chronographer ('Pseudo-Malalas') and in the Chronography of George Syncellus," in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1977* (ed. Paul J. Achtemeier; Chico: Scholars Press, 1977), 13–15. Adler suggests that Land of the Seiriad refers to the "mountain of Siris" (τὸ Σίριδος ὄρος) of Malalas (*Chron.* 1.5) and Georgius Monachus (*Chron.* 10.12–24). However, both these authors explicitly rely on Josephus. Mount Sir is also mentioned in *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II 92,8–14) as the place Noah lands his ark. Pearson, ibid., adds the possibilities of the flood mountain in *Gilgamesh*, Nisir, which is however not mentioned by Berossus, and "the biblical mountain of the Edomites, Σηιρ." Pearson seems to prefer Reitzenstein's Egyptian thesis,

Greek name of the dog-star, Sothis, and according to Plutarch, the Egyptians "consider Seirios to belong to Isis," though also Osiris "is called Seirios by the Greeks."[86] Since Josephus had read Manetho, it seems to me highly likely that his "land of the Seiriad" corresponds to the latter's "Seriadic land." Josephus probably took the motif of the stela that survived the flood from Manetho, and appropriated it by saying that this is in fact a copy of another one made of brick, which disappeared during the flood, and that both of these were written by Seth and his progeny, containing Adamic astrological knowledge. Josephus thus writes in the same tradition as Artapanus, the Hellenistic author who claims that Moses was called Hermes by the Egyptian priests, and taught them their letters and the worship of their gods.[87]

Both Josephus and Manetho probably made use of the Egyptian tale reported by Solon in Plato's *Timaeus*, where the priests counter Solon's retelling of the flood of Deucalion by stating that several floods and fires at regular intervals destroy the earth, save for Egypt. The sources for Plato's Egyptian tale are unclear though. As Albertus Klijn points out, the Babylonian priest Berossus gives a prophecy of Bel, possibly of earlier date, that there will be a conflagration when all the planets converge in Cancer, and a great flood when they converge in Capricorn.[88]

What we are dealing with is in fact a series of cultural one-upmanships sponsored by the competing Diadochi, the generals who took over the different

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but draws no further consequences from it. Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 118–19, plausibly suggested that Josephus referred to Num 24:17–18, in which the sons of Seth are connected to the land of Seir (שעיר), an option discounted by Reinink ("Seir," 72–73) because of the Ayin. Against the elegant solution of Stroumsa would be that Josephus relies heavily on the Septuagint, where Seir is not mentioned, that Seir is named after a Horite chief long postdating Seth, and that the Masoretic *Numbers* passage has Seir and the sons of Seth crushed by Israel.

86 Plut., *Is. Os.* 38 (365F): τῶν τ' ἄστρων τὸν σείριον Ἴσιδος νομίζουσιν; 53 (372D): εἰσὶ γὰρ οἱ τὸν Ὄσιριν ἄντικρυς ἥλιον εἶναι καὶ ὀνομάζεσθαι Σείριον ὑφ' Ἑλλήνων λέγοντες. Trans. John Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch: De Iside et Osiride* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1970). Cf. ibid., 444.

87 Apud Euseb., *Praep. ev.* 9.27.6–7: διὰ ταῦτα οὖν τὸν Μώϋσον ὑπὸ τῶν ὄχλων ἀγαπηθῆναι καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἱερέων ἰσοθέου τιμῆς καταξιωθέντα προσαγορευθῆναι Ἑρμῆν, διὰ τὴν τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων ἑρμηνείαν. Cf. John G. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 77.

88 Klijn, *Seth*, 123; Gerald P. Verbrugghe and John M. Wickersham, *Berossus and Manetho, introduced and translated: Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 66.

parts of Alexander's empire after he died.[89] Hecataeus of Abdera wrote his glorifying account of Egypt for his patron Ptolemy I Soter, while Berossus, who wrote for Antiochus I Soter, had the advantage of belonging to the native priestly elite. These priests boasted of Babylonian records of kings stretching back to creation, and indeed the fragments preserved show that Berossus translated at least parts of the Mesopotamian cosmogony, the *Enuma Elish.*[90] Manetho was the native expert brought in to counter Berossus, possibly at the behest of Ptolemy II. Like Berossus, Manetho could produce lists of kings, going back to the gods and to creation, directly from the sacred archives, superior to the indirect transmission reported by his Greek predecessors. According to Berossus, the wise monster Oannes—half man, half fish—came twice to civilize mankind; similarly, Manetho's Hermes came twice.[91] Berossus wrote about the flood of Mesopotamian legend,[92] and so, apparently, did Manetho, for Josephus states that "all those who wrote barbarian histories have made note of the Ark and this Great Flood."[93] This confirms the information that Syncellus gives in his introduction to the letter of Manetho, that he made mention of a great flood. Since Berossus had given astrological predictions of floods and conflagrations, and since Egyptian priests vied with the Chaldeans for the claim to be inventors of this art, it is likely that Manetho too discussed such cosmic disasters. We find in Egyptian texts both accounts of overflooding of the Nile and of conflagration. For example, in the New Kingdom *Book of the Heavenly Cow*, we find the myth of how the sun-god sent his fiery eye to destroy mankind, but then halted the massacre by flooding the earth with beer colored red to look like blood.[94] Ian Moyer points out that the flooding of the Nile is positive in Egyptian texts, and claims that the references to the flood

89 Oswyn Murray, "Hecataeus of Abdera and Pharaonic Kingship," *JEA* 56 (1979): 141–71 at 166.

90 Fr. 1 Verbrugghe & Wickersham = Euseb., *Chron.* 6.8–9.2 (Armenian), & Sync., *Eclog. Chron.* 50–53. Cf. Robert Drews, "The Babylonian Chronicles and Berossus," *Iraq* 37 (1975): 39–55 at 51.

91 Fr. 1 & 3 Verbrugghe & Wickersham. It is unclear if Berossus held Oannes himself to have come several times, or if this is an extrapolation from his commentators, but at least he reported a series of sage fish-men, the seven Apkallu of Mesopotamian legend. Cf. Verbrugghe and Wickersham, *Berossus and Manetho*, 71; McCants, *Founding Gods,* 93.

92 Berossus writes of the king Xisouthros, based on the Mesopotamian legends of Ziusudra, Atrahasis and Utnapishtim.

93 Jos., *Ant.* 1.93: Τοῦ δὲ κατακλυσμοῦ τούτου καὶ τῆς λάρνακος μέμνηνται πάντες οἱ τὰς βαρβαρικὰς ἱστορίας ἀναγεγραφότες.

94 Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 289–98.

before the letter of Manetho is proof of its inauthenticity.[95] However, since Manetho included the flood of Deucalion in his chronography, placed in his 18th dynasty, it is entirely possible that he also included a version of the Biblical or Mesopotamian flood-myth. Both the epitomes of Eusebius and Africanus have the heading before the first dynasty of mortals "Concerning the dynasties of the Egyptians after the Flood," though these headings might have been added later by Syncellus. Moyer also suggests that the Egyptian counterpart to the flood and ark could have been the myth of how Osiris was trapped in a chest, which drifted down the Nile and ended up near Byblos in Phoenicia, according to Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris*.[96] That would explain the rupture between the dynasty of gods and that of demigods after Osiris, but the flood should have occurred after the dynasties of gods, demigods, and the spirits of the dead according to Syncellus' account of Manetho. Possibly there were several catastrophes which explained the decline of the succeeding dynasties in the original treatise of Manetho, but there is no trace of them in the surviving portions.

We would do well to remember that Manetho wrote in the same milieu that the Septuagint first appeared in. He knew the Exodus-story,[97] and Josephus later wrote against his interpretation of this event. For Josephus, it was important to demonstrate the superiority of the Jewish Antiquities to those of the Egyptians, and he therefore appropriated the motif of the stelae of Thoth for Seth and his progeny, and placed the stela of stone in the land of Seiris, a name that is best explained with reference to Manetho and the Dog Star.

Another trait that has been used to argue against Manethonic authorship of the letter, is the claim to respond to Philadelphus' demand for knowledge of the future. As Adler formulates it: "Offering to Ptolemy Philadelphus Hermetic prognostications about the future of the universe, 'Manetho' here plays the role of Hermetist far better than he does the Egyptian annalist."[98] This, however,

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95 Ian S. Moyer, "Berossus and Manetho," in *The World of Berossos: Proceedings of the* 4th *International Colloquium on "The Ancient Near East between Classical and Ancient Oriental Traditions", Hatfield College, Durham 7th–9th July 2010* (ed. Johannes Haubold, Giovanni B. Lanfranchi, Robert Rollinger, and John Steele; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 213–32 at 218–20. Moyer also argues that Manetho did not try to upstage Berossus, since there are fewer years in his chronography than in that of Berossus.

96 Moyer, "Berossus and Manetho," 219; Plut., *Is. Os.* 13–18 (356A–358B).

97 Cf. Russel E. Gmirkin, *Berossus and Genesis, Manetho and Exodus: Hellenistic histories and the date of the Pentateuch* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), who controversially claims that the Pentateuch was composed *after* Manetho and Berossus, and was influenced by them.

98 Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 66.

draws a false distinction between the disinterested historian/annalist on the one hand and the sage/occultist on the other. The historical Manetho was an Egyptian priest, and for him such a distinction would be wholly foreign. The ideal of the professional historian was a fairly recent Greek invention at Manetho's time. Manetho knew of Herodotus, but was critical of his portrayal of Egyptian history.[99] As a priest, and possibly a high priest of Heliopolis, Manetho's daily duties would involve opening the temple every day to perform the daily temple ritual, in which the very creative forces of the cosmos came into play. As persons who had direct contact with the deity, such priests were widely considered to have predictive powers, indeed the *ḥm-nṯr* high priest was called a προφήτης in Greek, while the High Priest of Heliopolis also had the title "Greatest of Seers."[100] Robert K. Ritner has expertly demonstrated that in Egyptian tradition, the distinction between magic and religion was non-existent: the ritual experts of the temples wielded magical power, *heka*, and used it in temple, royal, and private contexts.[101] There is thus nothing odd about Manetho offering prognostications, indeed the priest Hor will do the same thing in his letters to the Ptolemaic kings a century later.[102] Jonathan Z. Smith has in fact characterized the king list of Manetho as "proto-apocalyptic,"[103] while Ian Moyer has demonstrated the comparable literary structures between Manetho's work and the prophetic *Demotic Chronicle*, and shown that Manetho furthermore probably included a version of the *Prophecy of the Lamb*, as we shall be able to confirm shortly.[104] There are also certain uses of the Sothic cycle that will make it understandable why Manetho would claim to present knowledge of the future.

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99 Manetho fr. 88. It is unclear if "against Herodotus" (πρὸς Ἡρόδοτον) is an independent work, or a part of the *Aigyptiaka*. Cf. O. Kimball Armayor, "Herodotus Influence on Manethon and the Implications for Egyptology," *CB* 61 (1985): 7–11, who argues that Manetho relied on Herodotus and Greek historians rather than Egyptian sources, rightly criticized by Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 127 n. 134.

100 Cf. John Gwyn Griffiths, "The Faith of the Pharaonic Period," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman* (ed. Arthur H. Armstrong; New York: Crossroad, 1986), 3–38 at 16.

101 Ritner, *Mechanics*.

102 Ray, *Archive of Hor*.

103 Smith, *Map is not Territory*, 74.

104 Moyer, *Egypt,* 129–33.

2.2.3.2 The Lists of God-Kings

Immediately after the letter of Manetho, Syncellus informs us that, "thereafter Manetho proceeded to narrate about the five Egyptian classes [of kings] in thirty dynasties, called by them gods, demigods, spirits of the dead, and mortal men."[105] This must mean that in the book that Syncellus had before him, these classes of kings by necessity followed immediately after the letter. It is therefore important to take the dynasties of gods into consideration, since they tie together the letter of Manetho and the first mortal dynasties. As we shall also see later, the divine dynasties are relevant to the genealogy of Hermes Trismegistus.

Syncellus does in fact preserve a passage listing the first dynasty of gods and demigods, which he says Manetho wrote to Ptolemy Philadelphus, like the letter.[106] The improbable length of the reigns of these gods and demigods have been shortened by "some of our historians," Syncellus explains; the Egyptian years supposedly only lasted a lunar month in the times of the gods, and a season in the times of the demigods. Thus, the 9000 "lunar years" reported for the first god-king, Hephaestus, are shortened to 727 ¾ solar years, and the 100 "seasonal years" of the demigod Horus is shortened to 25 solar years. According to the Neoplatonist Proclus, it was Eudoxus (fourth c. BCE) who first came up with this way to deal with the exaggerated time-spans in the ancient chronographies of the Orientals, but the theory was later also accepted by the Egyptian priests, as reported by Diodorus Siculus.[107] Syncellus has likely taken his list of gods from the Egyptian monk Panodorus, who made Manetho's

105 Sync. 41: μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα καὶ περὶ ἐθνῶν Αἰγυπτιακῶν πέντε ἐν λ′ δυναστείαις ἱστορεῖ τῶν λεγομένων παρ' αὐτοῖς θεῶν καὶ ἡμιθέων καὶ νεκύων καὶ θνητῶν. Trans. Waddell in the appendix as Pseudo-Manetho, while the section that follows immediately in Syncellus is deemed to be the authentic fragment 2. It is unclear what the five classes refer to, since only four are then listed. Lepsius, *Die Chronologie der Aegypter*, 421–22, claims that the five refer to gods, demigods, Aëritai (= spirits of the dead), Mestraioi and Aigyptioi. The latter three are taken from the Old Chronicle (see below) however, and cannot simply be grafted onto the four classes mentioned here. Sterling (*Historiography and Self-Definition*, 133) wonders why Manetho had no theogony or cosmogony, but of course we cannot be sure that he did not, since we mostly have only the epitomes preserved.

106 Sync. 32, deemed authentic by Waddell (= fr. 3), but inauthentic by Adler and Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos*, 25 n. 1, who claim: "Since this text is unattested in the other witnesses to Manetho, it is widely assumed that Synk.'s text is based on the *Book of Sothis*, a work pseudonymously attributed to Manetho." But the Armenian version of Eusebius, *Excerpta Latina Barbari*, Lydus and Malalas preserve similar lists.

107 Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 75–76; Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.26.1–5; Procl., *In Tim.* 1.102. Cf. Anne Burton, *Diodorus Siculus: Book I. A Commentary* (EPRO 29; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 13.

dynasties of gods and demigods correspond to the time of the Watchers and the Giants before the flood: the 12.843 years of gods and demigods were thus reduced by Panodorus to 1184 years, fitting the period he postulates between the Watchers and the Flood (Anno Mundi 1058–2242).[108] Since the list of gods and demigods in Syncellus contains the reduced reigns calculated by Panodorus, Syncellus' direct source for the list must have been Panodorus.

However, we know that Manetho's work too started with an account of gods, demigods and spirits of the dead, since the accounts of the first mortal dynasty in the epitomes of Eusebius and Africanus are both prefaced with "in succession to the spirits of the dead (and) the demigods,"[109] which clearly means that both compilers must have preserved an account of this semi-divine dynasty. Indeed, the Armenian version of Eusebius preserves a list of gods, demigods and spirits of the dead that partly corresponds to that of Panodorus.[110] We know that Manetho drew on Egyptian king-lists,[111] and the only somewhat intact such list we possess, known as the Turin Canon, also begins with gods, transfigured spirits (*ȝḫ.w*) and the followers of Horus (*šmsw-Ḥr*).[112] Likewise, the famous Palermo Stone has a similar sequence, though these lists of mythic kings seem often to be a source of embarrassment and therefore ignored in scholarly literature.[113] Manetho's dynasty of gods is the Memphite adaptation of the Heliopolitan Ennead, which places Ptah before Atum-Re.[114] The lists can be presented synoptically as follows:[115]

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108 Böckh, *Manetho*, 65. Cf. Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 75–80.

109 Manetho fr. 6 & 7: μετὰ νέκυας ⟨καὶ Eus.⟩ τοὺς ἡμιθέους.

110 Jean-Baptiste Aucher, *Eusebii Pamphili Caesariensis episcopi: Chronicon bipartitum. Graeco-Armeno-Latinum* (Venice: S. Łazar, 1818), 200 = Manetho fr. 1. German translation can be found in Josef Karst, *Eusebius Werke V: Die Chronik, aus dem Armenischen übersetzt mit textkritischem Commentar* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1911).

111 Jaromir Malek, "The Original Version of the Royal Canon of Turin," *JEA* 68 (1982): 93–106 at 104; Redford *Pharaonic King-Lists*, 206–30; Verbrugghe and Wickersham, *Berossos and Manetho*, 103–7.

112 Redford, *Pharaonic King-Lists*, 13; Eduard Meyer, *Aegyptische Chronologie* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1904), 105–29; Alan H. Gardiner, *The Royal Canon of Turin* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1997); Kim Ryholt, "The Turin King-List," *Ägypten und Levante* 14 (2004): 135–55.

113 John Tait, "Introduction—'… since the time of the Gods,'" in *Never Had the Like Occured: Egypt's view of its past* (ed. John Tait; London: UCL Press, 2003), 7.

114 Diodorus gives a list beginning with Helios, but then adds that some place Hephaestus in front.

115 Cf. Verbrugghe and Wickersham, *Berossus and Manetho*, 186. I see no reason to juxtapose the god-kings with historical predynastic rulers, as these authors have done.

Turin Canon	**Armenian Eusebius (Manetho fr. 1)**	**Sync. 19 (Panodorus)**	**Joh. Mal., *Chron.* 2.1–4**	**Excerpta Latina Barbari (Manetho fr. 4)**	**Sync. 56: "Ancient Chronicle"**	**John Lydus, *De Mens.* 4.86**
(Greater Ennead)	**Gods**	**Gods**	**Gods**	**Gods**	**Gods**	**Gods**
(Ptah)	Hephaestus	Hephaestus	Hephaestus	Hephaestus	Hephaestus	Hephaestus
Ra	Helios	Helios	Helios	Sol	Helios	Helios
(Shu)		Agathodaimon	Sosis[a]	Sosinosiris		
Geb	Cronus	Cronus			Cronus	Cronus
Osiris	Osiris	Osiris & Isis	Osiris	Horus	12 gods	Osiris
Set	Typhon	Typhon		Typhon		Typhon
(Lesser Ennead)		**Demigods**		**Demigods**	8 **Demigods**	
Horus	Horus	Horus	Horus			
Thoth	…	Ares	Thoulis			
Maat		Anoubis	Sostris	Anubis		
Har-…		Herakles				
		Apollo				
		Ammon		Amusis		
		Thithoes				
		Sosos				
		Zeus				
	Bidis					
Transfigured Spirits (*ȝḫ.w*)	**Demigods**					
Memphis	Another					
This	Memphis					
	This					
Followers of Horus (*šmsw-Ḥr*)	**Spirits of the Dead**			**Spirits of the Dead**	**15 of Sothic Cycle**	

a The eclogae (Paris gr. 1336, p. 237) gives Σέσωστρις instead of Σῶσις, and Θοῦλος instead of Θούλις.

As we see, several of the lists demonstrate grave confusion concerning the names and positions of the gods, with the best preserved being the one of Panodorus given by Syncellus. All the other lists just give either Cronus or Agathodaimon/Shu, with the highly corrupt *Excerpta* even conflating Shu and Osiris as Sosinosiris, and placing Horus before Typhon. Such confusion between the versions is also common in the listing of historical kings.

In the list given by Syncellus, Hephaestus corresponds to Ptah, Helios to Atum-Re, Agathodaimon to Shu, Cronus to Geb, while Isis and Osiris are well enough known to keep their Egyptian names.[116] The identification of Agathodaimon with Shu relies on his position in the dynasty, which is given to "Sôsis" in Johannes Malalas' 6th century *Chronography*.[117] The identification of Cronus with Geb is attested in Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris* (12 [355D–F]), and in Diodorus Siculus (1.27). We notice that Horus is classified under the demigods in Syncellus' list, while he is classified with the gods in the Armenian version of Eusebius' *Chronicle*.[118] Eusebius is probably closer to the original list of Manetho here, since we know that Panodorus, the source of Syncellus, tried to make the period of gods, demigods and spirits of the dead conform to the rule of fallen angels before the Flood in the *Book of Watchers*. Eusebius, on the other hand, simply declared the rule of gods to be a fabrication (Sync. 42), and would therefore have had no vested interest in changing the status of Horus. Eusebius does not give us any of the names of the gods between Horus and Bidis, though we can assume that at least some of the demigods of Panodorus fit in here. Unfortunately, the Turin Canon is not of much help in this section due to its fragmentary state, yielding only Horus, Thoth, Maat and yet another Horus. Possibly the two Horuses are the Elder and the Younger Horus.

116 Manetho, fr. 3 = Sync., *Chron.* 19.1f.: πρώτη δυναστεία. Αἰγυπτίων α′ ἐβασίλευσεν Ἥφαιστος ἔτη ψκ′_δ′. β′ Ἥλιος Ἡφαίστου ἔτη π′_ς′. γ′ Ἀγαθοδαίμων ἔτη νς′_ιβ′. δ′ Κρόνος ἔτη μ′. ε′ Ὄσιρις καὶ Ἶσις ἔτη λε′. ς′ Τύφων ἔτη κθ′. ζ′ Ὧρος ἡμίθεος ἔτη κε′. θ′ Ἄρης ἡμίθεος ἔτη κγ′. κτλ.

117 Joh. Mal., *Chron.* 2.2: μετὰ δὲ τὴν τελευτὴν Ἡλίου βασιλέως, υἱοῦ Ἡφαίστου, ἐβασίλευσε τῶν Αἰγυπτίων Σῶσις, καὶ μετὰ τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ ἐβασίλευσεν Ὄσιρις καὶ μετὰ Ὄσιριν ἐβασίλευσεν Ὧρος, καὶ μετὰ Ὧρον ἐβασίλευσε Θοῦλις, ὃς παρέλαβε μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἕως τοῦ Ὠκεανοῦ. Thoth is perhaps reflected in the otherwise unknown Θοῦλις, probably to be emended to Θοῦθις, cf. PGM III.471 (Θούθ); IV.218 (Θουθουϊ), 3243 (Θουθοι); XIII.923 (Θούθ); Manetho, fr. 42.80 (Θούθμωσιν). Cf. Gerard Mussies, "The Interpretatio Judaica of Hermes-Thoth," in *Studies in Egyptian Religion: Dedicated to Professor Jan Zandee* (ed. Matthieu H. Van Voss; SHR 43. Leiden: Brill, 1982), 89–120 at 117.

118 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.25 and Herod., *Hist.* 2.144 make Horus the last god. Herodotus further provides three dynasties of gods: 1) Pan (= Amun-Min or Banebdjedet of Mendes, cf 2.46): 8 gods; 2) Herakles: 12 gods; 3) Dionysus–Osiris and Horus (2.145). From Dionysus to Amasis there were 15.000 years, while from Herakles to Amasis there were 17.000 years (2.43).

It is possible that Thoth corresponds to Thoulis in Malalas, though this is far from certain. Bidis could be identical with the prophet Bitys of Iamblichus, who presented the Hermetic system to Ammon from stelae he had found in Saïs (8.5; 10.7), and the Bitos of Zosimus who wrote that Thoth was the first human.[119] There is furthermore a King Pitys, a Pitys writing to King Ostanes, and a Pitys the Thessalian in the Great Paris Magical Papyrus (PGM IV.1928, 2006, 2140).

Another Horus ends the list of the Lesser Ennead in the Turin Canon, though because of the fragmentary state we cannot determine if he had an epithet, perhaps Harsiese, Horus son of Isis, to distinguish him from the first Horus on the list. After the second Horus, there are traces of a red line, which means that the dynasty has ended: The subsequent kings of column 1 and the beginning of column 2 are missing. These are probably the demigods and "another line of kings" of Eusebius. The latter could perhaps explain the reference to two dynasties of demigods mentioned by Panodorus,[120] or perhaps the dynasties of Memphis and This are both subgroups of the demigods.

The dynasties of Memphis and This are listed in the Armenian version of Eusebius, and the Turin Canon likewise has a Memphite dynasty, though the Hieratic sign of the succeeding dynasty is unclear, and could be read either as "the Northlands" or as "This."[121] The parallel demonstrates that Eusebius' list of divine kings stuck closer to Manetho than the list of Panodorus, which Syncellus preserved. The reason that Syncellus preserved Panodorus' list instead of that of Eusebius, is that he agreed with the latter that the gods and demigods were all fabrications of Manetho, and wished to ridicule the people who attempt to harmonize them with Scripture: "But Panodoros, without good reason in my opinion, criticized him (sc. Eusebius) in this matter, claiming that he was unable to solve the meaning of the historians, which Panodoros thinks he has succeeded in doing through a kind of novel method."[122] The list of di-

119 Zos. Pan., *Mém. auth.* 1.7. Cf. Mertens, *Zosime*, 83–84 n. 46, who accepts the link to Iamblichus' Bitys, and also provides the manuscript Paris gr. 1918 146v, where Plato is said to follow Hermes and Bitys on the doctrine of two souls. Mertens discards a connection to Bithus Dyrracinus (Pliny, *Nat.* 28.82). Cf. John Whittaker, "Harpocration and Serenus in a Paris Manuscript." *Scriptorium* 33 (1979): 59–62.

120 Manetho fr. 2 (= Sync. 42).

121 Meyer (*Aegyptische Chronologie*, 119) follows Möller in reading "North," while Gardiner reads "This."

122 Sync. 41–42: Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ὁ Εὐσέβιος μεμφόμενος αὐτοῖς τῆς φλυαρίας εὐλόγως συνέγραψεν, ὃν ὁ Πανόδωρος οὐ καλῶς, ὡς οἶμαι, ἐν τούτῳ μέμφεται, λέγων ὅτι ἠπόρησε διαλύσασθαι τὴν ἔννοιαν τῶν συγγραφέων, ἣν αὐτὸς καινότερόν τι δοκῶν κατορθοῦν λέγει. Trans. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, 56.

vine rulers is thus included by Syncellus in order to demonstrate the deficiency of this "novel method" of Panodorus and others. There is nothing at all that indicates that the list of gods and demigods ever preceded the list of Egyptian kings that Syncellus uses in his Universal Chronography, and which scholars have named the *Book of Sothis* and attributed to Pseudo-Manetho.

2.2.3.3 The So-Called Book of Sothis

The Book of Sothis is the title usually given by commentators to the letter of Manetho to Philadelphus, the list of gods and demigods from Hephaestus to Zeus, and the list of kings that Syncellus places after his synoptic presentation of the epitomes of Manetho according to Africanus and Eusebius. However, the list of kings does not correspond to the description of the *Book of Sothis* that Syncellus provides after having quoted the letter of Manetho, since it contains no gods or demigods, nor does it order the kings into thirty dynasties. In fact, Syncellus never refers to the list as the *Book of Sothis*, nor does he ascribe the list to Manetho. I will therefore refer to it as the Mestraia-list in the following, after the title given by Syncellus: "The years of the kings of Egypt, anciently known as Mestraia."[123]

Although the list has nothing to do with Hermes, it will be necessary to review the arguments given for designating this list Ps.-Manetho's *Book of Sothis*, and for associating the letter of Manetho to Ptolemy II with it. All commentators that I have seen simply accept the conclusions reached in the nineteenth century, by such luminaries as Bunsen, Böckh and Lepsius, and so these authors must inevitably be discussed at some length.

1) One argument is that Syncellus does not state from where he derived the list, and that it is authoritative for him, which ostensibly points towards Manetho.[124] It is further claimed that every time Syncellus mentions Manetho, he means the Mestraia-list.[125] But Syncellus habitually accuses Manetho of being a liar,[126] and it is hard to believe that he would have adopted a list wholesale if he thought it belonged to such a dubious authority. Moreover, nearly every time Manetho is mentioned it is in connection with his division of kings into dynasties.

123 Sync. 102: Αἰγύπτου τῆς πάλαι Μεστραίας βασιλεῖς ἔτη. Trans. Adler and Tuffin.

124 Lepsius, *Die Chronologie der Aegypter*, 418.

125 Lepsius, *Chronologie der Aegypter*, 419; Heinrich Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie* (2 vols.; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1898), 2:206f.; Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 172f.

126 Sync. 16.5–6; 17.2–3, 13–14; 18.22–24; 24.6–9; 35.14–15; 38.15–16.

2) The Sothic cycle is mentioned only once in the Mestraia-list, where Syncellus states that the 25th king, Koncharis, belongs to "the sixteenth dynasty of the Sothic cycle [or: cycle of the dog], as it is known in Manetho."[127] This demonstrates that Syncellus does *not* identify the Mestraia-list with the *Book of Sothis* by Manetho, since this is a cross-reference to the actual Manetho. In the epitomes of Africanus and Eusebius none of the kings of the sixteenth dynasty are named, so it might be that the name Koncharis is from Panodorus' or Annianus' version of Manetho. Proof of this is furnished at the very end of the Mestraia-list, which sums it up: "The kingdom of the Egyptians extended from AM [anno mundi] 2776 up to the year 4986, over 10 dynasties, 86 kings, and 2211 years."[128] There is in other words no sixteenth dynasty in the Mestraia-list, which means that it cannot be identified with the Sothic cycle or *Book of Sothis*. It is unclear what exactly the 10 dynasties refer to, since the Mestraia list does not divide its kings into dynasties.[129] Syncellus has earlier not missed a chance to berate Manetho for his 30 dynasties,[130] which would make the earliest kings predate the flood according to his timeline of sacred history, and the Mestraia-list is a severely shortened, Procrustean version of Manetho, which makes him conform to the chronology of the Old Testament.

3) After Koncharis in the Mestraia-list, there follows a discussion of the dating of the Exodus, which Syncellus tells us took place "during the reign of Misphragmouthosis … the sixth Egyptian king of the eighteenth dynasty according to Manetho, the thirty-seventh from Mestraïm."[131] This statement seems to differentiate between Manetho and the Mestraia-list. Indeed, Misphragmouthosis *is* the sixth king of dynasty 18 in Africanus' epitome of Manetho, but fifth in that of Eusebius, and number 37 in the Mestraia-list. In the same passage, Syncellus states that there is a discrepancy between the 592

127 Sync. 118.2–3: βασιλεύσαντος Κογχάρεως τῆς Αἰγύπτου ἐπὶ τῆς ις′ δυναστείας τοῦ Κυνικοῦ λεγομένου κύκλου παρὰ τῷ Μανεθῷ. Trans. Adler and Tuffin. Böckh, *Manetho*, 77, suggests "dass die Dynastien des Manetho der Hundssternperiode angepasst waren." Cf. Redford, *Pharaonic King-Lists*, 311, for possible Egyptian antecedents for the name Koncharis.

128 Sync. 249: ἕως τοῦ ͵δϟπς′ χρόνου ἡ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων βασιλεία διαρκέσασα ἀπὸ τοῦ ͵βψος′ κοσμικοῦ ἔτους ἐν δυναστείαις ι′, βασιλεῦσι δὲ πς′, ἔτεσι ͵βσια′. Trans. Adler and Tuffin.

129 Lepsius, *Die Chronologie der Aegypter*, 423, corrects the reading to 12. He thinks the ending belongs to the "Sothis-list." Straight after this passage follows a mention of the Persian 27th dynasty, which must again refer to Manetho.

130 Ibid., 424–25.

131 Sync. 118.9–12: Ἰώσηππος δὲ ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ πρὸς ἔλεγχον Ἀπίωνος λόγῳ περὶ τῆς ἐξ Αἰγύπτου πορείας τοῦ λαοῦ γενομένης ἱστορῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ ιβ′ μετὰ τοὺς προγραφέντας κε′, τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν ἐπὶ τοῦ Μισφραγμουθώσεως, ἤτοι Φαραώ, ς′ βασιλέως Αἰγύπτου, κατὰ τὴν ιη′ παρὰ τῷ Μανέθωνι δυναστείαν, λζ′ ὄντος ἀπὸ τοῦ Μεστραΐμ. Trans. Adler and Tuffin.

years in Manetho's 17th, 18th and 19th dynasty, and the 594 years of 23 kings in Josephus. Neither figure can be identified in any of the extant lists, but Syncellus goes on to say that "because in the particular matter Josephus harmonizes with scripture, we follow him instead, arranging the sequence of kings from AM 3477 to 4070 as is set out below."[132] This proves that the Mestraia-list follows Manetho in some passages, and Josephus in others.

4) The next king on the Mestraia-list after Koncharis is Silites, who "was the first of the six kings of the 17th dynasty in Manetho."[133] Silites must be equated with the first of the Shepherd kings, called Saïtes in Africanus, Eusebius, and a scholium on Plato, but Salitis by Josephus.[134] Thus, naming him Silites would seem to derive from Josephus, while placing him in the 17th dynasty echoes the tradition of Eusebius and the scholium, unlike the more historically correct Africanus, who places the six kings and the start of the Shepherd kings in the 15th dynasty.

5) The reign of the sixth ruler of dynasty 17, Certos, is given as "29 years according to Josephus, 44 years according to Manetho,"[135] and Syncellus uses the number of Josephus in the Mestraia-list, yet again demonstrating that the list does not derive from Manetho. Neither Josephus nor Manetho, it should be mentioned, ever mentions Certos in any text known to us: the sixth ruler in Josephus is Assis, who is given a reign of 49 years (*C. Ap.* 1.81). After Certos in the Mestraia-list is Aseth, who is father of the king who evicted the Shepherds, called Amôs by Africanus and Amôsis by Eusebius. Since Syncellus complained that these authors did not include Aseth (Sync. 70), Lepsius argued that Syncellus here relies on the Sothis-book by Ps.-Manetho.[136] But Syncellus states that he found reference to Aseth "in other copies and in Josephus'

132 Sync. 118.22–24: ἡμεῖς δὲ μᾶλλον τῷ Ἰωσήππῳ διὰ τὴν γραφικὴν συμφωνίαν ἐν τούτῳ ἑπόμενοι ἀπὸ τοῦ ,γυοζ' ἔτους τοῦ κόσμου στοιχειοῦμεν ἐφεξῆς ἕως τοῦ ,δο' ἔτους, ὡς ὑποτέτακται. Trans. Adler and Tuffin. Adler points out that the following list does not in fact conform to Josephus either, while Lepsius (ibid., 426) counts 592 years for the six shepherd-kings and 17 kings from Tethmosis to Amenophis. But Josephus adds several hundred years after the six shepherd kings before Tethmosis. Lepsius admits that the 592 years cannot be clearly identified in his "Sothis-Buch."

133 Sync. 118.26: πρῶτος τῶν ς' τῆς ιζ' δυναστείας παρὰ Μανεθῷ. Trans. Adler and Tuffin.

134 Cf. John M.G. Barclay, *Against Apion* (vol. 10 of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*; ed. Steve Mason; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 54.

135 Sync. 142.27–28: Αἰγυπτίων λα' ἐβασίλευσε Κήρτως ἔτη κθ' κατὰ Ἰώσηππον, κατὰ δὲ τὸν Μανεθὼ ἔτη μδ'. Trans. Adler and Tuffin.

136 Lepsius, *Die Chronologie der Aegypter*, 416.

two-volume work *Against Apion*."[137] The "other copies" clearly do not refer to the Mestraia-list, but probably to Panodorus and Annianus. Josephus does in fact list the father of Amosis in his *Against Apion*, but gives both kings different names: "Thoummosis, son of Misphragmouthosis"[138] clearly corresponds to Syncellus' "Thetmosis, son of Aseth."[139] Syncellus explains, correctly, that it was standard Egyptian practice to give their kings several names (Sync. 70), and that Thetmosis is an alternative name for Amosis. It is therefore likely that Aseth is an alternative name of Misphragmouthosis. This can again explain the two kings between Aphophis and Aseth: The Mestraia-list gives Sethos (50 yrs) and Certos (44/29 yrs) while Josephus gives Iannas (ca. 50 yrs) and Assis (ca. 49 yrs). Since neither Africanus nor Eusebius provide names for any kings between Aphophis and Amosis, the Mestraia-list obviously depends on Josephus here, while providing the kings with alternate names, possibly from Panodorus or Annianus.[140]

6) The question if Certos ruled for 29 or 44 years has to do with the dating of the lives of Joseph and Moses. According to Syncellus, everyone agrees that Joseph ruled Egypt in the reign of Aphophis (Sync. 69). Syncellus criticizes Eusebius for erroneously making Aphophis the last king of the 17th dynasty with a reign of 14 years, saying that "all Eusebius' predecessors affirm that he reigned for sixty-one years,"[141] as does Africanus, who however places him last in the 15th dynasty. The Mestraia-list also gives Aphophis a reign of 61 years. If Syncellus believed this was the authentic Manetho, why does he not criticize Eusebius for diverging from the original, instead of disagreeing with his predecessors, by which Syncellus must mean Africanus and Josephus?

Next, Syncellus makes a cryptic statement: "Now if there is an apparent excess of years from Aphophis up to Amosis, this is caused by the incoherence of the Egyptians, since this is the way ⟨they⟩ found them in Manetho: for eighty years are more than the years from Joseph to Moses."[142] Even though the

137 Sync. 70.17–20: ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ Τέθμωσις καλούμενος υἱὸς Ἀσήθ· ἡμεῖς δὲ δεύτερον αὐτὸν τῆς ιη′ δυναστείας κατετάξαμεν ἔν τε ἄλλοις ἀντιγράφοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς πρὸς ἔλεγχον Ἀπίωνος Ἰωσήππου δυσὶ λόγοις περὶ τῆς ἐξ Αἰγύπτου πορείας τοῦ λαοῦ, οὕτως αὐτὸν εὑρόντες. Trans. Adler and Tuffin.

138 Jos., *C. Ap.* 1.88: τὸν δὲ Μισφραγμουθώσεως υἱὸν Θούμμωσιν. Trans. Adler and Tuffin.

139 Sync. 70.17: Τέθμωσις καλούμενος υἱὸς Ἀσήθ. Trans. Adler and Tuffin.

140 On the names of the Hyksos-kings of the fifteenth dynasty, see Jürgen von Beckerath, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen* (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1984), 77–78.

141 Sync. 77.14–15: πάντων ξα′ ἔτη ὁμολογούντων αὐτὸν βεβασιλευκέναι τῶν πρὸ Εὐσεβίου. Trans. Adler and Tuffin.

142 Sync. 77.19–21: εἰ δὲ τοῖς χρόνοις πεπλεονακέναι δοκεῖ ἀπὸ Ἀφώφεως ἐπὶ Ἄμωσιν, τοῦτο παρὰ τῆς Αἰγυπτίων ἔπαθεν ἀσυμφωνίας, οὕτω παρὰ Μανεθῶ κείμενα εὑρ⟨όντ⟩ων· πλείω γὰρ π′

immediate context here is a comparison between Eusebius' and Africanus' account of the years of Aphophis and Amos(is), it seems that the 80 years refer to the Mestraia-list. According to the calculations of Syncellus, there should only be 65 years from the death of Joseph to the birth of Moses in the reign of Amosis (Sync. 135). In the Mestraia list, this number is attained if one accepts Josephus' claim that Certos reigned 29 years, instead of Manetho's claim of 44 years.[143] This would give some support to the claim that Syncellus believed that the Mestraia-list was the work of Manetho. However, the confusion can best be explained by Syncellus' reference to the "incoherence of the Egyptians," who are likely Panodorus and Annianus, the Egyptian monks. Africanus and Josephus agree that there were six kings of shepherds of the fifteenth dynasty, whom they name, and after whom there is another 518 (Africanus) or 511 (Josephus) years of shepherd-kings. Syncellus accuses Eusebius of tampering with these dates, placing the shepherd kings in the seventeenth dynasty in accordance with his later dating of Moses.[144] Likewise, Panodorus and Annianus would have drastically reduced the length between Aphophis in the fifteenth dynasty and Amosis in the 18th, but ended up with 80 years between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses, still too large a number for Syncellus.[145]

7) As we now have seen, the Mestraia-list does not subdivide its kings into dynasties, but sometimes refers to the dynastic divisions of Manetho. This is a major point in my argument that the letter of Manetho never prefaced the Mestraia-list: as mentioned, Syncellus states that after the letter Manetho goes on to discuss the thirty dynasties of the Egyptians. The Mestraia-list is not, however, divided into dynasties. The nineteenth century authorities, to whom all recent commentators defer in the question of the "*Book of Sothis*," nevertheless managed to fit the list into a dynastic framework. I will paraphrase the

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τῶν ἀπὸ Ἰωσὴφ ἐτῶν ἐπὶ Μωυσέα. Trans. modified from Adler and Tuffin, who translate "… disagreement among the Egyptians, since this is the way I found them in Manetho." However, I emend εὑρών, which does not have a clear subject.

143 We learn that Joseph was 40 years old and 10 years into his rule when Jacob came to Egypt, and lived another 70 years (Sync. 135). He came to Egypt in the 4th year of the rule of Aphophis and became lord of Egypt in the latter's 17th regnal year (Sync. 125). That means that he died in the 36th year of Sethos. Then 14 more years of Sethos' reign + 29 Certus + 20 Aseth, means that Moses was born in the 2nd year of Amosis, 65 years after the death of Joseph. However, if Certus instead ruled 44 years, Moses would have been born in the 17th year of Amosis. Syncellus is inconsistent on the year of Moses' birth, cf. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, 184 n. 4.

144 Sync. 70–71; 77.

145 John van Seters, *The Hyksos: A New Investigation* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1966), 152–61.

argumentation of Richard Lepsius on this issue, since he builds on Hölckh and Bunsen, and is followed by Unger:

1. Lepsius first suggests that the 30 dynasties are not only mortal kings in "Sothis," but that the four first dynasties are gods, demigods (x2) and spirits of the dead, and that the 30th dynasty of "Sothis" would thus correspond to the 26th of Manetho, with Amosis as the last king (p. 425).
2. Lepsius follows Böckh (*Manetho*, 228) in postulating that the "16th dynasty of Sothis" went from Koncharis back to Ramesse, who is mentioned as "Amesse" of the 16th dynasty in the Armenian version of Eusebius. This would make the dynasty last 190 years with 8 kings, compared to 190 years with 5 kings in Eusebius (pp. 425–7).[146]
3. Lepsius then goes on to remove the anonymous 5th and 6th king in order to make the remaining 15, preceding Ramesse, correspond to the "15 of the Sothic Cycle," mentioned by the *Ancient Chronicle* (pp. 428–9).
4. Next, he emends the 10 dynasties mentioned at the end of the Mestraia-list, into which all the 86 kings are divided, to 12 dynasties: ιβ βασιλεια was corrupted to ι βασιλεια (pp. 429–30).
5. In order to make 30 dynasties, there must thus be 18 preceeding Mestraïm, but here Lepsius has already forgotten the "sixteenth dynasty of the Sothic cycle," which should actually have been numbered the twentieth if he was correct (p. 430; Lepsius does indeed number it dynasty 20 in his reconstruction of "Sothis", p. 442).
6. All the 16 gods and demigods of Manetho's list are each said to constitute an individual dynasty, while the demigods are in fact gods, who Panodorus made into demigods at a whim (pp. 430–1).
7. That leaves the demigods and spirits of the dead as the 17th and 18th dynasty (p. 431). At this point, Lepsius has forgotten that he earlier posited two dynasties of demigods, in order to make four dynasties before Menes (§ 1).

The argument is in my view forced, and even more so when Lepsius goes on to rework the numbers of years allotted to each king. There is nothing that indicates that the Mestraia-list was called the *Book of Sothis* or the *Sothic Cycle*, nor that it claimed to derive directly from the hand of Manetho. Rather, the

146 The confusion is complete when "Sothis" goes on to say that the 17th dynasty of Tanis consisted of four kings ruling for 254 years, and proceeds by listing *six* kings ruling for 254 years, a mistake Lepsius claims is due to the four kings of Eusebius' dynasty 17, which is partly parallel to the six kings of Africanus' dynasty 15.

list makes use of the epitomes of Africanus and Eusebius, along with Josephus, and likely Panodorus and Annianus. Editors have thus created a mirage, artificially connecting the letter of Manetho (Sync. 40–41), the list of gods and demigods (Sync. 19), and the Mestraia-list (Sync. 102ff.). Georg F. Unger suggested that the Egyptian monk Panodorus was the author of this *Book of Sothis*,[147] whereas William Adler suggested it was his source,[148] but the question is irrelevant for our purposes: there is nothing in the Mestraia-list relevant to Hermetism, nor was it ever attributed to Manetho.

2.2.3.4 The Sothic Cycle of Manetho

The title *Book of Sothis* thus only appears in the letter of Manetho, and has been attached to the Mestraia-list by modern editors on untenable grounds. On the contrary, the reference to dynasty 16 in the Sothic cycle of Manetho, indicates that the author or editor of the list knew Manetho's work by that name. Indeed, if we were to consider the letter as an authentic introduction to the history of Manetho, the title *Book of Sothis* would be the title of this work, instead of the *Aigyptiaka*. Syncellus only refers to Manetho's work as *Aigyptiaka* when he contrasts it to the *Chaldaika* of Berossus, and it is not at all obvious that it was used as a title for the work.[149] At any event, it was far from uncommon for ancient works to be known under several titles, and especially a generic title such as *Aigyptiaka* could easily also be known as *Book of Sothis*, lending it a more exotic flare. If that were the case, then this would be significant for the overall purpose of Manetho's work. According to the letter of Manetho, Ptolemy was inquiring into the future, so why does Manetho provide him with a survey of past kings? The answer seems to be that the Sothic cycles are associated with speculations on the Great Year, and the different "seasons" of each cycle were invariably connected with cosmic catastrophes, deluges and conflagrations, as noted by the Egyptian priest in Plato's *Timaeus*.[150] The placement of the reign of Philadelphus in the scheme of Sothic cycles could

147 Georg F. Unger, *Chronologie des Manetho* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1867), 31.

148 Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 57.

149 Sync. 38: ἡ παρὰ Μανεθῶ περὶ τῶν πρὸ τοῦ κατακλυσμοῦ καὶ δυναστειῶν τῶν Αἰγυπτίων συγγραφὴ ψευδής, πρῶτον μὲν ἐξ ὧν ἑκάτερος αὐτῶν ἑαυτὸν συνιστῶν, ἤγουν οἱ τῶν Χαλδαϊκῶν καὶ οἱ τῶν Αἰγυπτιακῶν συγγραφεῖς, θάτερος οὐ μέμνηται οὐδὲ συνιστᾷ ὁ τῶν Αἰγυπτιακῶν τὰ τῶν Χαλδαϊκῶν, περὶ αὐτούς, ὥς φασι, ψευδόμενοι γεγονότα, οὐδ' ὁ τῶν Χαλδαϊκῶν τὰ τῶν Αἰγυπτιακῶν, ἀλλ' ἕκαστος τὸ ἴδιον ἔθνος καὶ τὴν πατρίδα δοξάζων ἀράχνας ὑφαίνει·

150 Plato, *Tim.* 39d and 22c–23b; cf. Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 51–55, who also refers to Seneca (*Nat.* 3.29.1), who credits Manetho's main competitor, Berossus, with predictions based on the Great Year. Cf. Bartel L. van der Waerden, "Das Grosse Jahr und die Ewige Wiederkehr," *Hermes* 80 (1952): 129–55 (who has nothing to say about the Sothic Great Year); Godefroid

thus serve to indicate if catastrophes were imminent, but also at what time jubilees should be celebrated, namely after each of the 25 units of 1461 years.[151]

A passage in Tacitus provides a testimony to Egyptian writers, around 34 CE, who stated that the phoenix arrives at the beginning of each such 1461–year cycle, and that it had done so in the reign of Ptolemy III, Amasis, and Sesosis.[152] This Amasis refers, as we shall see, to Amosis of the 18th dynasty, and not to the homonymous Pharaoh of the 26th dynasty, as all commentators assume,[153] and likewise Sesosis refers probably to Sesostris III, not Sethos I.[154] Now, between the death of Dareius III (330 BCE)—the last king on Manetho's list—and the accession of Ptolemy III (246 BCE) there are 84 years, and in the calculation of Eusebius there are 1377 years from the reign of Amosis to the death of Dareius. This adds up to exactly 1461 years. This can hardly be a coincidence, although it should be underlined that the sum is reached by adding the totals from Eusebius' epitome as given in Syncellus. In dynasties 18 and 26 the count of individual reigns does not add up to the total given at the end of each dynasty, and moreover the Armenian version gives a different total for the latter dynasty.[155]

The totals of Africanus yield another sum altogether. However, in dynasty 24, consisting only of Bocchoris, a so far unexplained number appears right after the mention of the famous prophesying lamb in this reign: 990 years.[156] Bocchoris is only given a 6 year-reign in Africanus, contra the 44 years Eusebius gives him. The solution to the puzzle is however given in the fragmentary

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de Callataÿ, *Annus Platonicus: A Study of World Cycles in Greek, Latin and Arabic Sources* (Louvain-la-neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1996).

151 Cf. Rolf Krauss, "Egyptian Sirius/Sothic Dates and the Question of the Sothis-Based Lunar Calendar," in Hornung et al., *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, 439–57 at 442ff.

152 Tac., *Ann.* 6.28: *sunt qui adseverent mille quadringentos sexaginta unum interici, prioresque alites Sesoside primum, post Amaside dominantibus, dein Ptolemaeo, qui ex Macedonibus tertius regnavit.* Cf. Roelof van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix: According to Classical and Early Christian Traditions* (EPRO 24; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 26–32, 105–9, 238–46 on the phoenix and the Sothic cycle.

153 Ibid., 108ff.; Jacoby, *FgrH* IIC:307; Anthony J. Woodman, *Tacitus: The Annals* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 2004), 180 n. 87; John Yardley and Anthony Barrett, *Tacitus: The Annals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 455; Ronald Martin, *Tacitus: Annals V & VI* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2001), 160. Both kings are named Ἄμωσις/Αμώς in the Manetho epitomes.

154 As in van den Broek, *Phoenix*, 108.

155 Dyn. 18: Total 348, actual count 351/353; Dyn. 26: Total 163, actual count 168; Armenian total 167, actual count 173.

156 Sync. 82.27: Βόχχωρις Σαΐτης ἔτη ϛ′, ἐφ' οὗ ἀρνίον ἐφθέγξατο, ἔτη ϡϟ′. Waddell assumed a lacuna, while Mosshammer emended 990 to 95.

Demotic remains of the *Prophecy of the Lamb*, whose concluding words are: "Behold here the curse that Pre made against Egypt from the sixth regnal year of Pharaoh Bakenrenef."[157] Here the lamb speaks prophetically *in the sixth year* of Bocchoris' reign, and mentions a king that would rule at the end of a 900 year cycle.[158] If we replace the 6 years of Bocchoris in Africanus with the 44 years in Eusebius, the totals of Africanus' dynasties eighteen to twenty-four yield 990, and so I would suggest that this number is in fact the total years of these dynasties. Such totals for several dynasties are common in the first book of Manetho, and we could emend the text in this way: Βόχχωρις Σαΐτης, ἔτη ϛ′ ἐφ' οὗ ἀρνίον ἐφθέγξατο. ⟨ὁμοῦ ἔτη μδ′. ὁμοῦ τῶν ζ′ δυναστειῶν τῶν μετὰ τὸν Ἀμῶσιν⟩ ἔτη ϡϟ′.[159] The number 44 is probably the total for dynasty 24, which Eusebius confused with the reign of Bocchoris since he is the only king in this dynasty given a name.[160] There is no immediately apparent reason as to why

157 Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 449.

158 Ludwig Koenen, "A Supplementary Note on the Date of the Oracle of the Potter," *ZPE* 54 (1984): 9–13 at 10 n. 9, claims that the 990 should originally have been 900, "an ideal number which can be explained from Egyptian beliefs … On the level of historical expectation, the reference to this number deferred the restoration of Egypt to the beginning of the next Sothis period." Cf. Karl-Theodor Zauzich, *Das Lamm des Bokchoris* (Wien: Brüder Hollinek, 1983), 173 n. 5; Ludwig Koenen, "The Prophecies of a Potter: A Prophecy of World Renewal becomes an Apocalypse," in *Proceedings of the 12th International Congress of Papyrology* (ed. Deborah H. Samuel; ASP 7; Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1970), 249–54 at 252f. I am not qualified to comment on the Demotic text, but from the different translations of the sentence it seems ambiguous if the 900 years refer to the time when the disasters will begin, i.e. directly after the reign of Bocchoris, or the time when the promised king will restore order, i.e. 900 years after Bocchoris. If the latter were the case, as all commentators seem to think, then the period of woes would not finish until about 200 CE, i.e. two hundred years after the ms. This can hardly be the case, though Koenen suggested that it referred to the end of the Sothic cycle which was celebrated under Antoninus Pius in 139 CE (Koenen, "The Prophecies of a Potter," 252–53). Instead the 900 years must refer to the period *before* Bocchoris, like the 990 years of Manetho. Cf. Heinz-Josef Thissen, "Das Lamm des Bokchoris," in *Apokalyptik und Ägypten: Eine kritische Analyse der relevanten Texte aus dem griechisch-römischen Ägypten* (ed. Andreas Blasius and Bernd U. Schipper; OLA 107; Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 113–38 at 133, claims the 900 years is the length the future king will rule, but then on p. 134 that it is the period of woes. Hoffmann, *Ägypten*, 183, emends: "es wird ⟨nach⟩ der Vollendung von 900 Jahren geschehen." Interestingly, the promised king is prophesied to enter Syria and find Egyptian gods, which recalls the victories of the Ptolemies as Hoffmann (ibid., 184) notes, and one might add: especially Euergetes, who is praised for bringing gods back after the Laodicean War in the Canopus Decree.

159 Compare the total for dynasty 4, fr. 14.

160 Cf. Jürgen von Beckerath, *Chronologie des Pharaonischen Ägypten: die Zeitbestimmung der ägyptischen Geschichte von der Vorzeit bis 332 v. Chr.* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp

the explanation of the number 990 disappeared, perhaps the gaze of a copyist at some point wandered from ϵ̓τη μδ′ to ϵ̓τη ϡϛ′.

Adding the remaining dynasties of Africanus to the number 990, we again get a sum of 1377 years,[161] which would once again place Ptolemy III's accession to the throne in year 1461 from Amosis. Even though the numbers of individual reigns and the totals are hopelessly corrupt, it seems that both the epitome of Eusebius and that of Africanus were keen to preserve the number 1377 from Amosis to Darius III, so as to show that the accession of Ptolemy III started a new Sothic cycle. The only possible explanation I can suggest for this oddity, is that both epitomes must have been redacted individually at some point by someone who was aware of this Sothic scheme, perhaps because it was spelt out more clearly in the introduction or epilogue, now lost to us. The totals of dynasties 18–31 in the two epitomes can be seen synoptically as follows:

Dyn.	Africanus	Eusebius apud Syncellus
18	16 kings of Diospolis	14 kings of Diospolis
	Total: 263[a]	Total: 348[b]
19	6 kings of Diospolis	5 kings of Diospolis
	Total: 209 (204 counted)	Total: 194
20	12 kings of Diospolis	12 kings of Diospolis
	Total: 135	Total: 178 (Arm. 172)
21	7 kings of Tanis	7 kings of Tanis
	Total: 130 (114 counted)	Total: 130
22	9 kings of Bubastis	3 kings of Bubastis
	Total: 120 (116 counted)	Total: 49
23	4 kings of Tanis	3 kings of Tanis
	Total: 89.	Total: 44

von Zabern, 1997), 92–93, mentions a stela erected early in the sixth and last year of the historical Bocchoris, who was preceded by his father Tefnakht. Their combined reign did not amount to 44 years, but historical truth is probably preempted by the Sothic scheme here. Legends accreted to Bocchoris: Diod. Sic. 1.45, 65, 79 and 94; Ael., *Nat. an.* 12.3; Plut., *Vit. pud.*, cf. Thissen, "Der Lamm des Bokkhoris," 120; id. "'Apocalypse now!' Anmerkungen zum Lamm des Bokchoris," in *Egyptian Religion: The Last Thousand Years. Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Jan Quaegebeur, Part 2* (ed. Willy Clarysse, Antoon Schoors, and Harco Willems; OLA 85; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 1043–53.

161 Excluding the regnal months.

Dyn.	Africanus	Eusebius apud Syncellus
24	Bocchoris of Saïs, 6 ⟨total: 44, for the total so far:⟩ 990	Bocchoris of Saïs, 44
25	3 Ethiopian kings Total: 40	3 Ethiopian kings Total: 44
26	9 kings of Saïs Total: 150 + 6 months	9 kings of Saïs Total: 163 (168 counted; Arm. 167, 173 counted)
27	8 Persian kings Total: 124 + 4 months	8 Persian kings Total: 120 + 4 months.
28	Amyrteos of Saïs, 6	Amyrtaios of Saïs, 6
29	4 kings of Mendes Total: 20 + 4 months	4 kings of Mendes Total: 21 + 4 months.
30	3 kings of Sebennytos Total: 38	3 kings of Sebennytos Total: 20
31	3 Persian kings, ending with Dareius III (Total: 9)	3 Persian kings, ending with Dareius III (Total: 16)
Total	1377	1377
+ 84 years from the death of Dareius III to the accession of Ptolemy III: 1461 years.		

a Only 259 counted, but the reign of Amos is not numbered.

b The actual count is impossible to establish, as it varies in the mss. The total of 348 remains.

If the numbers derive from Manetho, then we must date the *Aigyptiaka*/*Book of Sothis* to a date early in the reign of Euergetes. In that case, we finally understand why Manetho claimed to foretell the future in the letter to Ptolemy II Philadelphus: the king-list would demonstrate that a new Sothic cycle, and thus a new golden era, would commence with his successor, Euergetes. Such a *vaticinium ex eventu* is standard practice for Egyptian oracular predications: the narrative framework is commonly that of a prophet having come before a past king to predict coming disasters, followed by their resolution under the reign of the current king, the one ruling at the time the prediction is made.[162] There is thus nothing new in the prophecy of Manetho, only that instead of

162 Jan Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 107–10, 386–88; Jan Bergman, "Introductory

placing the prophecy in the reign of a Pharaoh of the distant past, the narrative framework is here placed in the immediately preceding reign. If we assume that Plutarch was correct in making Manetho one of the counselors of Ptolemy I or II in connection with the creation of the Sarapis-cult, then Manetho would be an influential and by now elderly presence in the court of Euergetes.[163] Indeed, a papyrus dated to 241 BCE mentions a still living Manetho as a person of great importance, who is thus likely to be our Manetho.[164] Perhaps Philadelphus had commissioned him to write his account of Egyptian antiquities, no doubt as a response to Berossus and the Septuagint, but the work was not finished by the time Philadelphus died. The work that went into establishing the king-list must have been painstaking; not only did Manetho have to consult temple records, probably of several temples, but he also had to elaborate on the individual reigns with glosses—sometimes lengthy ones, as those recounted by Josephus—and then write it all down in Greek, a language to which he was probably a novice. The letter to the posthumous recipient was then written near the end of his work, in order to underline the relation between Manetho and his patron,[165] the prestigious ruler and saving god, Ptolemy II Philadelphus. The letter made it appear that the Sothic cycle from Amosis was a prophecy of the ruler to succeed Philadelphus, namely Euergetes, who would inaugurate a new cycle. An alternate explanation, but one which seems to me less satisfying, would be that Manetho really did write the three books under Philadelphus, and that the lists were thereafter re-edited in the reign of Euergetes. At any

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Remarks on Apocalypticism in Egypt," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (ed. David Hellholm; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983), 51–60.

163 Jerome dates the entry of Sarapis in Alexandria to 286, the Armenian Eusebius to 278. If Manetho was involved in the establishment of the cult (as the statue-base in the Serapeum in Carthage indicates), and was still active in the reign of Euergetes, he would necessarily have been a young man when he was consulted by either Soter or Philadelphus. Manetho is a possible source for the story of the introduction of Sarapis as we find it in Plutarch (*Is. Os.* 28, 361F–362A) and Tacitus (*Hist.* 4.81–84). But cf. Philippe Borgeaud and Youri Volokhine, "La formation de la légende de Sarapis: une approche transculturelle," *ARG* 2 (2000), 37–76 at 42–45, who aver that the source was probably not Hellenistic, and instead suggest the *Aigyptiaka* of Apion (1st c. CE) against whom Josephus wrote his *Contra Apionem*. However, Tacitus states that his sources were Egyptian priests, which would fit Manetho better than Apion. As Borgeaud and Volokhine point out, Manetho did write on Sarapis according to Theodoret, *Therap.* 2.61 (= Manetho fr. 76), and Plutarch obviously had access to Manethoniana.

164 P. Hibeh 1.72.4ff. = T2 Verbrugghe & Wickersham. Cf. Waddell, *Manetho*, xiv.

165 Cf. Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1987), 138ff.

rate, the tally of dynasties eighteen to thirty-one[166] must be from the reign of Euergetes, functioning as a piece of royal propaganda, since there would be no discernable reason for later editors to ascribe to this ruler the role of an instigator of a new cosmic era.

Admittedly, Manetho does not mention any appearance of the phoenix. Tacitus notes that the meaning of the arrival of the phoenix in year 34 CE was disputed among Greek and Egyptian commentators, and that most people claimed that the bird arrived every 500 years, as does Herodotus (2.73), while others—no doubt the Egyptians—claimed the number was 1461.[167] Tacitus points out that, "what happened in antiquity is unclear; but between Ptolemy and Tiberius was a period of less than two hundred and fifty years. Some people have for this reason believed that the bird in this case was a false phoenix."[168] Tacitus does not mention the possibility of getting rid of Ptolemy III in the chain, and thereby obtain just about 500 years between Amasis of the 26th dynasty (r. 570–526 BCE) and Tiberius (b. 42 BCE, r. 14–37 CE); apparently, the Egyptian tradition of a Sothic cycle between Amosis and Ptolemy III was fixed, and as we have seen the name Amasis must refer to the eighteenth, not twenty-sixth dynasty pharaoh. This tradition must thus have become fixed well before the reign of Tiberius, and since the phoenix is said to arrive at the temple of the sun in Heliopolis, in order to cremate its father on the altar there,[169] who

166 Lacqueur suggests that Manetho's list only consisted of 30 dynasties, and that the 31st was added shortly after. However, Eusebius (*Chron.* [Arm.] 63.18–12 Karst) writes that Manetho's history went down to Darius.

167 Tac., *Ann.* 6.28: *Paulo Fabio L. Vitellio consulibus post longum saeculorum ambitum avis phoenix in Aegyptum venit praebuitque materiem doctissimis indigenarum et Graecorum multa super eo miraculo disserendi. de quibus congruunt et plura ambigua, sed cognitu non absurda promere libet. sacrum Soli id animal et ore ac distinctu pinnarum a ceteris avibus diversum consentiunt qui formam eius effinxere: de numero annorum varia tradunt. maxime vulgatum quingentorum spatium: sunt qui adseverent mille quadringentos sexaginta unum interici, prioresque alites Sesoside primum, post Amaside dominantibus, dein Ptolemaeo, qui ex Macedonibus tertius regnavit, in civitatem cui Heliopolis nomen advolavisse, multo ceterarum volucrum comitatu novam faciem mirantium*. Chaeremon (fr. 3) claimed it was 7.006 years.

168 Ibid. (cont.): *sed antiquitas quidem obscura: inter Ptolemaeum ac Tiberium minus ducenti quinquaginta anni fuerunt. unde non nulli falsum hunc phoenicem neque Arabum e terris credidere, nihilque usurpavisse ex his quae vetus memoria firmavit*. Trans. Yardley and Barrett, *Tacitus*, 199.

169 Ibid. (cont.): *confecto quippe annorum numero, ubi mors propinquet, suis in terris struere nidum eique vim genitalem adfundere ex qua fetum oriri; et primam adulto curam sepeliendi patris, neque id temere sed sublato murrae pondere temptatoque per longum iter, ubi par oneri, par meatui sit, subire patrium corpus inque Solis aram perferre atque adolere.*

would be a better authority for this tradition than the High Priest of Heliopolis, Manetho?

Other Egyptian sources also indicate an appearance of the phoenix around the time of Euergetes. A recently published Demotic apocalypse mentions the appearance of the phoenix in connection with a Chaos-description. The dating of the apocalypse is uncertain; Joachim F. Quack suggests sometime between the founding of Alexandria, which is mentioned in the text, and the early second century CE, though a mention of Syria could point towards a Ptolemaic military campaign against this country.[170] An appearance of the phoenix and a campaign against Syria would both fit well in the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes, who started his reign by campaigning vigorously in Syria. Despite the fragmentary state of the papyrus, the apocalypse seems to have an anti-Greek tenor, contrasting Alexandria negatively with Memphis, like the *Oracle of the Potter*.[171] Perhaps the apocalypse arose in a priestly milieu dissatisfied with the Ptolemies, and the connection of the phoenix with cosmic disasters was meant to counteract Ptolemaic propaganda heralding the start of a new cycle? Although we can find no explicit connection between Ptolemy III and the phoenix besides the testimony of Tacitus, his royal nomenclature clearly implies a program of restoration:

> With Ptolemy III, complex royal names begin to appear laden with elaborate religious components and epithets of praise. In epithets such as 'lord of the jubilee-festivals as well as Ptah Tatjenen' (in the golden-name of Ptolemy III), the pharaoh is, henceforth and until the time of Ptolemy XII, regularly compared with 'king' Ptah who is at the head of the dynasty of the gods in the list of kings (Royal Papyrus of Turin, Manetho): this is a definite sign of the transfer of the king's ideology onto the Ptolemies ...[172]

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haec incerta et fabulosis aucta: ceterum aspici aliquando in Aegypto eam volucrem non ambigitur.

170 Joachim F. Quack, "Prophetischer Text aus Tebtynis," in Blasius and Schipper, *Apokalyptik und Ägypten*, 253–74 at 273–74.

171 Ibid., 269. Cf. Ludwig Koenen, "Die Apologie des Töpfers an König Amenophis oder das Töpferorakel," in Blasius and Schipper, *Apokalyptik und Ägypten*, 139–87.

172 Günther Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire* (trans. Tina Saavedra; London: Routledge, 2001), 80. Cf. Ronald J. Leprohon, *The Great Name: Ancient Egyptian Royal Titulary* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 179–80, who gives the full Golden Horus name: "The one great of strength who has done beneficial things, the possessor of Sed festivals like Ptah Tatjenen and a sovereign like Re" (*wr-pḥty ir ꜣḫwt nb ḥbw-sd mi ptḥ tꜣ-ṯnn ity mi rʿ*).

"Lord of the jubilee-festivals," the *Sed* festivals renewing royal power, was incidentally also a title of the Egyptian phoenix, the *benu* of Heliopolis.[173] Since the *benu* is nowhere else connected with the Sothic cycle, and indeed there is no proof of any awareness of the wandering year in Egypt prior to the Canopus decree (see below), it might be suggested that the association between the Sothic period and the phoenix was created by Manetho, as a way to order his king-lists as heralding the present new era, the beginning of a new Golden Age. Such a propagandistic use of religion would suit well the co-creator of the Hellenistic savior-god Sarapis. The myth of the phoenix-*benu* was a new way to "see double,"[174] to unite both Greek and Egyptian beliefs in the service of the Ptolemaic ideology of kingship.[175]

The chain Sesostris—Ahmose—Ptolemy III, in whose reigns the phoenix appeared according to Tacitus, makes perfect sense from what we know of the royal ideology of these rulers: The early Ptolemies modeled themselves on the royal ideology of the New Kingdom, taking their throne-names from the kings of this period.[176] Indeed, the Amosis who was the founder of the New Kingdom must have been ascribed a special civilizing role in the unabridged version of Manetho, for Porphyry recounts his testimony that Amosis put an end to human sacrifice to Hera, substituting human victims with waxen images.[177] This testifies to Amosis' civilizing role in bringing the chaos of the second intermediate period to a halt, and the paradigmatic activity of instituting order is suppressing human sacrifice. Sesostris was also very much seen as an ideal Pharaoh by the Greeks, as witnessed by Herodotus, Hecataeus of Abdera, and Aristotle.[178] Just as the Ptolemies looked back to the New Kingdom,

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173 Van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix*, 22–23.

174 Cf. Susan A. Stevens, *Seeing Double: Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003).

175 On possible allusions to the phoenix in the Hermetica, cf. Andrè-Jean Festugière, "Le symbole du Phénix et le mysticisme hermétique," *Mon. Piot* 38 (1941): 147–51, repr. in *Hermétisme et mystique païenne* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967), 256–60.

176 Joseph G. Manning, *The Last Pharaohs: Egypt under the Ptolemies, 305–30 BC* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 101.

177 Porph., *Abst.* 2.55.2: κατέλυσε δὲ καὶ ἐν Ἡλίου πόλει τῆς Αἰγύπτου τὸν τῆς ἀνθρωποκτονίας νόμον Ἄμωσις, ὡς μαρτυρεῖ Μανεθὼς ἐν τῷ περὶ ἀρχαϊσμοῦ καὶ εὐσεβείας. Waddell (fr. 85) follows Jacoby (*FgrH* 609 fr. 14) in postulating a separate work, Περὶ ἀρχαϊσμοῦ καὶ εὐσεβείας, from which the fragment derives. I think a more economical explanation would be that it refers to Manetho, "in discussing ancient custom and religion," i.e. in the full version of the *Aigyptiaka*.

178 Cf. Murray, "Hecataeus," 161–64; Sally A. Ashton, "The Ptolemaic Royal Image and the Egyptian Tradition," in Tait, *Never Had the Like Occurred*, 213–23 at 218–19.

the kings of the New Kingdom took the 12th dynasty as their model for emulation, and in particular Sesostris III.[179] The Sothic scheme of Manetho also gives us a possible explanation for the grossly exaggerated numbers that divide the 12th and 18th dynasty, which were historically only about 200 years apart: the author probably wanted to fit a Sothic cycle between Sesostris and Amosis, although admittedly the numbers between these kings do not add up to 1461 in either Eusebius (1278/1578 yrs) or Africanus (1666 yrs).

We should take notice that Tacitus does not mention any arrival of the phoenix previous to Sesosis (= Sesostris), and indeed we look in vain for any traces of a Sothic cycle between the twelfth dynasty and any kings of the Old Kingdom in Manetho.[180] One would, however, expect the legendary Menes to inaugurate a Sothic cycle, and indeed that seems to be the case: the total of the first six dynasties adds up to 1497 years, and this would place the end of the cycle in the reign of Phiops (Pepi II), in his 71th regnal year. This king reportedly reached the considerable age of a hundred, with a reign of 94 years, which has been confirmed by the Turin Canon and is generally accepted historically, after which the Old Kingdom rapidly declined. According to Manetho, he was succeeded by Methousouphis, who ruled only one year, and then by Nitokris, who reigned 12 years. Manetho adds that she was noble and beautiful, and built the third pyramid, but her reign apparently ended in chaos as the subsequent seventh dynasty consists of five kings ruling only 75 days, or seventy kings ruling 70 days, according to Eusebius and Africanus respectively. Herodotus relates the story of Nitocris drowning her brother's murderers before killing herself on a pyre (*Hist.* 2.100). The prophecy of the *Admonitions of Ipuwer*[181] is considered to reflect the Middle Kingdom view of the period following the sixth dynasty as a time of chaos, a chaos that the 12th dynasty put themselves in direct opposition to. Some commentators claim that the recipient of the prophecy in the narrative framework, called "the Lord of All," refers to the elderly Pepi II, while others suggest that it is the creator god Atum.[182] Also the

179 Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 199.

180 If we calculate from the total number of dynasties 1–10—2300 years in both Africanus and Eusebius—then the Sothic cycle preceding Sesostris would start in the fourth dynasty, in year 41 of Souphis (= Cheops/Khufu), who built the pyramids and wrote a holy book (according to Africanus; Eusebius does not give the individual reigns for this dynasty). But there is nothing that points to this being a correct interpretation of Manetho's intentions.

181 Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 149ff.; Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 188ff.

182 Creator as recipient: Winfried Barta, "Das Gespräch des Ipuwer mit dem Schöpfergott," *SAK* 1 (1974): 19–33; Ronald J. Williams, "The Sages of Ancient Egypt in the Light of Recent Scholarship," *JAOS* 101 (1981): 1–19 at 4. More recently Roland Enmarch, *A World Upturned:*

Middle Kingdom *Prophecies of Neferty*,[183] though set in the reign of Snefru, predicts the calamities of the First Intermediate Period, while the *Instruction of King Amenemhet I for His Son Sesostris I* portrays the time before Sesostris as chaotic.[184] Manetho probably knew of the latter teaching, since he too records that Amenemhet died at the hands of his eunuchs.[185] Thus the theory imposes itself that Manetho, aware of these prophecies of disaster after the sixth dynasty, made the period from Menes to Pepi II correspond to a Sothic cycle, which is considerably longer than the actual historical period between these kings, less than a thousand years.[186] The rupture between the Sothic cycle ending with Pepi II and the one beginning with Sesostris III would then be due to royal ideology: while the Ptolemies modeled themselves on the New Kingdom Pharaohs, who again modeled themselves on the Middle Kingdom, the latter did not look back to the Old Kingdom, but instead placed themselves in opposition to the chaos of the First Intermediate Period.[187] The Old Kingdom was not declared a classic, normative past in the same way that the Middle Kingdom was by the New, and the New Kingdom by the Ptolemies.[188]

An additional fact can be adduced to support this theory: the Canopus decree records the (unsuccessful) attempt of Euergetes to introduce a leap day every fourth year, so that the festival calendar would thereafter follow the seasons, and so that this day would be a festival to the king and his queen, the benevolent gods.[189] Even though this calendar–reform did not succeed until the Julian calendar, it demonstrates that Euergetes saw his reign as a new era in terms of the Sothic cycle. The decree was issued in Euergetes' ninth year, in which the rising of Sothis coincided with the first day of the month Payni,

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Commentary on and Analysis of the Dialogue of Ipuwer and the Lord of All (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 30–31, decided in favor of a human king as recipient.

183 Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 139ff.; Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 214ff.

184 Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1:135ff. Cf. Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 166ff., who points out that *The Story of Sinuhe* also records trouble before the accession of Sesostris.

185 Manetho, fr. 34–36. Cf. Waddell, *Manetho*, 67 n. 2.

186 Beckerath, *Chronologie des Pharaonischen Ägypten*, 187–88.

187 Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 106–14.

188 Ibid., 272–73.

189 E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Decrees of Memphis and Canopus* (3 vols.; Books on Egypt and Chaldea 17–19; New York: Henry Frowde, 1904), 3:10f. For the Demotic text, cf. Wilhelm Spiegelberg, *Der demotische Text der Priesterdekrete von Kanopus und Memphis* (*Rosettana*) (Heidelberg: Carl Winters, 1922); Christian Onasch, "Zur Königsideologie der Ptolemäer in den Dekreten von Kanopus und Memphis (Rosettana)," *APF* 24–25 (1976): 137–55 at 139.

which should therefore be celebrated as the New Year festival hence. The day was to be preceded by festivities on the five epagomenal days, with an additional sixth day every four years, "and their seasons of the year shall at all times be in accordance with ordinances whereon the heavens are founded to this very day."[190] Thus the Hieroglyphic version. The Greek version states that, "the seasons will forever follow the precise proportions according to the present disposition of the cosmos (= heaven)."[191] The notion of the present disposition (κατάστασις) of the cosmos is evocative of the periodic revolution of the Great Year (ἀποκατάστασις), the restoration of the cosmos.[192] Further circumstantial evidence that Ptolemy III Euergetes presented himself as the herald of a new Sothic cycle is that he erected a temple to Isis-Sothis at Aswan.[193]

If we presume that Manetho was still alive at the time of the Canopus-decree in 237 BCE, as is not unlikely in view of the letter of 241 BCE that mentions him, and if we also accept that he was consulted by Soter concerning Sarapis around 286 BCE, we can conclude that he reached an advanced age. Presuming that he could have been no younger than thirty when consulted by Soter, he needs, however, only have reached the age of eighty to accommodate these important dates in his career.

2.2.3.5 Manetho's Sothic Cycles and the Books of Hermes

It should be emphasized that the Sothic Cycles of Manetho were tools of propaganda, to portray Euergetes as the king who would usher in a new Golden Age, and do not reflect prior Sothic speculations, as far as we know. In Egyptology, the Sothic Cycle has played a huge part in developing the basic chronology, with Meyer's *Aegyptische Chronologie* (1904) postulating 4240 BCE as the starting point of the first Sothic cycle counted, and thus the first ever historically dated year.[194] However, later research has shown that there is no proof at all, prior to the Canopus decree, that the Egyptians were aware that

190 Budge, *Decrees*, 3:26.

191 Budge, *Decrees*, 3:168: ὅπως δὲ καὶ αἱ ὧραι τὸ καθῆκον ποιῶσιν διαπαντὸς κατὰ τὴν νῦν οὖσαν κατά{στα}στασιν τοῦ κόσμου.

192 Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque*, 33 n. 3, 39 n. 1, 549. The notion is originally Stoic, cf. Chrys., *Fr. log. et phys.* 989.47–49: πλέον δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς προγνώσεως γίνεται τὸ κατάταξιν λαμβάνειν εἰς τὴν τοῦ παντὸς διοίκησιν, χρειώδη τῇ τοῦ κόσμου καταστάσει, τὸ ἑκάστου ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The Hieroglyphic parallel has *sḫprw* "plan, counsel, governance, conduct, condition, fortune, affair, fashion, nature, custom" (Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* [Oxford: Oxford Univesity Press, 1962], 242–43).

193 Edwyn R. Bevan, *The House of Ptolemy: A History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty* (Chicago: Ares publishers, 1927, repr. 1995), 215.

194 Cf. Richard A. Parker, *The Calendars of Ancient Egypt* (SAOC 26; Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1950), 51–56.

their 365-day calendar wandered, and that the heliacal rising of Sothis would therefore only happen on the same date once every 1461 year.[195] The question of the dating of the Egyptian calendar far exceeds the scope of the present discussion, for our purposes it suffices to note that the Canopus decree proves that Egyptian priests were aware of the wandering civil year by the time of Euergetes' reign, and that Manetho could very well have played a central role in the unsuccessful attempt to introduce a leap day every fourth year. Supporting this proposal is the testimony of Iamblichus, that Manetho claimed there were 36,525 books of Hermes.[196] This number is the total number of years in 25 Sothic Cycles, and in light of Manetho's use of the scheme of Sothic cycles, supposedly taken from the stelae of Thoth-Hermes, the testimony of Iamblichus might be authentic. Further support of this hypothesis can be found in the *Ancient Chronicle*, which Syncellus transmits to us as one of the sources of Manetho, but which is in fact much younger.[197] Syncellus summarizes it like this:

τὰ πάντα ὁμοῦ τῶν λ' δυναστειῶν ἔτη Μγ' καὶ ,ϛφκε'. ταῦτα ἀναλυόμενα, εἴτουν μεριζόμενα παρὰ τὰ ,αυξα' ἔτη εἴκοσι πεντάκις, τὴν παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις καὶ Ἕλλησιν ἀποκατάστασιν τοῦ ζῳδιακοῦ μυθολογουμένην δηλοῖ, τοῦτ' ἔστι τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σημείου ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ σημεῖον, ὅ ἐστι πρῶτον λεπτὸν τῆς πρώτης μοίρας τοῦ ἰσημερινοῦ ζῳδίου, κριοῦ λεγομένου παρ' αὐτοῖς, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς Γενικοῖς τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ καὶ ἐν ταῖς Κυραννίσι βίβλοις εἴρηται.

All told, 36,525 years consisting of 30 dynasties. When this total is broken up, or divided, twenty-five times into periods of 1461 years, it describes the revolution of the zodiac fabricated by the Egyptians and Greeks, that is the revolution from one sign of the zodiac back to the same sign. This is the first minute of the first degree of the equinoctial sign of the zodiac, the Ram as it is called by them, just as it is stated in the *Genika* of Hermes and the books of the *Kyrannides*.[198]

195 Otto Neugebauer, "Die Bedeutungslosigkeit der 'Sothisperiode' für die älteste ägyptische Chronologie," *AO* 17 (1938): 69–95; Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton, *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, 47.

196 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.1: τὰς μὲν οὖν ὅλας Ἑρμῆς ἐν ταῖς δισμυρίαις βίβλοις, ὡς Σέλευκος ἀπεγράψατο, ἢ ταῖς τρισμυρίαις τε καὶ ἑξακισχιλίαις καὶ πεντακοσίαις καὶ εἴκοσι πέντε, ὡς Μανεθὼς ἱστορεῖ, τελέως ἀνέδειξεν.

197 Cf. Böckh, *Manetho*, 40–57; Unger, *Chronologie*, 20–28; Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus*, 2.215–7. A dating after Eusebius is proposed.

198 Sync. 57.10–17. Trans. Adler and Tuffin.

Now the king-list in the *Ancient Chronicle* has little in common either with the epitomes of Manetho or the Mestraia-list, and so it is likely that it is the organizational scheme of Sothic cycles that suggested to Syncellus (or his source) that it had been a source for Manetho. The *Genika* or *Genikoi Logoi* of Hermes are well known from Hermetic literature, as we shall see,[199] and the *Cyranides* that we have today is a medico-magical manual also attributed to Hermes, though with no trace of this doctrine of the Sothic cycle in the text we have extant.[200] Syncellus also mentions these two Hermetic sources in another passage, again discussing the Great Year:

Χαλδαίους μὲν ἀπείρους αἰῶνας τῆς κοσμογονίας εἰσάγοντας, Ἕλληνας δὲ καὶ Αἰγυπτίους ἐν εἴκοσι πέντε περιόδοις ἐτῶν λέγοντας τῶν ἀπὸ ͵αυξα′, ἤτοι ἐν λς′ χιλιάσι καὶ φκε′ τὴν κοσμικὴν ἀποκατάστασιν γίνεσθαι λέγοντας, ἤγουν ἀπὸ σημείου εἰς σημεῖον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν, ὡς ἐν τοῖς Γενικοῖς Ἑρμοῦ καὶ ταῖς Κυραννίσι φέρεται

Whereas the Chaldaeans introduces the creation of the universe with endless ages,[201] the Greeks and Egyptians say that in 25 periods of 1461 years (that is, 36,525 years) a cosmic revolution takes place, namely a revolution from heavenly sign to sign, as it is reported in the *Genika* of Hermes and the *Kyrannides*.[202]

Christian Wildberg has suggested that Syncellus has taken the reference to the *Genika* from the *Kyrannides*, where Hermes would have said something like "As we have also said before in the *General Discourses* …" Böckh suggested that the reference to the two works was from the *Ancient Chronicle* itself.[203] More likely, the source of Syncellus for both the *Ancient Chronicle* and the comparison of its Sothic cycle with the *Genika* and *Kyrannides* was the Egyptian monk Panodorus, who was familiar with such literature. A Hermetic excerpt in Stobaeus presents itself as the crown of the *Genika,* and

199 CH X, 1, 7; XIII, 1; SH III, 1; VI, 1; *Disc.8–9* (NHC VI 63,1–4). Cf. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes,* 98; Christian Wildberg, "The General Discourses of Hermes Trismegistus" in *Handschriften- und Textforschung heute: Zur Überlieferung der griechischen Literatur. Festschrift für Dieter Harlfinger aus Anlass seines 70. Geburtstages* (ed. Christian Brockmann, Daniel Deckers, Lutz Koch, Stefano Valente; Serta Graeca 30; Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2014), 137–46.

200 Cf. FR 1:201ff.; Dimitris Kaimakis, *Die Kyraniden* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1976).

201 I have modified the translation of Adler and Tuffin here: "Whereas the Chaldaeans ascribe an eternity to the creation of the universe."

202 Sync. 36.10–15. Trans. Adler and Tuffin.

203 Böckh, *Manetho,* 55.

refers to previous astrological *Genika,* so it may have been in one of these that Panodorus found the reference to the Sothic cycle.[204]

The teaching of the Sothic cycle finds a parallel in the fourth century astrologer Firmicus Maternus, who supplies us with the birth-chart of the world, the *thema mundi*, which he claims that the pseudepigraphic Egyptian astrologers Nechepsos and Petosiris took from Hermes.[205] Here we find the Ram in midheaven (MC), and Firmicus affirms that the ancient sages who made the *thema mundi* began with Aries, just like Hermes according to Syncellus.[206] A further indication that Firmicus might be familiar with the same tradition as that of Manetho, is that he states in the very preface to his work that the "sun and all the planets revert to their original position every 1461 years, which is called the 'greater year' (*maior annus*)."[207] In book 3, on the other hand, he states that "the greater revolution" (*maior apocatastasis*) is completed in 300,000 years, after a flood and conflagration.[208] Since the numbers 1461 and 300,000 have nothing to do with each other,[209] and the Great Year is nowhere else attested to consist of 300,000 years, it is just possible that 300,000 is a corruption of 365,525. However, this must remain entirely conjectural.

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204 SH VI, 1. Cf. below, chap. 4.6.5.

205 Firm. Mat., *Math.* 3.prooem.1–1.1, 18. Cf. below, chap. 3.11 on the relationship of Nechepsos and Petosiris with Hermes. Cf. Bouché-Leclerq, *L'Astrologie*, 185–92, for this *thema mundi*.

206 Firm. Mat., *Math.* 3.1.17–18: *Cur autem initium signorum XII ab Ariete esse voluerunt … Retractans itaque genituram mundi, quam diximus a sapientissimis viris prudentissime esse compositam, inveni MC. Geniturae in Ariete esse positum*. The sages are elsewhere said to be "the ancient wise and divine men of Egypt, and the learned men of Babylon" (Firm. Mat., *Math.* 1.prooem. 6: *quicquid Aegypti veteres sapientes ac divini viri Babyloniique prudentes de vi stellarum ac potestatibus divinae nobis doctrinae magisterio tradiderunt*). Cf. Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque*, 129 n. 1. However, Böckh, *Manetho*, 46–47, and Unger, *Chronologie*, 20–21, think that the Great Year of the *Ancient Chronicle* starts in the vernal equinox, when the sun is in Cancer. Syncellus does not actually say this, only that it starts in the equinoctial sign of Aries, without specifying if Aries is the MC, Ascendant, or the heliacal sign. Aries is also placed in MC of the *thema mundi* by Proclus, *In Tim.* 4.93, who adds that this is called a "Dog Year" because of the rise of the Dog-star (Sothis) with Cancer, and Macrob., *In somn. Scip.* 1.21.23, who also attributes the teaching to the early Egyptians (1.21.9).

207 Firm. Mat., *Math.* 1.prooem.5: *quantis etiam conversionibus maior ille quem ferunt perficeretur annus, qui quinque has stellas, Lunat etiam et Solem locis suis originibusque restituit, qui mille et quadringentorum et sexaginta et unius anni circuitu terminator*. My trans.

208 Firm. Mat., *Math.* 3.1.9: *praesertira cum CCC milibus annorum maior apocatastasis, id est redintegratio, per pyrosin aut per cataclysmum fieri consueverit*.

209 De Callataÿ, *Annus Platonicus*, 74–76.

Joachim F. Quack has shown that the origin of the *thema mundi* is the Egyptian start of the year during the heliacal rise of Sothis in Cancer, borrowed from the Babylonian zodiac, and that this is also the constellation shown on the famous Zodiac of Dendera, in the temple of Hathor.[210] Manetho's arrangement of his king-list according to the Sothic cycle, and his attribution of this scheme to Hermes, might be the ancestor of the Great Year attributed to Hermes by Firmicus Maternus, and his sources Nechepsos and Petosiris. The even greater revolution of 365,525 years need only derive from Manetho if we accept Iamblichus' testimony that Manetho mentioned 365,525 books of Hermes. Otherwise, it is likely to be from a later Hermetic astrological treatise which was then used by the *Ancient Chronicle.*

2.2.3.6 Excursus: Pliny on the Arrival of the Phoenix, and the Manilii Astrologers

As mentioned, Tacitus dated the arrival of the phoenix to the year 34 CE. According to Pliny the Elder, the phoenix appeared two years later, in 36 CE, and was displayed by Claudius on the occasion of Rome's eighth centennial (47 CE).[211] Like Tacitus however, he notes that nobody was in doubt that the phoenix was fake. Apparently, the phoenix and the myth of the return of a Golden Age was a useful propaganda tool for the Roman emperors as well. Indeed, Antoninus Pius would a century later celebrate the start of a new Sothic period in the year 138/139 CE, although this time there is no record of the arrival of the phoenix.[212] The very usefulness of such periodic returns for propaganda-purposes is their adaptability: the precise numbers are not essential, but different schemes can be adapted for different purposes, somewhat similarly to astrological predictions. In the case of Pliny, he refers to a certain Manilius as his authority, who merits a closer look. This Manilius, an eminent senator, wrote that the phoenix arrived every 540 years, which was also the duration of the Great Year.[213] Furthermore, in the consulships of P. Licinius

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210 Joachim F. Quack, "Beiträge zu den ägyptischen Dekanen und ihrer Rezeption in der griechisch-römischen Welt" (Habilitationsschrift, Freie Universitet Berlin, 2002). I am grateful to the author for sharing with me a revised version of this important work, awaiting publication.

211 Pliny, *Nat.* 10.2: *Cornelius Valerianus phoenicem devolavisse in Aegyptum tradit Q. Plautio Sexto Papinio coss.; allatus est et in urbem Claudii principis censura anno urbis DCCC et in comitio propositus, quod actis testatum est. sed quem falsum esse nemo dubitaret.* Cf. Martin, *Tacitus: Annals V & VI*, 158–59.

212 Van den Broek, *Phoenix*, 70. Cf. Cens., *Di. nat.* 21.10.

213 Van den Broek, *Phoenix*, 68–69.

and G. Cornelius (97 BCE) he wrote that it was 215 years since the phoenix had last made an appearance, which would bring us to 312 BCE.[214] We should say something about the identity of this Manilius, and then the date he gives for the last appearance of the phoenix. First, if we take the consular date to indicate when he was active, this Manilius cannot be identical to the homonymous astronomical writer, about whom we know nothing except that he wrote an astronomical poem in the time of Augustus and/or Tiberius.[215] Pliny mentions elsewhere one Manilius Antiochus who was the originator of Roman astrology, but he came to Rome as a slave sometime before 82 BCE, and can thus hardly be identical to the senator.[216] But if the slave Manilius Antiochus was the originator of astrology, how do we account for the senator Manilius, who wrote about the calculation of the Great Year nearly twenty years before Antiochus arrived in Rome?[217]

The senator is said to have been self-taught, but before him there were Chaldean astrologers practicing in Rome, before they were evicted in 139 BCE,[218] and the Stoic Diogenes of Babylon was said to espouse astrology in the embassy of philosophers from Athens in 156 BCE.[219] It seems likely that

214 Pliny, *Nat.* 10.2: *vivere annis DXL … et fuisse eius conversionis annum prodente se P. Licinio Cn. Cornelio coss. CCXV*.

215 On this Manilius, cf. below, chap. 3.10. It has been suggested that he was the son or grandson of Pliny's Manilius, but there is no proof for such an assertion.

216 Pliny says he arrived on the same ship as Staberius Eros, who was said by Suetonius (*Gramm.* 13) to have teached the children of those proscribed by Sulla for free. Cf. Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 126, who does not take into consideration Manilius the senator however. Gundel (ibid., n. 8) suggests that the slave is identical to Antiochus of Athens, an influential astrologer who Franz Cumont ("Antiochus d'Athènes et Porphyre," *AIPhO* 2 (1934): 135–56) placed in the first century BCE, but David Pingree ("Antiochus and Rhetorius," *CP* 72 (1977): 203–23 at 204) in the second century CE. Pingree's argument relies entirely on the fact that Antiochus is often cited alongside other authors of the second century however, which does not constitute proof. If Manilius Antiochus and Antiochus of Athens *were* the same, this would explain how he came to Rome as a slave: There was no great influx of slaves from Syria in the 80s since Rome did not campaign there at the time. However, Sulla's capture of Athens in 86 BCE would have yielded slaves aplenty, who would thus have arrived before the conscriptions. In that case Manilius and his cousin Publilius would have been immigrants to Athens from Syria, before they were enslaved.

217 Pliny, *Nat.* 10.2: *cum huius alitis vita magni conversionem anni fieri prodit idem Manilius, iterumque significations tempestatum et siderum easdem reverti, hoc autem circa meridiem incipere quo die signum arietis sol intraverit*.

218 Val. Max., *Fact.* 1.3.2.

219 Tamsyn Barton, *Ancient Astrology* (London: Routledge, 1994), 34.

the senator Manilius could have bought a Syrian astrologer as a slave and later manumitted him, which would explain that they share their family name, since manumitted slaves always assumed the names of their former masters. In this case Pliny's remark that Manilius Antiochus was the originator of astrology must be seen as sarcasm, since the context is a list of freedmen who have enriched themselves at the expense of the Romans proscribed by Sulla.[220] The Imperial-era author could then be a descendant of either the senator or his freedman. This would account for all three astrological authors named Manilius.

As mentioned, Manilius the senator wrote that the phoenix had last appeared in 312 BCE, which must therefore have been a date of some importance for him or his sources. In this year, Ptolemy I Soter defeated Demetrius, allowing Seleucus to return to his kingdom. The Seleucids would thereafter make this year the beginning of their dynasty.[221] Who may have been the source of Manilius for this calculation? Roelof van den Broek has brilliantly shown that Manilius in fact gives the answer to a riddle posed by Hesiod (fr. 304) concerning the age of the phoenix, which relies on Babylonian speculations on the Great Year. Comparing Hesiod's riddle with Berossus' account of the antediluvian Babylonian kings, van den Broek found that the Great Year of 540 years represents one "month" of the second period of the world, following the flood.[222] He then goes on to conclude that the appearance of the phoenix in 312 BCE and the beginning of a new era—in fact the second "month" of the second world period—must also underlie Berossus' king-lists, with the goal of flattering the Seleucids.[223]

Manilius the senator thus testifies to a tradition that places the arrival of the phoenix at the beginning of a Golden Age in 312 BCE, which he had most likely taken from Berossus, who wrote his native chronography as propaganda for the Seleucids. This provides circumstantial evidence that this may also be the case for Manetho, who was said to imitate Berossus. Manetho counters the Babylonian Great Year of 540 years with the Egyptian Sothic cycle of 1461 years,

220 The cousin of Manilius Antiochus, Publilius of Antioch, came on the same boat as him, and is probably identical to Publilius Syrus, who was the leading dramatist in Rome in 43 BCE (Jer., *Chron.* 184.2). Their boat could therefore not have arrived much earlier than 82.

221 Van den Broek, *Phoenix*, 103.

222 Ibid. Actually 540 × 60 = 32.400 years. Consult van den Broek, *Phoenix*, 76ff. for the complex sexagesimal calulations.

223 Ibid., 104.

and by this calculation arrives at a Golden Age starting in 246 BCE, the year of Ptolemy III Euergetes' accession.

2.2.3.7 Conclusion: The Importance of Manetho for Hermetism

The main purpose of this lengthy chapter has been to demonstrate that the letter of Manetho to Ptolemy II Philadelphus did in fact serve as an introduction to his authentic work, known interchangeably as the *Aigyptiaka* or the *Book of Sothis*, and is therefore a crucial and early testimony to the myth of Hermes Trismegistus. Here, we find Hermes Trismegistus recovering the wisdom of Thoth, the first Hermes, who belonged to the dynasty of primordial gods before the flood. This second Hermes is the son of Agathodaimon and father of Tat, just as in our Hermetic treatises. In the course of demonstrating the importance of the letter, we have entered upon some themes that will recur in our treatment of the myth of Hermes: The first Hermes is associated with the primordial gods, Manetho's first dynasty, and his perennial wisdom is astrological, concerning the Sothic cycle. Furthermore, Hermes is associated with Egyptian kingship ideology, still operative in Greco-Roman Egypt. These themes have been underanalyzed in previous studies on Hermetism.

2.2.4 *The Myth of Hermes in Cicero and Diodorus Siculus*

As we have seen in the foregoing, there was already by the time of Plato some confusion as to whether the Egyptian Hermes was a man or god (*Phileb.* 18b), and by the time of Manetho there existed a teaching of two Hermeses. It is unclear if these two were both considered to be gods, but it seems likely that the one preceding the flood, Thoth, was seen as divine, since the gods reigned at this time, whereas the second might have been considered a deified human. Later, in the first century BCE, we find two new witnesses to the teaching of two Hermeses, namely Cicero and Diodorus Siculus.

Cicero, in his discussion of deified humans in *De natura deorum*, lists several versions of a number of gods, a list heavily slanted towards the Egyptian identities of the gods.[224] Among the five Hermeses on the list there are two

224 Cf. Martin van den Bruwaene, "Traces de mythologie égyptienne dans le 'De Natura Deorum' de Cicerón (III 53–60)," *Latomus* 38 (1979): 368–412 at 388–92, who is overly enthusiastic in identifying traces of Egypt behind even those exemplars of the gods who are not explicitly connected with Egypt: he identifies the parents of first Hermes, Heaven and Day (*Caelo patre Die matre*) as Ra and Mut, and the parents of second Hermes, Valens and Foronis (*Valentis et Foronidis filius*), as Shu and Tefnut. These interpretations are forced. The third Hermes, son of Zeus and Maia, is undisputably the Greek one, though van de

from Egypt: the first is the son of the Nile, while the second is the Argus-slayer, worshipped at Pheneus in Arcadia, at the foot of Mount Cyllene, who fled to Egypt, introduced letters and laws to the Egyptians, and was known by them as Theuth.[225] It is unclear if either should be considered to be a god or a deified human, but the Nile is also listed as the father of several other Egyptian gods—Vulcan, Dionysos the slayer of Nysa, Athena of Saïs—and is never explicitly stated to be human. Thoth as son of the Nile is also attested in Egyptian sources.[226] Discussing Helios, Cicero says that "the third Helios is son of Vulcan the son of the Nile—this is the one whom the Egyptians say is lord of the city named Heliopolis."[227] This demonstrates that the source of Cicero, like Manetho's list of gods, was based on the Memphite theology, where Vulcan—whom Cicero subsequently identifies as Ptah—rises from the primordial water and begets Ra, the sun. If the Ciceronian list can be harmonized with that of Manetho, then the first Egyptian Hermes, as son of the Nile, would be a contemporary of Ptah, the first king of the first dynasty of gods. The second Egyptian Hermes is harder to date. Argus was the guardian of Io, who had been changed into a cow by Hera, and Hermes killed Argus so that Io could flee to Egypt, where she was transformed into the goddess Isis. Io was the daughter of Inachus in most accounts, and the chronographers tend to make Inachus a contemporary of Amosis in Egypt. If all of this could be presupposed, then Cicero's fifth Hermes would have reached Egypt in the time of Amosis, in the eighteenth dynasty. However, the introduction of laws and letters, credited to the second Egyptian Hermes, must have been supposed to predate this late period, and it is possible that the mention of Argus and the flight from Greece is a Greek addition, to connect the Egyptian Hermes with Greek myth.

Such mythological accretions also occur in the account of Diodorus Siculus. Diodorus first outlines the celestial gods, who beget the five elements: Osiris is

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Bruwaene insists he is Hermanubis, on the background of the medieval Second Vatican Mythographer, no. 41.

225 Cic., *Nat. d.* 3.56: *quartus Nilo patre, quem Aegyptii nefas habent nominare, quintus quem colunt Pheneatae, qui Argum dicitur interemisse ob eamque causam Aegyptum profugisse atque Aegyptiis leges et litteras tradidisse: hunc Aegyptii Theuth appellant, eodemque nomine anni primus mensis apud eos vocatur*. Actually the mss of Cicero do not have the name Theuth, but *theyn* (AE), *thein* (B^1PL+), *theun* (B^2), *theyr* (CVBM), and *their* (CF Oxf.+). Cf. app. crit. in Joseph B. Mayor and John H. Swainson, *Cicero: De natura deorum libri tres* (3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1885), 3.18.

226 Boylan, *Thoth*, 184.

227 Cic., *Nat. d.* 3.54: *tertius Volcano Nili filio, cuius urbem Aegyptii volunt esse eam quae Heliopolis appellatur*.

the sun who begot spirit and fire, identical with Zeus and Hephaestus, while Isis as the moon begot dryness and moisture, identified as "mother" and Oceanus, the latter being identical to the Nile. Sun and moon together produced air, identified as Athena (1.11–12). The Nile then begot primordial gods who founded cities bearing their own names: Zeus, Helios, Hermes, Apollo, Pan, Eileithyia and others.[228] These children of the Nile must thus be distinguished from the "celestial and primordial gods,"[229] and identified with those discussed immediately after, who "having once been mortal, were born on earth and attained immortality through wisdom and benevolence to all mankind; and some of them had been kings of Egypt. Translated, some of their names are identical to those of the celestial gods."[230] Hermes is explicitly named as one of these gods, and naturally he carries the same name as the planet Mercury. Hecataeus of Abdera is often proposed as the source of most of Diodorus' first book,[231] but it is also quite possible that Manetho was used.[232] At least we find the same account of the celestial gods as that outlined by Diodorus in the fragments of Manetho's *Epitome of Physical Doctrines*, and Eusebius states that, "Manetho writes on this subject at considerable length, while Diodorus gives a concise account."[233] The sequence of divine rulers also in part corresponds to that of Manetho. Diodorus initially states that Helios was the first to rule as king, but then immediately qualifies this: "although some of the priests claim Hephaestus ruled before him, having been the discoverer of fire and

228 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.12: οἱ γὰρ Αἰγύπτιοι νομίζουσιν Ὠκεανὸν εἶναι τὸν παρ' αὐτοῖς ποταμὸν Νεῖλον, πρὸς ᾧ καὶ τὰς τῶν θεῶν γενέσεις ὑπάρξαι· τῆς γὰρ πάσης οἰκουμένης κατὰ μόνην τὴν Αἴγυπτον εἶναι πόλεις πολλὰς ὑπὸ τῶν ἀρχαίων θεῶν ἐκτισμένας, οἷον Διός, Ἡλίου, Ἑρμοῦ, Ἀπόλλωνος, Πανός, Εἰλειθυίας, ἄλλων πλειόνων. Cf. Burton, *Diodorus Siculus*, 68–69, on these cities.

229 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.12: τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ θεῶν καὶ γένεσιν ἀίδιον ἐσχηκότων.

230 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.13: ἄλλους δ' ἐκ τούτων ἐπιγείους γενέσθαι φασίν, ὑπάρξαντας μὲν θνητούς, διὰ δὲ σύνεσιν καὶ κοινὴν ἀνθρώπων εὐεργεσίαν τετευχότας τῆς ἀθανασίας, ὧν ἐνίους καὶ βασιλεῖς γεγονέναι κατὰ τὴν Αἴγυπτον. μεθερμηνευομένων δ' αὐτῶν τινὰς μὲν ὁμωνύμους ὑπάρχειν τοῖς οὐρανίοις. Trans. Edwin Murphy, *The Antiquities of Egypt: A Translation of Book I of the* Library of History *of Diodorus Siculus* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 17.

231 Murray, "Hecataeus," 144, but cf. Charles E. Muntz, *Diodorus Siculus and the World of the Late Roman Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 22–23.

232 Burton, *Diodorus Siculus*, 12–14.

233 Manetho fr. 82 (= Diog. Laert., *Vit.* Prooem.10) & fr. 83 (= Euseb., *Praep. ev.* 3.2): γράφει δὲ καὶ τὰ περὶ τούτων πλατύτερον μὲν ὁ Μανεθώς, ἐπιτετμημένως δὲ ὁ Διόδωρος.

having earned the sovereignty through this service to mankind."[234] Perhaps Diodorus found the list starting with Helios in the work of Hecataeus, whereas the one starting with Hephaestus most probably derived from Manetho, corresponding well with the attribution to "some of their priests." After Helios, Diodorus reports that Cronus ruled, and that some myth-tellers say that he begot Osiris and Isis with Rhea, whereas the majority of them say he begot Zeus and Hera, who then begot Osiris, Isis, Typhon, Apollo, and Artemis.[235] As we have seen, there is also some confusion here in the king-lists derived from Manetho, which place Osiris, Isis and Typhon after Cronus, and only some recensions include Agathodaimon before Cronus, representing Shu from the Heliopolitan theogony. The source that identifies Cronus as the father of Osiris thus likely derives from a version of Manetho that excludes Agathodaimon before Cronus.

All of these first rulers of Egypt were according to Diodorus made into gods because of their civilizing activities, a euhemerizing perspective that is absent in the work of Manetho, who must indeed have been roughly contemporary with Euhemerus of Messene.[236] Deified humans only appear, presumably, in Manetho's third dynasty of spirits of the dead (νέκυες). Indeed, the Egyptian term for the latter in the Turin Canon, "transfigured spirits" (*ꜣḫ.w*), is the exact term used in mortuary literature for the deified dead.[237] It is possible, then, that Diodorus imposed euhemerism on his sources, for he admits that "their myths have it also that the most ancient gods each ruled more than twelve hundred years, and those of later times not less than three hundred apiece."[238]

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234 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.13: ἔνιοι δὲ τῶν ἱερέων φασὶ πρῶτον Ἥφαιστον βασιλεῦσαι, πυρὸς εὑρετὴν γενόμενον καὶ διὰ τὴν εὐχρηστίαν ταύτην τυχόντα τῆς ἡγεμονίας. Trans. Murphy, *Antiquities*, 17.

235 Osiris, Isis, Typhon (= Set), Apollo (= the elder Horus, Harmachis), and Artemis (= Nephthys) are the children of Geb and Nut in the Heliopolitan theogony.

236 Marek Winiarczyk, *The Sacred History of Euhemerus of Messene* (trans. Witold Zbirohowski-Kościa; BzA 312; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 1–5. On Diodorus' Euhemerism, cf. Kenneth S. Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 68–72.

237 Jan Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt* (trans. David Lorton; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 33, 52, 240, 243–44.

238 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.25–26: δοκεῖ δ' ὕστατος τῶν θεῶν οὗτος βασιλεῦσαι μετὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς Ὀσίριδος ἐξ ἀνθρώπων μετάστασιν… μυθολογοῦσι δὲ καὶ τῶν θεῶν τοὺς μὲν ἀρχαιοτάτους βασιλεῦσαι πλείω τῶν χιλίων καὶ διακοσίων ἐτῶν, τοὺς δὲ μεταγενεστέρους οὐκ ἐλάττω τῶν τριακοσίων. In this passage Diodorus also writes that some of the priests reduce the lengthy reigns of gods by recalculating the years as months or seasons, thus prefiguring the method of Panodorus. On Diodorus' euhemerizing modification of his sources, cf. Iris

This corresponds well with the list of Manetho, where the most ancient god, Hephaestus, ruled nine thousand years, while the later gods, Osiris and possibly Horus, ruled around four hundred years, and the demigods about hundred years each.[239] Diodorus elaborates later in his Egyptian history: "Now some of them relate the fable that the first rulers in Egypt, for nearly eighteen thousand years, were gods and heroes, and that the last of the gods to hold sway was Horus, son of Isis."[240] Eighteen thousand years roughly correspond to the rule of gods and heroes in Manetho's list according to the Armenian translation of Eusebius.[241] However, the sequence of mortal kings mentioned by Diodorus does not conform to the lists of Manetho, although he is clearly familiar with such lists: "The priests have a record concerning every one of them [the kings] in their holy books, which have been handed down without interruption to each succeeding generation … But it would be wearisome and unnecessary for us to write the deeds of every one in succession, since the majority of their acts offer no instruction."[242] This indicates that Diodorus, although he was aware of Manetho's priestly records, only included what he thought offered some instruction.

Although Diodorus thus knows of two Hermeses, one celestial god and one primordial god, it is uncertain if he knew of any later Hermes, corresponding to the post-diluvian Hermes Trismegistus in the letter of Manetho to Ptolemy II and the Argus-slayer Theuth in Cicero. Diodorus mentions Hermes several times as the councilor of Isis and Osiris, which would place him among the

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Sulimani, *Diodorus' Mythistory and the Pagan Mission: Historiography and Culture-Heroes in the First Pentad of the Bibliotheke* (MnS 331; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 73, unfortunately unhelpful on the role of the Egyptian Hermes as Culture-Hero.

239 Manetho fr. 1 (= Armenian Eusebius) & fr. 2 (= Panodorus apud Syncellus).

240 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.44: Μυθολογοῦσι δ' αὐτῶν τινες τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἄρξαι τῆς Αἰγύπτου θεοὺς καὶ ἥρωας ἔτη βραχὺ λείποντα τῶν μυρίων καὶ ὀκτακισχιλίων, καὶ θεῶν ἔσχατον βασιλεῦσαι τὸν Ἶσιδος Ὧρον. Trans. Murphy, *Antiquities*, 56.

241 Manetho fr. 1: Gods: 13.900; demigods: 1255; "another line": 1817; of Memphis: 1790; of This: 350 = 19.112. This excludes the succeeding "rule of Spirits of the Dead and Demigods" (5813 yrs), which I take to refer only to the Spirits of the Dead. The list of Panodorus in Syncellus only lists the gods and demigods. Cf. however Murray, "Hecataeus," 50, who claims the source for the 18,000 years is Hecataeus of Abdera.

242 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.44: περὶ ὧν ἁπάντων οἱ μὲν ἱερεῖς εἶχον ἀναγραφὰς ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς βίβλοις ἐκ παλαιῶν χρόνων ἀεὶ τοῖς διαδόχοις παραδεδομένας, ὁπηλίκος ἕκαστος τῶν βασιλευσάντων ἐγένετο τῷ μεγέθει καὶ ὁποῖός τις τῇ φύσει καὶ τὰ κατὰ τοὺς ἰδίους χρόνους ἑκάστῳ πραχθέντα· ἡμῖν δὲ περὶ ἑκάστου τὰ κατὰ μέρος μακρὸν ἂν εἴη καὶ περίεργον γράφειν, ὡς ἂν τῶν πλείστων ἀχρήστων περιειλημμένων. Trans. Murphy, *Antiquities*, 57. Cf. Peter Green, *Diodorus Siculus, Books 11–12.37.1: Greek History, 480–431 BC. The Alternative Version* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 13.

primordial gods, while Manetho's second Hermes comes after the flood which separates the reign of the gods, demigods, and spirits of the dead from the mortal kings.[243] The Hermes described by Diodorus is a councilor and sacred scribe of Osiris who invented language and letters, as well as divine rites, sacrifices, astronomy and music.[244] When Osiris left for his campaign of world-domination he left Hermes as the advisor of Isis (1.17), and when Osiris later died and assumed his place among the gods, Isis and Hermes established his mysteries.[245]

After the dynasty of gods, Diodorus goes on to treat the first kings, who are also given a civilizing role: "the priests tell in their myths that Hermes was the father of learning and the arts, but the kings discovered the things necessary to life … they were so instructed by their holy books."[246] Hermes is thus considered to be the inventor of higher learning, while the kings made more pragmatic discoveries, such as how to construct channels and dikes for the Nile, and techniques of agriculture. One of the arts invented by Hermes was law, and the Egyptian informers of Diodorus also told him about the first Egyptian lawgiver after the time of gods and heroes:

> For in primitive Egypt, after life had become settled, which according to myth took place in the era of gods and heroes, they say that the first person who convinced the people to use written laws was a man both lofty in spirit and the most altruistic in his way of life of anyone in memory. And they say he claimed that Hermes had given these laws to him as a source of many substantial benefits.[247]

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243 Sync. 59: "Concerning the dynasties of Egypt after the Flood, according to Africanus. After the spirits of the dead, the demigods, the first royal line is numbered at eight kings."

244 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.16. He also invented wrestling and the lyre, which are elements taken from the Greek Hermes.

245 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.20: μετὰ δὲ ταῦτ' ἐξ ἀνθρώπων εἰς θεοὺς μεταστάντα τυχεῖν ὑπὸ Ἴσιδος καὶ Ἑρμοῦ θυσιῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων τιμῶν. τούτους δὲ καὶ τελετὰς καταδεῖξαι καὶ πολλὰ μυστικῶς εἰσηγήσασθαι, μεγαλύνοντας τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δύναμιν.

246 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.43: οἱ δ' ἱερεῖς εὑρετὴν τῶν μὲν παιδειῶν καὶ τῶν τεχνῶν μυθολογοῦσι τὸν Ἑρμῆν γεγονέναι, τῶν δ' εἰς τὸν βίον ἀναγκαίων τοὺς βασιλεῖς·… ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς ἀναγραφαῖς οὕτω παρειλημφότων. Trans. Murphy, *Antiquities*.

247 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.94: μετὰ γὰρ τὴν παλαιὰν τοῦ κατ' Αἴγυπτον βίου κατάστασιν, τὴν μυθολογουμένην γεγονέναι ἐπί τε τῶν θεῶν καὶ τῶν ἡρώων, πεῖσαί φασι πρῶτον ἐγγράπτοις νόμοις χρήσασθαι τὰ πλήθη [βιοῦν] τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ μέγαν καὶ τῷ βίῳ κοινότατον τῶν μνημονευομένων. προσποιηθῆναι δ' αὐτῷ τὸν Ἑρμῆν δεδωκέναι τούτους, ὡς μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν αἰτίους ἐσομένους. I have modified the translation of Murphy, *Antiquities*, 119, and have removed the emendation ⟨Μνεύην⟩ or ⟨Μηνᾶν⟩ before ἄνδρα, cf. below. According to Theiler,

The subsequent passage compares this man with Minos and Lycurgus among the Greeks, who received laws from Zeus and Apollo respectively, while the Persian Zoroaster received them from the Good Spirit, Zalmoxis of the Getae from Hestia, and the Judaean Moses from Iao. The comparisons make it clear that the Egyptian lawgiver received the laws as divine revelations. Who is this Egyptian? Modern editions of Diodorus in unison identify him with Menes, the first king of Egypt, but only one Greek manuscript mentions a corrupt version of this name, and then in the wrong place, indicating it might have been a marginal note wrongly inserted in the text by a later copyist.[248] Indeed it would befit the first mortal king after the flood to also be the first lawgiver, but given the weak foundations for the name Menes in the manuscripts of Diodorus there is also the possibility that the first lawgiver after the gods and heroes was in fact the second Hermes, receiving the laws as revelations from the first Hermes.[249] If so, then this Hermes must belong to the very earliest dynasties after the flood, since the following lawgivers seem to be listed in chronological order: Sasychis, Sesoösis (= Sesostris), Bocchoris, Amasis, and Darius.[250] This must remain entirely hypothetical however, and another tradition places Hermes Trismegistus in the reign of another lawmaker, namely Sesostris of Manetho's twelfth dynasty.

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this passage is an excerpt from Posidonius (fr. 134 Theiler). Cf. also Ael., *Var. hist.* 14.34: Αἰγύπτιοί φασι παρ' Ἑρμοῦ τὰ νόμιμα ἐκμουσωθῆναι; Diog. Laert., *Vit.* 1.11: ἔθεσαν δὲ καὶ νόμους ὑπὲρ δικαιοσύνης, οὓς εἰς Ἑρμῆν ἀνήνεγκαν·

248 Editors have usually supplied Μνεύην before ἄνδρα, but this name only occurs in one ms, and then after κοινότατον. Furthermore, the eta in the name has been corrected from an iota by another scribal hand. Another manuscript has Μῖνα in a marginal note, and Poggio Bracciolino's Latin translation has Minam. Cf. Pierre Bertrac and Yvonne Vernière, *Diodore de Sicile: Bibliothèque historique. Tome I* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002), 172, 217, who suggest the emendation τὸν ⟨Μηνᾶν⟩. Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 39, uses Diodorus as testimony that there existed a cultural memory of Menes as the first lawgiver and boundary between prehistory and history.

249 For the weak historicity of Diodorus' lawgivers, cf. Tomasz Markiewicz, "Bocchoris the Lawgiver—Or was He Really?" *JEH* 12 (2008): 309–30.

250 Sasychis probably corresponds to the Asychis of Herodotus (*Hist.* 2.136), and has been identified variously with Shepseskaf of the 4th dynasty, and Sheshonq, the founder of the 22nd dynasty. Cf. Burton, *Diodorus Siculus*, 273. If the latter is correct, the list would not be chronological. Note that Sasychis like our Menes or anonymous lawgiver is not explicitly designated as king, like Sesoösis, Bocchoris, and Amasis, but neither is Darius, so the lack of title does not necessarily indicate that the first two lawgivers were not kings.

Oswyn Murray has suggested that Diodorus actually based the tale of Osiris' world-conquest on the world-conquest of Sesostris described by Hecataeus of Abdera.[251] Indeed, the later elaborations on the deeds of Sesostris owe something to the conquests of Ramesses II.[252] The epitomes of Manetho merely inform us that Sesostris was of great stature and subdued Asia and Europe in nine years, leaving commemorative stelae in his wake, and for this he "was honored next in rank to Osiris."[253] Of course, this last sentence could indicate that a similar world-conquest was described for Osiris in the full version of Manetho. John Malalas, writing his chronography in the sixth century, claims that Hermes Trismegistus lived during the reign of Sesostris, whose tale of world-conquest he recounts, and he cites Manetho as the authority for his information regarding these Egyptian dynasties.[254] Malalas also attributes to this Hermes two Hermetic excerpts he has taken from Cyril of Alexandria's treatise against Julian.[255] Just as in Manetho, Hermes Trismegistus is in Malalas a second Hermes, for the first Hermes was identified with Faunus, the son of Picus-Zeus, the first king of the Latins.[256] This Hermes is said to have arrived in Egypt in the reign of Mestrem, Ham's son and the first king of Egypt according to biblical history, and he practiced philosophy there and was revered

251 Murray, "Hecataeus," 149–50, 161–64. Alexander the Great was called a "new Sesostris" in the Alexander Romance.

252 Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 274: "In a much later retrospective view of Egypt's Great Past, Ramesses II, Sesostris III, and Sesostris I merged into a single indistinguishable figure. The 'Sesostris' of the late Sesostris romance and the *Aegyptiaca* of Hecataeus of Abdera connect reminiscences of Ramesses II with the canonical memory of the Middle Kingdom."

253 Manetho fr. 34: ὡς ὑπὸ Αἰγυπτίων μετὰ Ὄσιριν πρῶτον νομισθῆναι. Another source linking Sesostris and Hermes is a highly confused passage in Ps.-Eratosthenes, also preserved in Syncellus, listing the kings of Egyptian Thebes. Some of these conform to the kings of Manetho's list, and we find Sesostris called "Sistosichermês, valiant Heracles," Σιστοσιχερμῆς Ἡρακλῆς κραταιός, which Bunsen plausibly emended to Σεσόρτωσις, Ἑρμῆς ἢ Ἡρακλῆς κραταιός, "Sesortosis, valiant Hermes or Herakles." What to make of this is however unclear. Cf. Waddell, *Manetho*, 224–25.

254 Joh. Mal., *Chron.* 2.5.

255 Joh. Mal., *Chron.* 2.5 = Cyr. Alex., *C. Jul.* 1.48 (FH 23) & 1.46 (FH 27). The final prayer of Hermes in the Malalas passage is attributed to Orpheus by Cyril (1.46). For Hermes in Cyril's *Contra Julianum*, cf. Christian H. Bull, "Hermes between Pagans and Christians in Fourth Century Egypt: The Nag Hammadi Hermetica in Context," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 207–60.

256 Joh. Mal., *Chron.* 1.14–15.

as a god.[257] This Hermes became king after Mestrem, and was succeeded by Hephaestus, after whom follows the rest of Manetho's dynasty of gods. The gods of Manetho are thus moved to well after the flood in Malalas, completely distorting the original chronological scheme. Later Byzantine chronographers attribute the euhemeristic version of these gods to Julius Africanus, and it has been suggested that he would have been a likely source for the distortion of Manetho, since he wanted to affirm the ancestral ties of Rome with the East.[258] It is thus possible that Manetho in the full version of his work placed the second Hermes in the reign of Sesostris, though Malalas is admittedly a poor source for the authentic work of Manetho. Just as Osiris and Sesostris were conflated, it might have been felt that the latter also needed his Hermes, a vizier of superhuman stature, and so a second Hermes was invented.[259]

These passages of Diodorus should suffice to demonstrate the continued importance of Hermes-Thoth in the royal ideology of the priests near the end of the Ptolemaic reign, and indeed some Ptolemies were titled "the one who establishes the laws like the twice-great Thoth."[260] Diodorus visited Egypt in year 60 BCE, and makes numerous references to priestly informers who quote from their sacred archives.[261] It was obviously of great importance to the priests to demonstrate that Egypt was the cradle of civilization, and they even claimed that king Osiris had conquered the world, and had spread the gifts of civilization as he went along.[262] Even though Diodorus did not always

257 Picus-Zeus and Faunus-Hermes are mentioned in a fragment from the sixth book of Diodorus Siculus (fr. 5), but the latter is not there identified with the Egyptian Hermes.

258 William Adler, "From Adam to Abraham: Malalas and Euhemeristic Historiography," in *Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas: Quellenfragen* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2017), 27–47 at 40–41. I thank the author for sharing this article with me.

259 In the fifth book of Diodorus there is also a lengthy passage taken from Euhemeros concerning the island of Panchaea, where Hermes had inscribed a golden stela in a temple, with what resembled Egyptian hieroglyphs, commemorating the deeds of other deified kings. Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 5.46.7: κατὰ μέσην δὲ τὴν κλίνην ἕστηκε στήλη χρυσῆ μεγάλη, γράμματα ἔχουσα τὰ παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις ἱερὰ καλούμενα, δι' ὧν ἦσαν αἱ πράξεις Οὐρανοῦ τε καὶ Διὸς ἀναγεγραμμέναι, καὶ μετὰ ταύτας αἱ Ἀρτέμιδος καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος ὑφ' Ἑρμοῦ προσαναγεγραμμέναι. Cf. Winiarczyk, *Sacred History*, 164.

260 Paul E. Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies: Greek Kings as Egyptian Pharaohs* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 45: *smn-ḥpw-mi-Ḏḥwty-ꜥ-ꜥ*.

261 The year was 56 according to Jan Quaegebeur, "Diodore I, 20 et les mystères d'Osiris," in *Hermes Aegyptiacus. Egyptological Studies for B.H. Stricker* (ed. Terence DuQuesne; Oxford: DE Publications, 1995), 157–81 at 157, but see Green, *Diodorus*, 4–5. Cf. also Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 16, on priestly informers.

262 The tale is repeated two centuries later, by Plut., *Is. Os.* 13 (356A).

believe the tales he was told, he was clearly impressed by the great antiquity of the records kept by the priests. Thus, by the time the theoretical Hermetica were authored, commonly accepted to be around the first, second, and third centuries CE, Hermes Trismegistus was an important figure of memory for the Egyptian priests, but he was also recognized as the authority of Egyptian sacred writings by the Greeks. As we shall see, his connection with primordial gods and Egyptian kingship ideology is also reflected in the Hermetica, though this has been less emphasized in the scholarly literature.

CHAPTER 3

The Primordial Egyptian Kings in the Hermetica

In *The Key* (CH X), Hermes instructs his son Tat about the vision of the good, and obliquely mentions their ancestors who have achieved this beatific vision:

ἧς οἱ δυνάμενοι πλέον τι ἀρύσασθαι τῆς θέας κατακοιμίζονται πολλάκις [δὲ] ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος εἰς τὴν καλλίστην ὄψιν ᾧπερ Οὐρανὸς καὶ Κρόνος, οἱ ἡμέτεροι πρόγονοι, ἐντετυχήκασιν.

Those able to drink somewhat more deeply of the vision often fall asleep, moving out of the body toward a sight most fair, just as it happened to Ouranus and Cronus, our ancestors.[1]

In a Greek context, Hermes' reference to Ouranus and Cronus as ancestors, leaving out his father Zeus, would have been surprising, so Walter Scott is probably right in seeing here a reference to Egyptian mythology.[2] Cronus is, as mentioned above, regularly identified as the Egyptian earth-god Geb, and in a magical papyrus Ouranus is identified with his spouse, the goddess of heaven Nut.[3] However, the reference in CH X is probably not to the primordial gods, since they would presumably not be in need of deification.[4] The deified ancestors of Hermes are again mentioned in an excerpt from Stobaeus, where

1 CH X, 5. Trans. Copenhaver.

2 Scott 2:240. Cf. HHE 2:281 on the role of the wisdom of ancestors, referring to SH IIB, 5; XXIII, 36, 65; XXIV, 13; XXVI, 1; FH 28; *Ascl.* 37. Cf. also Pierre Hadot, "Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus in Plotinus' Treatise against the Gnostics," in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in honour of A.H. Armstrong* (ed. Henry J. Blumenthal and Robert A. Markus; London: Variorum, 1981), 124–37 at 124ff., for an allegorical rather than euhemerizing account.

3 PGM XII.232ff.: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ Ἥλιος ὁ δεδειχὼς φῶς, ἐγώ εἰμι Ἀφροδείτη προσαγορευομένη Τῦφι, ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄ[γ]ι[ο]ς ἐπίβολος ἀνέμων, ἐγώ εἰμι **Κρόνος** ὁ δεδειχὼ⟨ς⟩ φῶς, ἐγώ εἰμι μήτηρ θεῶν ἡ καλ[ου]-μένη **οὐρανός**, ἐγώ εἰμι Ὄσιρις ὁ καλούμενος ὕδωρ, ἐγώ εἰμι Ἶσις ἡ καλουμένη δρόσος, ἐγώ εἰμι Ἠσενεφυς, ἡ καλουμένη ἔαρ, ἐγώ εἰμι Εἴδωλος τοῖς κατὰ ἀλήθειαν εἰδώλοις ὡμοιωμένος, ἐγώ εἰμι Σοῦχος ⟨ὡμοιωμένος⟩ κορκοδείλῳ. This corresponds to the Heliopolitan Ennead: Helios = Ra; Aphrodite-Typhi = Tefnut; the "sender of winds" = Shu; Cronus = Geb; Ouranus, the mother of gods = Nut; Osiris; Isis; Esenephys = Nephthys. Seth seems to be left out, if he is not hiding behind the obscure Eidolos or the crocodile-god Souchos.

4 Aug., *Civ.* 18.39, claims that Atlas, the maternal grandfather of Hermes, lived in Egypt at the time of Moses. Cf. Roelof van den Broek, "Hermes Trismegistus I: Antiquity," in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism* (ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 474–78.

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they are not named: "For this, my son, is the only way towards truth, the one our ancestors travelled too, and having completed the way they found the good."[5] Completing the way here entails that the soul leaves the body and ascends to the good and truth, both before and after the death of the body.

Philo of Byblos, in the late first or early second century CE, explicitly names Hermes Trismegistus as the councilor of Cronus in his battle against Ouranus,[6] but neither Cronus nor Ouranus are there said to be the ancestor of Hermes, nor do they fall asleep in a beatific vision.[7] Philo identifies Trismegistus with the Phoenician Taautos, the first to have discovered letters, "whom the Egyptians call Thouth, the Alexandrians Thoth, and the Greeks translate Hermes."[8] The writings of Taautos/Thoth had allegedly been discovered by Philo's source, Sanchuniathon, "in the *adyta* of the temples of Ammon, composed in letters which, indeed, were not known to everyone."[9] Clearly this refers to Egyptian writings, even though the mythology related is Phoenician.[10] The explanation is that Cronus gave Egypt to Hermes after he had vanquished Ouranus, thus privileging Phoenician mythology to Egyptian. Philo champions a euhemerizing account of the myths found therein, and throws invectives at more recent writers on religion who have "invented allegories and myths, and [thus] having falsely related [the true stories] to cosmic events, they established mysteries."[11] It is uncertain who is meant here, and whether the mysteries established are Phoenician or Egyptian. In the latter case, we know that Manetho and Chaeremon interpreted the Egyptian gods allegorically, and the former is known to have a hand in the establishment of the cult of Sarapis.[12] On the

5 SH IIB, 5: αὕτη γὰρ μόνη ἐστίν, ὦ τέκνον, ἡ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ὁδός, ἣν καὶ οἱ ἡμέτεροι πρόγονοι ὥδευσαν καὶ ὁδεύσαντες ἔτυχον τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. My trans.

6 Phil. Byb., *Phoen.* 2.810 Baumgarten (= Euseb., *Praep. ev.* 1.10.17): Ἑρμῆι τῶι τρισμεγίστωι συμβούλωι καὶ χρώμενος—οὗτος γὰρ ἦν αὐτῶι γραμματευς.

7 Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos*, 181.

8 Phil. Byb., *Phoen.* 2.804 Baumgarten (= Euseb., *Praep. ev.* 1.9.24): ὃν Αἰγύπτιοι μὲν ἐκάλεσαν Θωύθ, Ἀλεχανδρεῖς δὲ Θώθ, Ἑρμῆν δὲ Ἕλληνες μετέφρασαν. Trans. Baumgarten.

9 Phil. Byb., *Phoen.* 2.805 Baumgarten (= Euseb., *Praep. ev.* 1.9.26): ὁ δὲ συμβαλὼν τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀδύτων ἐυρεθεῖσιν ἀποκρύφοις Ἀμμουνέων γράμμασι συγκειμένος ἃ δὴ οὐκ ἦν πᾶσι γνώριμα, τὴν μάθησιν ἁπάντων αὐτὸς ἤσκησε. Trans. Baumgarten.

10 Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos*, 80–81.

11 Phil. Byb., *Phoen.* 2.805 Baumgarten (= Euseb., *Praep. ev.* 1.9.26): Ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν νεώτατοι τῶν ἱερολόγων τὰ μὲν γεγονότα πράγματα ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἀπεπέμψαντο, ἀλληγορίας δὲ καὶ μύθους ἐπινοήσαντες καὶ τοῖς κοσμικοῖς παθήμασιν συγγένειαν πλασάμενοι μυστήρια κατέστησαν. Trans. Baumgarten.

12 Manetho, fr. 76–80; Chaer., test. 9, 12, fr. 12 van der Horst.

other hand, it is also possible that the invective is directed at Hermetists, for example those behind the books of Hermes known to Plutarch, a contemporary of Philo. These books also provided allegorizing accounts of the gods:

> In the so-called Books of Hermes they relate that it is written concerning the sacred names that the power placed in charge of the sun's course is Horus, and that the Greeks call it Apollo; that the power in charge of the wind is called by some Osiris, by others Sarapis; ⟨...⟩, and by others, in Egyptian, Sothis.[13]

It seems, then, that by the late first century CE, there existed Hermetica which allegorized the Egyptian gods as the powers behind natural phenomena. But this allegorization did not necessarily run counter to the euhemerism inherent in the Hermetica that represent Hermes as a deified mortal. In the *Perfect Discourse*, Hermes treats the intelligible divine powers behind sensible gods such as heaven, the sun, the fixed-stars, the planets, and the air[14]—though he does not give them the names of Egyptian gods as Plutarch's books of Hermes do—but he also tells Asclepius that they both have eponymous ancestors who founded cities in their names and are worshipped as gods.[15] In the *Korê kosmou*, Isis tells Horus about a primordial and celestial Hermes, in addition to a Hermes who instructed herself and her husband, Osiris.[16] In the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth*, the apparently human Hermes says he has a temple in Diospolis and identifies himself with his celestial counterpart, the planet Mercury.[17]

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13 Plut., *Is. Os.* 61 (375F): ἐν δὲ ταῖς Ἑρμοῦ λεγομέναις βίβλοις ἱστοροῦσι γεγράφθαι περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν ὀνομάτων, ὅτι τὴν μὲν ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ ἡλίου περιφορᾶς τεταγμένην δύναμιν Ὧρον, Ἕλληνες δ' Ἀπόλλωνα καλοῦσι· τὴν δ' ἐπὶ τοῦ πνεύματος οἱ μὲν Ὄσιριν, οἱ δὲ Σάραπιν, ⟨...⟩ οἱ δὲ Σῶθιν Αἰγυπτιστί. Trans. Griffiths, who suggests filling the proposed lacuna ⟨τὴν δ' ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οἱ μὲν Σείριον⟩, "and that the power in charge of the earth is called Sirius by some ..." Cf. Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 520, for commentary. Plutarch calls Euhemerus a quack, and is as dismissive to euhemerism as Philo is to allegorical interpretation, see Plut., *Is. Os.* 22–24 (359D–360D).

14 *Ascl.* 19. There is a gap in the manuscript tradition after the "essence-ruler" (οὐσιάρχης) of the air, so we cannot know which other sensible gods Hermes might have discussed.

15 *Ascl.* 37–38.

16 SH XXIII, 5–8, 25–32, 44, 48, 67–68.

17 NHC VI 62,4: ⲡⲁⲟⲩⲱⲡⲉ: "My sanctuary" (ⲟⲩⲱⲡⲉ likely from Demotic *w'b*, cf. HHE 1:126); 62,17: ⲉⲓⲁϫⲟⲟⲡ ⲉⲛ̄ ⲧⲡⲁⲣⲑⲉⲛⲟⲥ: "when I am in the virgin," i.e. when Mercury is in Virgo.

Hermetica containing reference to divine ancestors of Hermes Trismegistus appeared at the latest by the middle of the second century CE, for Athenagoras, the Alexandrian Christian apologist, refers to them:

> When Alexander and Hermes who is called Trismegistus link their own family with the gods, and others too numerous to mention individually do likewise, there is no longer any reason left to doubt that they were regarded as gods because they were kings. The most learned of the Egyptians show that these were men; for whereas they call ether, earth, sun, and moon gods, they regard all others as mortal men and their tombs as temples.[18]

Not only did the Hermetic teaching referred to by Athenagoras identify the ancestors of Hermes as gods, but also as kings. The teaching of the "most learned of the Egyptians," that the ether, earth, sun, and moon are gods, could also derive from the Hermetic text. At least Herodotus, who Athenagoras discusses at length in this chapter, does not mention that the ether or earth are called gods. Alternately, the source for this could also be Leon of Pella, who wrote a commentary based on the spurious letter of Alexander to his mother, which Athenagoras mentions.[19] However, given the topics of the deification of kings and planetary gods, it seems likely that Athenagoras refers, perhaps via an intermediary, to a Hermetic treatise. The *Perfect Discourse*, for example, refers to the temples of the deified ancestors of Hermes and Asclepius, where their bodies dwell (*Ascl.* 37–38), and also deals with the divinity of the celestial bodies (*Ascl.* 19, 29–30).

Later Christian authors also picked up on Hermes' euhemerism. Lactantius makes extensive use of Hermetica, and quotes Hermes on his divine ancestors: "Saturn was not born of the sky, which is impossible, but from a man whose name was Uranus. Trismegistus is our authority for the truth of this: when he observed that 'there were very few whose learning was perfect,' he

18 Athen., *Leg.* 28.6–7: ἐπεὶ δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ Ἑρμῆς ὁ Τρισμέγιστος ἐπικαλούμενος συνάπτων τὸ ἴδιον αὐτοῖς γένος καὶ ἄλλοι μυρίοι, ἵνα μὴ καθ' ἕκαστον καταλέγοιμι, οὐδὲ λόγος ἔτι καταλείπεται βασιλεῖς ὄντας αὐτοὺς μὴ νενομίσθαι θεούς. καὶ ὅτι μὲν ἄνθρωποι, δηλοῦσιν μὲν καὶ Αἰγυπτίων οἱ λογιώτατοι, οἳ θεοὺς λέγοντες αἰθέρα, γῆν, ἥλιον, σελήνην, τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους θνητοὺς νομίζουσιν καὶ ἱερὰ τοὺς τάφους αὐτῶν. Trans. William R. Schoedel, *Athenagoras: Legatio and De Resurrectione* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 69. Schoedel dates the *Plea* to 176–180 (p. xi).

19 Cf. Athen., *Leg.* 28.1. Athenagoras says that Apollodorus of Athens *also* affirms this, which must mean that Apollodorus was not his source (*Leg.* 28.7: δῆλοι δὲ καὶ Ἀπολλόδωρος ἐν τῷ περὶ θεῶν).

named among them 'Uranus, with Saturn and Mercury his kinsmen.'"[20] While Diodorus tells us that the wise men of ancient times had been made immortal, and thus divine, Lactantius' point is rather that they remained mortal men all along, and were merely considered gods by posterity. Clearly, the Hermetic view is closer to Diodorus. Lactantius apparently had access to a Hermetic treatise where Hermes listed as his ancestors not only Ouranus and Cronus, as in CH X, but also another Hermes. Lactantius also quotes the *Perfect Discourse* numerous times, and in this treatise Hermes makes reference first to a group of ancestors, who were ignorant of divinity before they discovered the art of making gods, and then to a homonymous ancestor of Hermes, who founded a city that bears his name.[21] The latter would seem to correspond to the city-founding primordial god of Diodorus Siculus.[22] But is the primordial Hermes one of the ancestors who discovered the art of making gods? It does not seem to be a fitting description of the primordial gods that they were at first ignorant of divinity. In order to find an answer to this problem, we should consider the *Korê kosmou* (SH XXIII), which gives more information concerning the primordium.

3.1 SH XXIII (Korê Kosmou): An Egyptian Account of Creation

The relationship between the heavenly gods, primordial gods and the earthly kings can best be elucidated from the Hermetic dialogues between Isis and Horus, contained in the anthology of John of Stobi (SH XXIII–XXVII).[23]

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20 Lact., *Inst.* 1.11.61 (FH 5a): *quod esse uerum Trismegistus auctor est, qui cum diceret admodum paucos extitisse in quibus esset perfecta doctrina, in his Uranum Saturnum Mercurium nominauit cognatus suos*. Repeated in the epitome (FH 5b = *Epit.* 14.3). Trans Anthony Bowen and Peter Garnsey, *Lactantius: Divine Institues* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 86–87. On the place of Hermes in Lactantius' thought, cf. Antonie Wlosok, *Laktanz und die philosophische Gnosis: Untersuchungen zu Geschichte und Terminologie der gnostischen Erlösungsvorstellung* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1960), 115–42; Elizabeth D. Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire: Lactantius & Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 65–90.

21 *Ascl.* 37: *quoniam ergo proaui nostri multum errabant circa deorum rationem increduli et non animaduertentes ad cultum religionemque diuinam, inuenerunt artem qua efficerent deos … Hermes, cuius auitum mihi nomen est, nonne in sibi cognomina patria consistens omnes mortales undique uenientes adiuuat atque conseruat?*

22 Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 29, claims *Ascl.* 37 reflects the Egyptian idea that gods are perpetually regenerated.

23 Cf. NF 3:cxxvi–ccxxviii.

The best known of these is the *Korê Kosmou* (SH XXIII),[24] which contains a cosmogony and anthropogony, but the other dialogues contain valuable information concerning the doctrine of kings too. It has been argued that the author must have been a devotee of Isis who has reworked Hermetic teachings and fitted them into a new narrative framework featuring Isis and Horus,[25] but this is hardly necessary since we have seen that Isis and Hermes are tightly connected in Egyptian mythology. The treatise has been dated to the third century CE on stylistic grounds,[26] though we are obviously dealing with a heavily redacted final text, of which some of the components must be earlier.[27]

The mythical account of the *Korê Kosmou* is confusing,[28] but it contains more information about Hermes Trismegistus and his associates than any other Hermetica. Even before mortals came into being, we are told, the creator of the universe instilled in Hermes and the other gods his love and his splendor, and the desire to seek after him.[29] Hermes, after observing the universe, came to know the "mysteries of heaven," which he inscribed on stelae, and "in this way he ascended to the stars and flanked his kindred gods."[30] He

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24 Cf. Zielinski, "Hermes und die Hermetik," 356–68; On the title cf. Howard M. Jackson, "Κόρη Κόσμου: Isis, Pupil of the Eye of the World," *CdÉ* 61 (1986): 116–35. Note that Sirius is called "the son of pupil of the eye" in Ps.-Eratosthenes' Theban king list.

25 NF 3:cxxxi; Hans D. Betz, "Schöpfung und Erlösung im hermetischen Fragment *Kore Kosmu*," *ZTK* 63 (1966), 160–87 at 161–63; Pier A. Carozzi, "Gnose et sotériologie dans la 'korè kosmou' hermétique," in *Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique. Acts du Colloque de Louvain-La-Neuve* (ed. Julien Ries; Louvain-La-Neuve: Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 1982), 61–78 at 66, 71. Zielinski, "Hermes und die Hermetik," 359–61, suggests that there are two conflicting narratives: the Kamephis-narrative introduces Isis in the Hermetic tradition, whereas the Osiris-narrative introduces Hermes in the mysteries of Isis.

26 Arthur D. Nock, "A New Edition of the Hermetic Writings," *JEA* 11 (1925): 126–37 at 133, dates the text to no earlier than 300 CE on the basis of clausulae identified by Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1913), 66 n. 1. However, Norden compares these clausulae to those of second-century gnostics. On the idiosyncratic style of *KK*, cf. André-Jean Festugière, "Le style de la Koré Kosmou," *VP* 2 (1942): 15–57.

27 Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 65.

28 Cf. Kroll, *Die Lehren*, 143–55.

29 SH XXIII, 4: ἔρωτας ἐνεθουσίασε θεοῖς καὶ αὐγὴν ἣν εἶχεν ἐν στέρνοις πλείονα ταῖς τούτων ἐχαρίσατο διανοίαις, ἵνα πρῶτον μὲν ζητεῖν θελήσωσιν κτλ.

30 SH XXIII, 5–6: ψυχῆς δὲ τὴν συμπάθειαν ἐχούσης τοῖς οὐρανοῦ μυστηρίοις· τοῦτο δὲ ἦν ὁ πάντα γνοὺς Ἑρμῆς· ὃς καὶ εἶδε τὰ σύμπαντα καὶ ἰδὼν κατενόησε… ἃ ἐνόησεν ἐχάραξε καὶ χαράξας ἔκρυψε… καὶ οὕτως τοὺς συγγενεῖς θεοὺς δορυφορεῖν ἀνέβαινεν εἰς ἄστρα. All translations from SH are my own.

became the teacher of his son, Tat, and of Imouthes-Asclepius, the son of Ptah-Hephaestus, and "whoever else were destined to inquire into the trustworthy discipline of the heavenly contemplation, by the will of the queen of all things, Providence."[31] Hermes apparently did not transmit the full discipline of contemplation to his son Tat before he ascended to heaven, because of his young age. Rather, he hid away the "sacred symbols of the cosmic elements," no doubt the stelae mentioned earlier, "near the secrets of Osiris."[32] We may notice that the word used for hiding away the books, ἀποθέσθαι, is the same verb as the one Syncellus uses for the books that were deposited in the sanctuaries by the second Hermes (41.5: ἀποτεθέντων).

Ptah and Osiris are both members of Manetho's first dynasty of gods, and the narrative of Hermes' teaching activities is clearly meant to take place in this primordial time. These gods however seem to correspond both to the celestial and primeval gods of Diodorus. Although they are gods from the beginning, they are at first ignorant of the creator of the universe, and are only able to seek after and find him because he instills his love and light into their thoughts. Only after Hermes had discovered the mysteries of the universe and written them down for succeeding generations was he able to ascend and take his place as a celestial god.

After Hermes has placed a protective spell on his books he returns to heaven, after which earth remains barren for a while until a new creation takes place.[33] The creator then brings forth procreative Nature, Physis, and makes the soul-mixture, Psychosis, in the upper part of the cosmos.[34] This soul-mixture is divided into sixty layers, declining in purity the closer to earth they get. The souls of the upper layers are associated with the holy demons and supernal spirits. It is possible that these souls, demons, and spirits are related to the dynasties of demigods or spirits of the dead in Manetho, but the *Korê Kosmou* does not go into any great detail on this point. The souls cooperate with God in creating the cosmos, and so are parallel to the lesser gods of Plato's

31 SH XXIII, 6: ἄλλοι τε ὅσοι τῆς οὐρανίου θεωρίας πιστὴν ἀκρίβειαν ἔμελλον βουλομένης τῆς πάντων βασιλίδος ἱστορῆσαι προνοίας.

32 SH XXIII, 7: πλησίον τῶν Ὀσίριδος κρυφίων ἀποθέσθαι τὰ ἱερὰ τῶν κοσμικῶν στοιχείων σύμβολα.

33 Cf. Betz, "Schöpfung und Erlösung," 171–74.

34 Cf. André-Jean Festugière, "La création des âmes dans la Korè Kosmou," in *Pisciculi: Studien zur Religion und Kultur des Altertums: Franz Joseph Dölger zum sechzigsten Geburtstage dargeboten von Freunden, Verehrern und Schülern* (ed. Theodor Klauser and Adolf Rücker; Münster: Aschendorff, 1939), 102–16. Festugière points out how the creation of the soul is parallel to the creation of mercury in alchemical procedures, which means that the author must have been knowledgeable of alchemical literature.

Timaeus. The souls then disobey the creator by straying from their appointed tasks, and are therefore punished by being embodied as humans. The creator makes it clear that this is not only a punishment, however, but that humans are also created in order not to leave the cosmos idle and unpraised. The creator calls upon Hermes, "the soul of my soul, and holy mind of my mind,"[35] to bring him the other heavenly gods, so that they may assist in the creation of humans. Again, we observe that the neat euhemerist rationalization of Diodorus is absent: Hermes, the father of Tat, is identified with both the planet Mercury and the soul and mind of the creator god. But there is furthermore a second Hermes, who appears together with a second Osiris at a later stage of the narrative, after the souls have been incarnated as humans. This second Osiris, together with Isis, is credited with civilizing savage mankind with the assistance of Hermes.

In order to understand the relative chronology of these gods we must try to gain an overview of the highly convoluted narrative sequence:

1. Prelude: What is above rules what is below (§§ 1–3).
2. The god Hermes inscribes his stelae on earth, hides them near the "secrets of Osiris," teaches Tat and Asclepius, and then ascends to heaven (§§ 4–8).
3. Nature lies barren, until God creates the goddess Physis, the World-soul (Psychosis), individual souls, and the zodiac. Then he withdraws (§§ 9–21).
4. The souls create the animals, but then leave their appointed stations (§§ 22–24).
5. God and the heavenly gods create humans by placing the souls in bodies, in order to punish them and make the cosmos an object of admiration (§§ 25–30).
6. The souls complain about their lot and are granted a reprieve by God: Those who are less blameworthy when they die will progressively improve their lot in the next incarnations, until they re-enter heaven as gods (§§ 31–42).
7. An earthly spirit, Momus, blames Hermes that humans are carefree, nosy and venturesome; Hermes agrees, and institutes Necessity to curb them (§§ 43–49).
8. God and the heavenly gods separate creation and remove chaos, so that heaven appears to earth, and God commands earth to be bountiful (§§ 50–52).

35 SH XXIII, 26: ὦ ψυχῆς ἐμῆς ψυχὴ καὶ νοῦς ἱερὸς ἐμοῦ νοῦ.

9. Ignorance prevails in mankind, and they make war and desecrate the sanctuaries, until the elements complain to God, who agrees to send an emanation down to earth (§§ 53–63).
10. Isis reveals to Horus that this emanation is his father, Osiris, and that Isis and Osiris together civilized mankind, with the assistance of Hermes (§§ 64–70).[36]

The narrative sequence would be much neater if one could postulate that section 2 in fact belongs to the age of Osiris, in section 9–10, but this is impossible, since it is clearly stated that no mortals yet existed at the time of Hermes.[37] Another seeming paradox is that chaos is only removed in section 8, after the creation of animals and mankind, when God divides the "dark unity."[38] This would not be out of place after section 3, but we should hesitate before removing the passage; the problems are not necessarily worse than, e.g., with the two diverging anthropogonies of Genesis.[39]

The sequence of events in the creation of mankind and the cosmos can be divided into ages comparable to the ages of humankind in Hesiod. Section 2–4 would represent a Golden Age, when the still incorporeal souls live among the gods. A break occurs when the souls transgress the order they were put in by God, and the souls are made into humans. Although the souls complain about their new station, the speech of Momus[40] makes it clear that they still live relatively carefree lives, in this Silver Age. The reproach of Momus leads Hermes to institute Necessity, curtailing the existence of mortal humans, and after the short intermezzo of an ordering division in section 8, it is clear that the reign

36 Cf. NF 3:cxxxii. Festugière postulates three separate pieces brought together by an Isiac redactor: §§ 2–21: "Organisation du monde supérieure"; 22–63: "Révolte et châtiment des âmes"; 64–69: "Venue sur la terre ... d'Isis-Osiris." Carozzi, "Gnose et sotériologie," 66–69, more or less replicates this scheme, though marking 1–8 as an introduction, and points out that Hermes plays no role in the first part but an extensive role in the second.

37 Jan Zandee, "Der Hermetismus und das alte Ägypten," in *Die hermetische Gnosis im Lauf der Jahrhunderte: Betrachtungen über den Einfluss einer ägyptischen Religion auf die Kultur* (ed. Gilles Quispel; Haarlem: Rozekruis Pers, 2000), 97–176 at 100, mistakenly believes that the first reference to Hermes as a soul in sympathy with the heavenly mysteries makes him human, which is explicitly denied, and claims that the later mention of him as a god therefore makes the text inconsistent.

38 SH XXIII, 50: εὐθέως κοσμικῶς τῆς ἔτι μελαίνης ἑνώσεως διάστασις ἐγένετο.

39 Indeed, like the second Jahwist narrative of Genesis, man is created before the earth yields its produce as nourishment.

40 Possibly an *interpretatio Graeca* of Bebon, the Typhonic obstructor (cf. Manetho fr. 78), who contended with Thoth.

of Necessity leads to a Bronze Age, characterized by indiscriminate killing and warfare, as in Hesiod. The complaints of the elements make Osiris come down to earth for a short time (64: πρὸς ὀλίγον), perhaps a short Heroic Age, in which the laws and arts characteristic of present civilization are set down, thus instituting the present Iron Age.

The position of Osiris in this scheme is unclear. On the one hand, the "secrets of Osiris," i.e. his adyta, are already established by the time Hermes ascends to heaven, before the creation of humankind, but he is also sent down as a civilizing emanation from God at a late stage of human prehistory. If the chronology of the *Korê Kosmou* is to be matched with the king-lists, we are obliged to place the dynasty of gods in the first age, before the souls, since Ptah-Hephaestus, the first king, is mentioned there. The first, primordial Osiris would also belong to this age. The second dynasty of demi-gods, or transfigured spirits (*ȝḫ.w*), as they are called in the Turin Canon, would correspond to the incorporeal souls "that have been invited to the land of gods and the places and holy demons close to the stars."[41] After the demi-gods the king-lists diverge,[42] but most agree in placing a series of mythical kings before the first "historical" king, generally known as Menes. Jan Assmann has emphasized that the memory of Menes is likely to be a conflation of several historical kings, like Narmer, Scorpion, etc., but that his importance lies in the fact that posterity establishes him as the end of mythic time and the beginning of history.[43] Diodorus Siculus also notes that Menes was the first to rule the Egyptians after the gods and the heroes, that either he or Isis introduced the use of cultivated foods, and that he was the first lawgiver, although he claimed to have received his laws from Hermes.[44]

Where does the later emanation of Osiris, near the end of the *Korê Kosmou*, then fit in? We are told that this emanation of Osiris is 1) a holy overseer of all that is done, 2) an implacable judge of the living, and 3) a terrible and avenging

41 SH XXIII, 19: ψυχαῖς δὲ ταύταις ταῖς εἰς χωρία θεῶν καὶ τοὺς ἐγγὺς ἄστρων τόπους καὶ ἱεροὺς δαίμονας μετακεκλημέναι.

42 The Armenian fragment of Eusebius lists "another line of kings," then 30 of Memphis, 10 of This, and finally spirits of the dead. The *Excerpta Latina Barbari* lists spirits of the dead and "fortissimos," that is, Heroes (?).

43 Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 39.

44 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.45 & 1.94. The priestly informants of Diodorus told him that Menes ruled about 5000 years before their time, and that the gods and heroes ruled for a period of 18,000 years before that. Cf. above, pp. 92–93, for the uncertainty if Menes is to be identified with the man receiving the laws from Hermes.

lord of the dead.[45] These are not the typical attributes of a king; instead we find another figure in the Hermetic literature who fits this description, namely the Great Demon, as described in SH VII: "Indeed, there is appointed a certain exceedingly Great Demon revolving in the middle of the universe, overlooking everything which is done on earth by the humans."[46] This demon is associated with avenging justice (δίκη τιμωρὸς), and is appointed to punish those humans who err on earth, since they are unable to see the divine.[47] When the soul leaves the body it has to pass by this demon on its upward journey, and this is why the demon is placed in the middle, between heaven and earth (cf. CH I, 24; X, 16). The fullest account of the Great Demon is found in the *Perfect Discourse*, where he is said to be appointed as 1) an overseer, 2) a judge over the souls of man, and 3) a terrible judge of the dead, a direct parallel to the *Korê Kosmou*.[48] One might object that the demon of *KK* punishes those underground (τῶν ὑπὸ γῆν), while that of *PD* punishes the souls between earth and heaven. However, we are told earlier in the *PD* that Hades is so-called because it is at the bottom of the sphere of earth, and therefore cannot be seen (*Ascl.* 17: Ἅιδης). We should thus assume that the great fire, icy water, and furrows of flame are placed in mid-heaven at the bottom of the sphere, consistent with the nocturnal underworld of Egyptian mythology, and thus within the natural domain of Osiris.

The emanation of Osiris is thus to be understood as his installment as king of the Underworld, the Great Demon who inspects souls, just as Osiris oversees the inspection of the heart of the dead in the famous chapter 125 of the *Book of the Dead.* However, Isis goes on to explain to Horus that "the world-creator and craftsman of the universe, *for a short while* granted the greatest (god), your father Osiris, and the greatest goddess Isis, so that they should be helpers of the

45 SH XXIII, 62: ἑτέρα γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν τις ἤδη τῆς ἐμῆς ἀπόρροια φύσεως, ὃς δὴ καὶ ὅσιος ἔσται τῶν πραττομένων ἐπόπτης καὶ ζώντων μὲν κριτὴς ἀμεθόδευτος, φρικτὸς δ' οὐ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τιμωρὸς τῶν ὑπὸ γῆν τύραννος.

46 SH VII, 1: δαίμων γάρ τις μεγίστη τέτακται, ὦ τέκνον, ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ παντὸς εἱλουμένη, πάντα περιορῶσα τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς γινόμενα ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

47 SH VII, 2–3: ἡ δὲ δίκη τέτακται τιμωρὸς τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς ἁμαρτανόντων ἀνθρώπων· … καὶ μάλιστα ἐκείνοις συμβαίνει τὸ ὀλισθαίνειν οἷς θεοπτικὴ δύναμις οὐ πρόσεστι; Cf. CH I, 23: τῷ τιμωρῷ ἐκχωρήσας δαίμονι.

48 NHC VI, 76,22–28: ⲟⲩⲛ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ⲁⲓⲙⲱⲛ ϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲁⲡⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲧⲟⲫⲏ̅ ⲉⲫⲉⲡⲉⲡⲓⲥⲕⲟⲡⲟⲥ ⲏ̅ ⲛ̅ⲇⲓⲕⲁⲥⲧⲏⲥ ⲉⲭⲏ̅ ⲛ̅ⲯⲩⲭⲏ ⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲣⲱⲙⲉ· ⲁⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲕⲁⲁⲩ ⲉ̅ⲛ̅ ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡⲁⲏⲣ ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡⲕⲁⲣ ⲙ̅ⲙ̅ ⲧⲡⲉ The description of his judgement of the dead follows at length in the treatise. Cf. NF 2:385 n. 238, who thought this demon derived from the figure of Mithras.

world which lacked everything."[49] Why was Osiris given to the earth only for a short while (πρὸς ὀλίγον)? Isis is at this point deliberately vague, telling Horus only that, "I refuse to give an account of ⟨this⟩ birth; for it is not lawful to repeat the principle of your seed, O mightiest Horus, so that a birth of the immortal gods may not also come later to humans."[50] This indicates that the emanation of Osiris took place as a kind of birth or becoming (γένεσις), which has to do with the seed (σπορά) of Horus. It should be noted that, in the Late Period, the birth of a divine child—mostly Horus—was celebrated in special buildings called *mammisi* within several temple-complexes, and that this divine child was identified with the ruler.[51] We are dealing with the Pharaonic royal ideology, where every legitimate king represents Horus, the rightful heir of the deceased Osiris. I take the *KK* passage to mean that Osiris came to earth for only a short while, where he together with Isis instituted Osirian kingship by putting an end to chaos, providing the gifts of civilization, and giving birth to a legitimate heir. He then ascended to mid-heaven, where he became a Great Demon, leaving the kingship to his son Horus. After all, the creator told the elements that "there *is already* (ἤδη) amongst you another emanation of my nature, who *will be* (ἔσται) a holy overseer of all that is done, and both an implacable judge of the living, and a not only frightful, but also avenging ruler of those in the underworld."[52] Osiris is apparently already present in the world, perhaps having been incarnated in a body but not yet installed as a king, and he will become the Great Demon when he leaves his body.

When a new king assumed power in ancient Egypt, it was quite common for him to legitimate this power by royal propaganda, describing the preceding period as one of chaos in contrast to the present new order.[53] The former chaos extends from social disorder to a breakdown of the very cosmic order,

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49 SH XXIII, 64: ὁ τῶν συμπάντων κοσμοποιητὴς καὶ τεχνίτης, † τι † τὸν μέγιστόν σου πρὸς ὀλίγον ἐχαρίσατο πατέρα Ὄσιριν καὶ τὴν μεγίστην θεὰν Ἶσιν, ἵνα τῷ πάντων δεομένῳ κόσμῳ βοηθοὶ γένωνται.

50 SH XXIII, 64: παραιτοῦμαι γένεσιν ἱστορεῖν· οὐ γὰρ θεμιτὸν σῆς σπορᾶς καταλέγειν ἀρχήν, ὦ μεγαλοσθενὲς Ὧρε, ὡς μήποτε ὕστερον εἰς ἀνθρώπους ἀθανάτων ἔλθῃ γένεσις θεῶν·

51 François Daumas, *Les mammisis des temples egyptiens* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1958); Alexander Badawy, "The Architectural Symbolism of the Mammisi-Chapels in Egypt," *CdÉ* 38 (1963): 78–90 at 90.

52 SH XXIII, 62: ἑτέρα γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν τις ἤδη τῆς ἐμῆς ἀπόρροια φύσεως, ὃς δὴ καὶ ὅσιος ἔσται τῶν πραττομένων ἐπόπτης καὶ ζώντων μὲν κριτὴς ἀμεθόδευτος, φρικτὸς δ' οὐ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τιμωρὸς τῶν ὑπὸ γῆν τύραννος.

53 Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 109; David P. Silverman, "Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt," in *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice* (ed. Byron E. Shafer; London: Routledge, 1991), 7–87 at 70.

so that by contrast the current legitimate king is shown to maintain both his kingdom and the cosmos itself. We can see an echo of this in the *KK*, where it is the cosmic elements who complain about human malfeasance, and in the very opening lines of their aretalogy, Isis and Osiris put an end to chaos and institute peace, order and religion: "It is they who have filled life with life; it is they who have put an end to savage mutual slaughter; enclosures to the ancestor-gods and sacrifices it is they who have consecrated; laws they have granted, and nourishment for mortals, and protection."[54] A good life, peace, religion, order and prosperity; these were the things a legitimate king would provide his people with. As Jean-Pierre Mahé has pointed out, the so-called apocalypse of the *PD* also makes use of the genre,[55] although in that text it is God and not the king who will reinstate order, and then only after purifying and purging the world with floods and fire, plague and war.

We now return to the "discovery of divine nature," an invention that the ancestors of Hermes and Asclepius were said to be responsible for in the *PD*. In the *KK*, we have already seen mention of "the secrets of Osiris," probably the burial-places of Osiris that were distributed all over Egypt.[56] These sanctuaries had apparently been neglected and even profaned by the ignorant humans of the Bronze Age (§ 45 & 53), and the decline of religion inevitably led to the breakdown of ordered society. Earth, which is filled by all things, is yet devoid of God.[57] It is for this reason that Osiris, after his sanctuaries have fallen into disrepair and no longer "contain the god," now returns to earth "for a short while" (πρὸς ὀλίγον), in order to reinstate the divine presence in the world. With Isis he has instituted sanctuaries and sacrifices to the "ancestor-gods" (§ 66: προγόνοις θεοῖς), that is, to earlier avatars of themselves and the other primordial gods who dwelled on earth before humankind.[58]

Just as the Bronze Age humans of *KK*, the ancestors of Hermes and Asclepius in the *PD*, we are told, were at first ignorant of divinity before they discovered

54 SH XXIII, 65: οὗτοι βίου τὸν βίον ἐπλήρωσαν. οὗτοι τὸ τῆς ἀλληλοφονίας ἔπαυσαν ἄγριον. τεμένη προγόνοις θεοῖς οὗτοι καὶ θυσίας καθιέρωσαν. νόμους οὗτοι καὶ τροφὰς θνητοῖς καὶ σκέπην ἐχαρίσαντο. Cf. André-Jean Festugière, "L'arétalogie isiaque de la Korè kosmou," *RevA* 6/29–30 (1949): 376–81.

55 HHE 2:72–81.

56 Plut., *Is. Os.* 20 (359A).

57 SH XXIII, 60: πάντων ὁ ἐπιχθόνιός σου κόσμος πεπληρωμένος θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει.

58 The Ancestor Gods, primeval "deceased" versions of the gods, like Amun Kematef, were a fixture of Egyptian Religion in the Late Period. Cf. Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 362–64. On Isis and Osiris as founders of sanctuaries, cf. van den Kerchove, *La Voie d'Hermès*, 229–32, 234 n. 40.

the art of making gods.[59] This art, to which we will return later, is then described as that of invoking souls of angels and demons to make them inhabit the statues, before some of the earthly gods thus created are listed:

auus enim tuus, Asclepi, medicinae primus inuentor, cui templum consecratum est in monte Libyae circa litus crocodillorum ....
Hermes, cuius auitum mihi nomen est, nonne in sibi cognomine patria consistens omnes mortales undique uenientes adiuuat atque conseruat? Isin uero Osiris quam multa bona praestare propitiam, quantis obesse scimus iratam!

Take your ancestor, for example: he was the first to discover medicine, Asclepius. They dedicated a temple to him on the Libyan mountain near the shore of the crocodiles.... And Hermes, whose family name I bear, does he not dwell in his native city that was named for him, where mortals come from all around for his aid and protection? Isis, wife of Osiris: we know how much good she can do when well disposed, when angered how much harm![60]

These are ancestors who had temples dedicated to them, and are thus not necessarily identical to the ancestors who discovered the art of creating gods. Like the *KK*, we have here a tripartite temporal structure: the narrative present, the past when order was reinstated after a period of chaos, and a more mythical past of primordial gods. The characters explicitly mentioned in the two treatises can be compared as follows:

	Narrative present	**Ancestors who restored true religion**	**Primordial gods**
KK	Isis and Horus	Isis and Osiris, instructed by Hermes	Ptah-Hephaestus, Hermes, Osiris, Tat, and Asclepius
PD	Hermes, Asclepius, Tat and Ammon	Anonymous ancestors of Hermes and Asclepius	Hermes, Asclepius, Isis and Osiris

59 *Ascl.* 37: *Quoniam ergo proaui nostri multum errabant circa deorum rationem increduli et non animaduertentes ad cultum religionemque diuinam, inuenerunt artem qua efficerent deos*.

60 *Ascl.* 37. Trans. Copenhaver.

We are told regarding the primordial Asclepius that while his material body remains in his temple, his "consciousness of life" went back to heaven.[61] This is quite similar to what is said about Isis and Osiris in *KK*, that after they restored the cult of the gods they ascended back to heaven: "When Osiris and I had done all of this, my son, and saw that the world was entirely full, we were summoned back by those who dwell in heaven."[62] It is noteworthy that Isis here speaks in the first person, which means that she is the same as the one who has instituted all the civilizing arts, and the present dialogue with Horus must therefore be imagined either to take place in heaven, or Isis must subsequently have descended back down to earth at a later stage of world history. On balance, the latter view seems to be the most probable one: the concern with human affairs in the dialogue seems to indicate that Isis and Horus have descended to earth as humans, and that Horus is being prepared to once again ascend to heaven. This idea of a series of emanations of the deities Isis, Osiris and Horus—as well as Hermes and Asclepius—must be seen in context with the doctrine of royal souls, which Isis expounds in SH XXIV.

3.2 SH XXIV: The Emanations of Royal Souls[63]

The *Korê Kosmou* breaks off just as Isis is about to explain or recite the hymn that she and Osiris sang in order to reascend to heaven. John of Stobi apparently did not find this section worth including, and instead picks up at a later stage in the question-and-answer (*eratapokrisis*) dialogue between Isis and Horus, which he describes as being "in the same (book)" (ἐν ταὐτῷ).[64] Horus wants to know how royal souls come to be, and in answer Isis expounds an emanatory cosmology:

ἐπεὶ γὰρ τόποι τέσσαρές εἰσιν ἐν τῷ παντὶ οἵτινες ἀπαραβάτῳ νόμῳ καὶ προστασίᾳ ὑποπίπτουσιν, ὅ τε οὐρανὸς καὶ ⟨ὁ⟩ αἰθὴρ καὶ ὁ ἀὴρ καὶ ἡ ἱερωτάτη γῆ, [καὶ] ἄνω μέν, ὦ τέκνον, ἐν οὐρανῷ

Since there are four places in the All which fall under an inviolable law and governorship, my son,—namely heaven, ether, the air, and the most holy earth—the gods dwell up in heaven,

61 *Ascl.* 37: *sensus uitae*. Cf. below chap. 4.4.3.

62 SH XXIII, 69: ταῦτα πάντα ποιήσαντες, ὦ τέκνον, Ὀσιρίς τε κἀγώ, τὸν κόσμον πληρέστατον ἰδόντες ἀπητούμεθα λοιπὸν ὑπὸ τῶν τὸν οὐρανὸν κατοικούντων·

63 Cf. Kroll, *Die Lehren des Hermes Trismegistos*, 288f.

64 Cf. NF 3:cxxxiv, ccxix: Festugière sees SH XXIV–XXVI as a group distinct from SH XXIII, though with some affinity to its prologue (SH XXIII, 1–2).

θεοὶ κατοικοῦσιν, ὧν ἄρχει μετὰ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πάντων ὁ τῶν ὅλων δημιουργός· ἐν δὲ τῷ αἰθέρι ἀστέρες, ὧν ἄρχει ὁ μέγας φωστὴρ ἥλιος· ἐν δὲ τῷ ἀέρι ψυχαὶ δαιμόνιαι, ὧν ἄρχει σελήνη· ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς γῆς ἄνθρωποι καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ζῷα, ὧν ἄρχει ὁ κατὰ καιρὸν γενόμενος βασιλεύς.

γεννῶσι γάρ, ὦ τέκνον, βασιλεῖς οἱ θεοὶ ἐπαξίους τῆς ἐπιγείου γονῆς. καί εἰσιν οἱ ἄρχοντες τοῦ βασιλέως ἀπόρροιαι, ὧν ὁ μᾶλλον ἐκείνῳ πλησίον οὗτος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων βασιλικώτερος.

ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἥλιος, καθὸ ἔγγιόν ἐστι τοῦ θεοῦ, τῆς σελήνης ἐπιμείζων καὶ δυναμικώτερος, ᾧ δευτερεύει ἡ σελήνη καὶ κατὰ τάξιν καὶ κατὰ δύναμιν.

which the creator of the universe rules together with everything else; in the ether dwell the stars, which the great luminary, the sun, rules; in the air dwell the demons, which the moon rules; and on earth dwell the humans and the other living beings, which the king rules, who is born at just that time.

For the gods beget kings, my son, who are worthy of earthly birth. And the rulers are emanations of the king, and the one among them who is closest to him is more regal than the others.

For the sun, insofar as it is closer to God, is greater and more powerful than the moon, while the moon follows it both in order and in power.

SH XXIV, 1–2

The sun, the moon, and the king are all emanations of God, and they all rule their own realms like the creator rules heaven. The motif of the sun as king of the heavenly gods is known from CH V, 3.[65] The role of the king as a luminary on earth, just as sun and moon are in heaven, is traditional Egyptian royal ideology, as is made explicit in a New Kingdom stela from Karnak: "Behold, a god he is on earth. Magnify him like Re, praise him like the moon."[66] In the Amun-theology of the Ramesside age and beyond, we find the hidden god manifesting himself in cosmos and the kings: "Ba-like, who incarnates himself in incarnations, Holy concealed one whom one cannot recognize; He is the king who creates kings."[67] The king on earth, in our passage, is the reflection of the sun and the moon, who are again reflections of the creator-god.

Subsequently in SH XXIV we learn that the souls of kings come from "the place of God," which lies above those places where the rest of the souls come from, and the king is therefore the last of the gods, and the first among

65 Cf. NF 1:65 n. 10.

66 Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 141.

67 Ibid., 305.

humans.[68] As we have seen, the emanation of Osiris was sent to earth "for a short while," to reign as the living pharaoh who only stays on earth for the comparatively short duration of a mortal lifetime. This corresponds to the royal soul born in its allotted time (κατὰ καιρόν) in the quote above. During his lifetime (§ 4: τὸν ἴδιον αἰῶνα), the king is to perform his duties irreproachably, so that he will be deified and prepared to exert the authority of the gods, although he is already somehow divine and therefore does not suffer from embodiment in the same manner as other people.[69]

The position of the king as the least of the gods, and the greatest of the humans is comparable to the role of Horus in the Manethonic king-lists, where he is said to be the last of the god-kings in some sources, and the first of the demigod-kings in others. Both ontologically and chronologically Horus seems to represent the threshold between the divine and the human realms.[70] The living king was seen as "Horus in the Palace," the son of Re and Osiris, and the guarantor of order—Maat.[71] Yet, he was obviously mortal. The Egyptians solved this dilemma by connecting the living king with the daily course of the sun, representing cyclical time—*nḥḥ*—while the deceased king was Osiris, the nocturnal ruler of the underworld, representing eternal permanence—*ḏt*.[72] Both of these functions are found in the emanation of God in the *KK*; he is an overseer of all that is done—a standard function of the sun, cross-culturally—and an implacable judge of both the living and the dead.

The king was likely associated with Horus already in predynastic times, and we find the falcon of Horus guarding several of the early kings, such as Narmer. The most important king for our purposes here, however, is Menes, whom posterity designated as the one who instituted the line of mortal kings. In Egyptian memory, Menes is the first Horus-king, who united the two lands

68 SH XXIV, 3: καὶ ὁ μὲν βασιλεὺς τῶν μὲν ἄλλων θεῶν ἐστιν ἔσχατος, πρῶτος δὲ ἀνθρώπων· … ἡ γὰρ εἰς αὐτὸν καταπεμπομένη ψυχὴ ἐξ ἐκείνου ἐστὶ τοῦ χωρίου ὃ ὑπεράνω κεῖται ἐκείνων ἀφ' ὧν εἰς τοὺς ἄλλους καταπέμπονται ἀνθρώπους. Cf. SH XXVI, 2.

69 SH XXIV, 4: καταπέμπονται δὲ ἐκεῖθεν εἰς τὸ βασιλεύειν διὰ δύο ταῦτα αἱ ψυχαί, ὧ τέκνον· αἱ γὰρ καλῶς καὶ ἀμέμπτως δραμοῦσαι τὸν ἴδιον αἰῶνα καὶ μέλλουσαι ἀποθεοῦσθαι, ἵνα κἀν τῷ βασιλεύειν τὴν τῶν θεῶν προγυμνασθῶσιν ἐξουσίαν. αἱ ⟨δὲ⟩ θεῖαί τινες ἤδη οὖσαι καὶ ἐπὶ μικρῷ τινι παραθεμιστεύσασαι τὸν ἔνθεον γνώμονα, ἵνα μὴ κόλασιν μὲν ἐν τῷ σεσωματίσθαι ὑπομένωσι, διὰ δ' ἀξίαν καὶ φύσιν μηθὲν ὅμοιον τοῖς ἄλλοις πάσχωσιν ἐνσωματισθεῖσαι, ἀλλ' ὅπερ εἶχον λελυμέναι, τοῦτο καὶ δεθεῖσαι ἔχωσιν.

70 A comparison could be made with the Valentinian speculation of Horos as the boundary between the Pleroma and Earth.

71 Silverman, "Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt," 67–70.

72 Cf. Gwyn Griffiths, "The Faith of the Pharaonic Period," 27.

of Upper- and Lower Egypt, while at the same time the event is also transposed onto the mythical plane, in the story of the confrontation between Horus and Seth. In the Memphite Theology, later used by Manetho in his depiction of the divine dynasty, Ptah-Tatenen, the primal god, is first said to be the king and unifier of Egypt, and the originator of the Heliopolitan Ennead of gods.[73] Ptah's kingship later passes to his descendant Geb, who after the death of his son Osiris first gives Lower Egypt to Horus and Upper Egypt to Seth, before he changes his mind and gives sole kingship to Horus, relegating Seth to the desert and foreign countries. Horus is then proclaimed the unifier of Egypt, and called "Tatenen, South-of-his-Wall, Lord of Eternity," all epithets of Ptah. The identity of Horus and Ptah is thus stressed at his assumption of kingship and the unification of the two lands. Some Egyptologists, like Henri Frankfort, is of the opinion that the role of kingship in the text, as well as the central position of Memphis, points to the mythological identification of Horus with Menes.[74] Seth represents brute force, and therefore his reign is characterized by the mighty brutalizing the weak, while Horus represents the rule of law. The progression from the sole reign of Seth, to a dual kingship of Seth and Horus, and finally the sole reign of Horus, marks the advent of the rule of law. Seth is displaced from the throne, but placed on the prow of the sun-bark to ward off the serpent Apopis. In other words, Seth's strength is put in the service of the new world order, instead of being its ruling principle. Likewise, in the *KK*, war is the foremost hallmark of the period of disorder, as human rulers force their subjects to make war upon each other: "And so, strength accomplished much against weakness, so that the strong killed the powerless by burning them alive even in the sanctuaries, and threw the corpses into the inner sanctums."[75] Although neither Seth nor Horus is mentioned here, the motif of the brute strength of Seth and of the initial powerlessness of young Horus might very well be supposed to form the backdrop of this text. The followers of Seth, called "Typhonians," do appear in another part of the text, where they

73 Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 42–47. The Memphite Theology is preserved on the Shabaka-stone, which king Shabaka (716–702) states he had transcribed from a worm-eaten papyrus from his ancestors. Several scholars believe the theology to stem from the Old Kingdom, but even if it is not, for our purposes its importance lies in the identification of Ptah and Horus as unifiers of Egypt and founders of Memphis, thus conflating them both with the memory of Menes.

74 Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1948), 25–26, 90.

75 SH XXIII, 53: καὶ οὕτως ἡ μὲν ἰσχὺς κατὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας μέγα ἠδύνατο, ὥστε οἱ ἰσχυροὶ τοὺς ἀδυνάτους καὶ ἔκαιον καὶ ἐφόνευον καὶ κατὰ τῶν ἱερῶν τοῦτο μὲν ζῶντας τοῦτο δὲ καὶ νεκροὺς ἔρριπτον κατὰ τῶν ἀδύτων. Nock places κατὰ τῶν ἀδύτων in brackets.

try to make the souls transgress their boundaries.[76] This is the only mention of Seth-Typhon in the Hermetic corpus, but the reference does indicate that his presence might be supposed in these descriptions of chaos, alongside his traditional mythological counterparts, Isis, Osiris and Horus.

Although we cannot unambiguously identify all the primordial beings of *KK* with the pre-mortal kings of Manetho, it seems certain that both texts rely on common traditions about Egyptian primordial kingship. Cosmogony, anthropogony and the institution of Pharaonic kingship are not clearly delineated chronologically, because, as Jan Assmann points out, cosmogony is for the Egyptians also cratogony; the power of kingship is implied in creation.[77] Legitimate kingship is the bulwark against the threat of chaos, as is indicated by the speech of the creator to the heavenly gods in the *KK*: "For how long shall we rule over this unacknowledged dominion? ... Let us wipe off this still neglected compact! Let later generations regard chaos as an untrustworthy myth!"[78] As the creator is the king of the cosmos, the king on earth is his image, and plays his part in the well-ordered disposition of all things, staving off chaos.

3.3 SH XXV: Cosmology and the Location of the Royal Souls

According to SH XXIV, 1–2, quoted above, the cosmos was divided into four parts: the heavens, the ether, the air, and earth, populated respectively by gods, stars, demons, and humans, and ruled respectively by the creator, the sun, the moon, and human kings. Another fourfold division is introduced in SH XXV. The World-Soul was created in four parts, and these were subdivided into sixty zones, as in the *KK*. The bottom part near the earth consists of four zones, probably to be associated with the four elements.[79] The next part has 8 zones, comprising the air where the birds fly, although these can also traverse the four

76 SH XXV, 8: ... εἰ μή τις τῶν Τυφωνίων, ὦ τέκνον, παρελθὼν λέγοι, ὅτι δυνατὸν ταῦρον μὲν ἐν βυθῷ, ἐν δὲ ἀέρι χελώνην διαζῆν.

77 Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 346.

78 SH XXIII, 50: μέχρι πότε τῆς ἀνεπιγνώστου ταύτης δεσπόσομεν ἡγεμονίας; ... ἀπαλείψωμεν τῷ δύνασθαι τὴν ἔτι ἀργὴν σύστασιν ταύτην· ἄπιστος τοῖς μεταγενεστέροις μῦθος δὴ δοξάτω χάος εἶναι. It is hard to say what "wipe off" is supposed to mean here. Does the creator intend to destroy and rejuvenate the cosmos, as in *Ascl.* 26? If so, these cosmic disasters are nowhere related. Scott removes the entire section 50 to right after § 8.

79 SH XXV, 11: ὧν ἡ μὲν ἀπὸ γῆς ἄνω χωρῶν ἐστι τεσσάρων, ὡς τὴν γῆν κατά τινας λόφους καὶ ἀκρωρείας ἀνατεῖναι καὶ φθάνειν ἄχρι τοσούτου·

sections below.[80] The part above has 16 zones full of fine and pure air.[81] The last and upmost part has 32 zones of the finest and clearest air, "being itself the boundary to the upper heavens above, which are of a fiery nature."[82] All of these sixty zones constitute only the two bottom parts of SH XXIV, extending from the realm of the demons below the moon, down to earth: "For this is how the most sacred order is … The space from the summit of heaven as far as the moon is reserved for gods and stars, and providence as well, while that from the moon down to us, my son, is the dwelling place for souls."[83] The two upper parts are thus reserved for gods and stars, that is, the noetic and visible gods,[84] while the two lower parts are subdivided into four sections of sixty zones. Accordingly, the dwelling place of the royal souls must be the sixtieth zone, right below the moon, beyond which starts the abode of the visible gods, in the fiery ether.

I: Heaven.
God rules (noetic) gods.

II: Ether.
The sun rules the stars (visible gods).

III: Air.
The moon rules demons (souls).

IV: Earth.
The king rules humans.

A: Layer 29–60, finest & clearest air.
B: Layer 13–28, fine & pure air.
C: Layer 5–12, air where birds fly.
D: Layer 1–4, the elements (?).

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80 Ibid.: ἡ δ' ἀπὸ ταύτης δευτέρα ἐστὶ χωρῶν η', ἐν αἷς γίγνονται ἀνέμων κινήσεις … ὅπου ⟨δὲ⟩ ἡ τοῦ ἀνέμου κίνησις, καὶ ἡ τῶν ὀρνέων πτῆσις·

81 SH XXV, 12: ἡ δὲ τρίτη χωρῶν ἐστιν ἑκκαίδεκα, ἀέρος λεπτοῦ καὶ καθαροῦ πλήρης.

82 Ibid.: ἡ δὲ τετάρτη ἐστὶ δύο καὶ τριάκοντα, ἐν αἷς ἐστι λεπτότατος καὶ εἰλικρινέστατος ἀὴρ καὶ διαυγής, διορίζων ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ τοὺς ἄνω οὐρανούς, ἐκπύρους ὄντας τὴν φύσιν.

83 SH XXV, 9: ἔχει δὲ ἡ διάταξις ἡ ἱερωτάτη οὕτως. ἤδη ποτὲ ἄνω, μεγαλοφυέστατε παῖ, βλέπε ψυχῶν διατάξεις. τὸ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ κορυφῆς μέχρι σελήνης θεοῖς καὶ ἄστροις καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ προνοίᾳ σχολάζει· τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ σελήνης, ὦ τέκνον, ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ψυχῶν ἐστιν οἰκητήριον.

84 It should be pointed out that the division effectuated between gods and stars makes the cosmology elaborated by Isis more in line with the standard Platonic—and Hermetic—division between visible and noetic gods, and not Stoic as is often claimed. Contra Scott 3:508, who claims that the Hermetists in general do not distinguish between stars and gods.

This cosmological hierarchy is in accordance with the account of the creation of souls in the *KK*, and the kingly souls in SH XXIV and XXV can explain a somewhat obscure reference in *KK*: The creator, "standing on the exceedingly beautiful pedestal of the ether,"[85] tells the still unembodied souls that "if you remain tranquil, heaven awaits you again, and likewise the constellation assigned to you and thrones filled with excellence."[86] Since the ether is the pedestal of God, it seems that the souls are arrayed underneath it, in the air, and are yet promised to be able to rise above it, to heaven. Most editors ascribe the mention of thrones to Jewish influence, but thrones are common in Egyptian accounts also, and indeed the hieroglyphic sign of Isis is a throne.[87] The thrones that await the souls must certainly be associated with their royal status. Indeed, every soul is somehow royal, being the handiwork of God, but this inherent royalty is only realized by those souls who through a series of rebirths traverse several bodies, animal and human, until they reach the top zone below the moon.[88] The idea of a series of rebirths being necessary before the rebirth into divinity can also be found in the treatises of Hermes, who says to Tat: "Do you see how many bodies we must pass through, my son, how many troops of demons, ⟨cosmic⟩ connections and stellar circuits in order to hasten toward the one and only?"[89] Bodies, demons, and stars are the denizens of earth, air, and ether, which must be passed through before a soul can reenter heaven.

3.4 SH XXVI: Hermes as a Royal Soul

In SH XXVI, 9, Isis explains the different kinds of kingships that come from the royal stratum of the world soul. As we have learned, the world soul was extended from earth up to the ether in sixty zones, subdivided into four parts.

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85 SH XXIII, 17: ἐν τῇ περικαλλεῖ τοῦ αἰθέρος στὰς βάσει.

86 Ibid.: εὐσταθησάσαις μὲν οὖν ὑμῖν οὐρανός τε καταμένει πάλιν ὁμοίως, καὶ ὁ διαταγεὶς ἀστερισμὸς θρόνοι τε ἀρετῆς πεπληρωμένοι· Scott 3:512 suggests emending ⟨κατ⟩αστερισμὸς, "the making of a man into a star god," which is a possibility, but it makes good sense that the souls will reach certain constellations containing thrones when they enter into the ethereal realm.

87 Cf. also Ps.-Callisthenes on *thronisterium* in Memphis, Jan Bergman, *Ich bin Isis: Studien zum memphitischen Hintergrund der griechischen Isisaretalogien* (Uppsala: Berlingska Boktrykkeriet, 1968), 93.

88 SH XXV, 4: ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ πρᾶγμα ἰδιοφυές, τέκνον, καὶ βασιλικὸν καὶ ἔργον τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ χειρῶν τε καὶ νοῦ, αὐτό θ' ἑαυτῷ εἰς νοῦν ὁδηγούμενον.

89 CH IV, 8: ὁρᾷς, ὦ τέκνον, πόσα ἡμᾶς δεῖ σώματα διεξελθεῖν, καὶ πόσους χοροὺς δαιμόνων καὶ συνέχειαν καὶ δρόμους ἀστέρων ἵνα πρὸς τὸν ἕνα καὶ μόνον σπεύσωμεν; Trans. Copenhaver.

The very top zone is where the royal souls emanate from, and after their bodily holsters expire, they return to it, or even higher, to the realm of the gods, if they have performed their duties admirably. However, we now learn that the concept of royalty is not restricted to territorial monarchy, but rather there are kings of a wide range of phenomena:

πολλαὶ γάρ εἰσι βασιλεῖαι· αἱ μὲν γάρ εἰσι ψυχῶν, αἱ δὲ σωμάτων, αἱ δὲ τέχνης, αἱ δὲ ἐπιστήμης, αἱ δὲ αὖ τῶν καὶ τῶν.
– πῶς πάλιν; εἶπεν Ὧρος.
– οἷον, ὦ τέκνον Ὧρε, ἀπογεγονότων ἤδη ψυχῶν μὲν Ὄσιρις, ὁ πατήρ σου· σωμάτων δὲ ὁ ἑκάστου ἔθνους ἡγεμών· βουλῆς δὲ ὁ πατὴρ πάντων καὶ καθηγητὴς ὁ τρισμέγιστος Ἑρμῆς· ἰατρικῆς δὲ ὁ Ἀσκληπιὸς ὁ Ἡφαίστου· ἰσχύος δὲ καὶ ῥώμης πάλιν Ὄσιρις, μεθ' ὅν, ὦ τέκνον, αὐτὸς σύ·
φιλοσοφίας δὲ Ἀρνεβεσχῆνις, ποιητικῆς δὲ πάλιν ὁ Ἀσκληπιὸς Ἰμούθης. καθόλου γάρ, ὦ τέκνον, εὑρήσεις, ἐὰν ἐξετάζῃς, πολλοὺς καὶ πολλῶν ἄρχοντας καὶ πολλοὺς πολλῶν βασιλεύοντας.

"For there are many kingships; some are kingships over souls, others over bodies, others of an art, others of learning, and yet others of this and that."
"What do you mean?" said Horus.
"This, my son Horus: The king of those souls who have already passed away is Osiris, your father. The king of bodies is the chief of each of the races. The king of counsel is the father of all and guide, Hermes Trismegistus. The king of medicine is Asclepius, son of Hephaestus. The king of strength and might is once again Osiris, and after him, my son, are you yourself.
The king of philosophy is Harnebeschênis,[90] and of poetry it is once again Asclepius Imouthes. In general, my son, if you examine the matter you will discover many rulers of many things, and many kings over many things.

SH XXVI, 9

Osiris is the king of the dead, but as the one who instituted Pharaonic kingship he is also king of strength and might. Horus is also the king of strength and might after Osiris, indicating that his kingship depends on his legitimacy as successor of Osiris. Whereas might was seen as something negative in the chaos before the emanation of God was sent down, it is now in the possession of Osiris and Horus. It is in other words no longer indiscriminate brute force, but is now put in the service of legitimate kingship. The rulers of different peoples are merely kings of their bodies, whereas the Egyptian kings connected to Osiris and Horus also have authority over their souls.

90 Cf. PGM XIII.766–767.

Hermes Trismegistus is the king of counsel, a fitting epithet for the vizier of the gods, Thoth. On the other hand, it is surprising that he is called the "father of all," and the anthropogony of *KK* must be presupposed, where Hermes is both the artisan of the bodies of humankind (a role held by the ram-god Khnum in traditional Egyptian mythology) and the creator of human nature (SH XXIII, 29–30). The epithet "guide," is not very surprising, and refers to the traditional role of Hermes as the guide of the souls of the deceased, though in a Hermetic context the souls of the living might also benefit from his guidance.[91] Likewise, Asclepius-Imouthes is the king of medicine and poetry, and Harnebeschênis is the king of philosophy. It is surprising that Hermes is not given the reign over philosophy, rather than the obscure Harnebeschênis, "Horus, lord of Letopolis," the Horus worshipped at the Letopolis in Lower Egypt.[92] That Asclepius-Imouthes is also made king of poetry, besides medicine, must relate to his reputation as the author of Wisdom-texts in Egypt.

The implication of all this is that just as the souls of human kings, the souls of sages, who deal with "counsel," also emanate from the royal stratum of souls, just below the gods. Sages can thus presumably "manifest" Hermes, in the same manner that the Egyptian kings "manifest" Horus. Indeed, the different kingships enumerated here correspond to some of the favored rebirths for humans in *KK*, in their migration towards the divine.[93] Hermes and these other god-kings thus represent the hope of the souls under their dominion to ascend up to heaven, to the company of the gods, where they dwelt before their disobedience made God enclose them inside material bodies. In the anthropogony of *KK*, Hermes[94] declared his willingness to aid those who belong to him: "I will also forever be of assistance to the mortal life of those humans who are born under my signs—for those signs that the father and creator established for me are both mindful and intelligent—and even more so when a movement of the stars that is set over them is in harmony with the natural energy of each person."[95] The signs of Hermes are Virgo and Gemini, and Firmicus

91 Cf. below, section 3.1.

92 Hans Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), 424. Cf. Wilhelm Spiegelberg, *Demotische studien I* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1901), 28*, 41, who reads the name as the Greek rendering of *Ḥr-nb-Sḫm*, attested on Greek and Demotic mummy labels.

93 SH XXIII, 41–42: τὴν εἰς τὸ θεῖον μεταβολὴν. On μεταβολή as death, cf. CH XI, 15; XII, 6.

94 Scott 3:524 claims that the planet Mercury who is speaking here is distinct from the man Hermes in §§ 3–8 and the great god Hermes of §§ 26 & 30. This might be so, but as I have shown, this distinction is in no way clear-cut.

95 SH XXIII, 29: καὶ τῶν ὑπὸ ζῳδίων τῶν ἐμῶν γινομένων ἀνθρώπων εἰσαεὶ τὸν θνητὸν βίον ὠφελήσω (ζῴδια γὰρ ἃ ἐμοὶ ἀνέθηκεν ὁ πατὴρ καὶ δημιουργὸς ἔμφρονά γε καὶ νοερά) καὶ τότε

Maternus affirms that Mercury in favorable positions creates "philosophers, teachers of the art of letters, or geometers"; astrologers who "contemplate the presence of the gods, or men skilled in sacred writings"; orators and lawyers; and even "great men crowned with wreaths for being famous in sacred matters."[96] Hermes is thus not only the patron god of letters and sacred matters, but he is also in some sense the king of them, and the archetype that all those who pursue these arts should emulate.

The model of the emanations of royal souls might help elucidate some Neoplatonic testimonia to Hermetism. H.-C. Puech has pointed out that both Emperor Julian and Hermias, the fifth century scholiast on Plato, had interpreted Hermes' epithet, thrice greatest, to mean that he had been reincarnated in Egypt three times, and recognized himself in his third incarnation.[97] J.-P. Mahé

πλέον, ὅταν καὶ ⟨ἡ⟩ ἐπικειμένη αὐτοῖς τῶν ἀστέρων κίνησις σύμφωνον ἔχῃ τὴν ἑνὸς ἑκάστου φυσικὴν ἐνέργειαν.

96 Firm. Mat., *Math.* 3.7.1–2: *Mercurius in parte horoscopi partiliter constitutus in his, in quibus gaudet signis, in diurna genitura facit philosophos, grammaticae artis magistros aut geometras aut caelestia saepe tractantes aut qui ad hoc spectent, ut deorum possint praesentiam intueri, aut sacrarum litterarum peritos; facit etiam frequenter oratores et advocatos, praesertim si in hoc loco vel in suis signis vel in ceteris vocalibus signis fuerit inventus. Quodsi sic Mercurium Sol aut Saturnus aut Iuppiter in diurna genitura respexerit, magnos viros faciet, qui sacris ⟨et⟩ gloriosis stemmatibus coronentur; facit etiam tales, ut illis maxima imperatorum negotia credantur*. Trans. Jean Rhys Bram, *Ancient Astrology: Theory and Practice. Matheseos Libri VIII by Firmicus Maternus* (Park Ridge: Noyes Press, 1975). Cf. also 3.2.18 & 3.12.6.

97 Henri-Charles Puech, "Hermès trois fois incarné," in *En quête de la Gnose* (2 vols.; Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 1:117–18. Julian apud Cyr. Alex., *C. Jul.* 5.33: Ἔχουσι μὲν εἰπεῖν καὶ Αἰγύπτιοι, παρ' ἑαυτοῖς ἀπαριθμούμενοι σοφῶν οὐκ ὀλίγων ὀνόματα, πολλοὺς ἐσχηκέναι τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑρμοῦ διαδοχῆς—Ἑρμοῦ δέ φημι τοῦ τρίτον ἐπιφοιτήσαντος τῇ Αἰγύπτῳ… ("The Egyptians keep saying that the names of not a few sages are counted among them, and that they have had many from the succession of Hermes—I mean that Hermes who has visited Egypt three times …"); apud *Artemii Passio* 26: εἰσὶ καὶ παρ' Ἕλλησιν ἄνδρες σοφώτατοι οὐ μόνον δὶς γεννηθέντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ τρίς· ὅ τε γὰρ Ἑρμῆς, ὁ Τρισμέγιστος ἐπικαλούμενος, τρίτον ἦλθεν ἐν κόσμῳ ἑαυτὸν ἐπιγνούς, καθὼς αἱ ἱεραὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ θαυμάσιοι βίβλοι διαγορεύουσι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο Τρισμέγιστος ὀνομάζεται ("there are also among the Hellenes exceedingly wise men, who have been born not only twice, but three times! For indeed that Hermes who is called Trismegistus came into the world three times when he had come to know himself, according to what his holy and wondrous books relate, and therefore he is named Trismegistus"); Herm., *In Plat. Phaed. Schol.* 2.99.6–8: ὁ Τρισμέγιστος Ἑρμῆς λέγεται πλεονάκις ἐπιδημήσας τῇ Αἰγύπτῳ ἑαυτοῦ ἀνεμνῆσθαι καὶ τρίτον κεκλῆσθαι Ἑρμῆς ("Hermes Trismegistus, who dwelled several times in Egypt, is said to have recognized himself and been called Hermes three times"); 2.176.14–15: ὁ « Τρισμέγιστος » Ἑρμῆς ἐπεκλήθη, ὡς τρὶς ἐνταῦθα φιλοσοφήσας καὶ τὸ τρίτον ἑαυτὸν ἐπιγνούς ("Hermes is called 'Trismegistus' since

recognized that this seems to be a myth similar to that in the letter of Manetho preserved by Syncellus,[98] though here it is the second Hermes who is called thrice greatest. However, as we have seen, it is possible that Manetho placed the first Hermes in the dynasty of gods, the second in that of the demigods, and the third in a mortal dynasty after the flood. The Neoplatonic testimonies point to the possibility that the multiple Hermeses were not only considered to be related genealogically, as when Hermes refers to his homonymous ancestor, but were in fact seen as emanations from the same god, or royal soul. Similarly, Emperor Julian claimed that Asclepius first came single to Epidauros, before he multiplied himself and went to Pergamon, Ionia, Taranto and later Rome.[99] In the same manner, the primordial Hermes in *KK* ascends to heaven during the reign of gods in Egypt, but later sends down emanations to earth. Could it be that it is in order to assimilate himself with this royal soul that the first century CE astrologer Dorotheus refers to both himself and Hermes as king of Egypt?[100] We have no indication that Dorotheus had ever read the philosophical Hermetica, nor that they were even in existence at this early date, but we shall see that at least the theory of royal souls must have been developed before the turn of the Common Era, since it is then referred to by astrologers citing Hermes as an authority.

3.5 CH I: Poimandres the King

The teaching of emanations of royal souls from different god-kings in heaven can be illuminated by a hypothesis of Howard Jackson, regarding the origin of the god Poimandres, which has received little attention.[101] Jackson points

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he practiced philosophy here (below) three times, and on the third time he came to know himself"). My trans. There is some ambiguity whether τρίτον in each case should be taken to mean "third time" or "three times." Cf. also van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 26.

98 Mahé, "Paliggenesia et structure du monde supérieur," 137–38.

99 Jul., *C. Gal.* 197.13–198.3.

100 Dor., *Carm.*, 5.1.1 & 5.41.50 Pingree.

101 Surprisingly, neither van den Kerchove ("Pratique rituelles et traités hermétiques," Ph.D. diss. published as *La voie d'Hermès*), nor Peste ("The Poimandres Group in the Corpus Hermeticum," Ph.D. diss.), who both discuss CH I amply, make any mention of Jackson's article. Cf. however now Anna van den Kerchove, "Poimandrès, figure d'autorité dans la tradition hermétique," *RHR* 231 (2014): 27–46, who finds the suggestion of Kingsley most likely, while keeping that of Jackson as a distinct possibility. Van den Kerchove also points out that the name was explained as *Mꜥ.t-Rꜥ* by Heinz J. Thissen, "Demotistik und

out that there are two schools of interpretation for the name Poimandres.[102] One suggests a Greek derivation from ποιμήν and ἀνήρ, meaning a shepherd of men. This is apparently how Zosimus of Panopolis understood the name, since he writes Ποιμέναν̣δρα (in the accusative case).[103] There is also a hero from Tanagra in Boeotia called Poimandros, who seems to have little to do with Poimandres however.[104] The other school would see an Egyptian background to the name, though for some reason nearly all proposals make use of Coptic rather than Demotic, which makes little chronological sense. The number of suggestions is indicative of the imprecision of this etymological method:

> ⲡⲙⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲣⲉ , "The witness" (Granger)
> ⲡⲉⲓⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲏ, "The mind of Ra" (Griffith)
> ⲡⲉⲓⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣⲏ, "The mind of Ra" (Kingsley)
> ⲡⲉⲓⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲣⲟ, "The mind of sovereignty" (Marcus)
> ⲡⲉⲓⲙⲁⲛⲉ (ⲇ)ⲣⲏⲥ, "This shepherd guards" (Van den Kerchove)
> ⲡⲉⲓⲙⲁ ⲛ̄(ⲇ)ⲣⲏⲥ, "This place guards" (Van den Kerchove)
> ⲡⲉⲓⲙⲁ ⲛ̄(ⲇ)ⲣⲏ, "This place of Ra (*or* of light)" (Van den Kerchove)
> *Pꜣy-mꜣꜥ.t-Rꜥ*, "The truth of Ra" (Van den Kerchove)[105]

Kingsley and Van den Kerchove do not see their own suggestions as excluding all the others, but rather propose that the name would have invited multiple interpretations, both in Greek and Egyptian. However, as Jackson points out, all of the abovementioned suggestions presume that Poimandres is an ad hoc creation of the author of CH I, unlike the other Hermetic characters, who are all Egyptian gods whose names have been interpreted or transcribed into Greek, such as Hephaestus-Ptah, Tat, and Harnebeschenis. Jackson therefore proposes to identify Poimandres with the deified Pharaoh Amenemhat III of the twelfth dynasty, whose throne-name "The one who belongs to the Maat

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Ägyptologie. Anmerkungen zu demotischen literarischen Texten," *ZÄS* 117 (1990): 63–69 at 66.

102 Howard M. Jackson, "A New Proposal for the Origin of the Hermetic God Poimandres," *ZPE* 128 (1999): 95–106 at 95–99.

103 Zos. Pan., *The Final Quittance* (*CAAG* 2:245.6).

104 Jackson, "A New Proposal," 96.

105 Frank Granger, "The Poemandres of Hermes Trismegitus," *JThS* 5 (1904): 395–412; Griffith in Scott 2:16–17; Peter Kingsley, "Poimandres: The Etymology of the Name and the Origins of the Hermetica" *JWCI* 56 (1993): 1–24; Ralph Marcus, "The Name *Poimandrēs*," *JNES* 8 (1949): 40–43; Van den Kerchove, "Pratiques rituelles et traités hermétiques," 61–96 (this section is not included in the Brill publication of the dissertation, *La Voie d'Hermès*).

of Re" (*N*(*y*) *mꜣꜥt rꜥ*)[106] was prefixed with the title "king" (*pr-ꜥꜣ*), and transliterated into Greek in many different forms: Πραμαρρῆς, Πρεμαρρῆς, Φραμαρῆς, Πρεαμαρρῆς, Πρεεμαρρῆς, Πρεμανρῆς, Πορεμανρῆς and Πορραμάνρης.[107] The latter two are clearly the closest in form to Poimandres, and derive respectively from Philadelphia in the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Narmouthis (Medinet Madi) in the early first century BCE—the latter attestation is in the fourth hymn of Isidorus.[108] As Jackson realized, the hymn of Isidorus is important in order to demonstrate that Porremanres the king could be identified with Poimandres, the divine mind, though Jackson did not take into consideration the Hermetic teaching of royal souls, which would have added weight to his argument. But first we should take note of Jackson's explanation of the etymological difficulties in deriving Poimandres from Porremanres:

> …the form Ποιμάνδρης represents a final stage in the process of Hellenization of the name *Pr-ꜥꜣ Mꜣꜥ*(*.t*) *rꜥ*. Isidoros' accusative Πορραμάνρην shows that the name has already assumed the proper Greek declension -ης, -ου, -ῃ, -ην that CH I's Ποιμάνδρης (genitive -δρου, as we saw) equally evinces, where earlier, less Hellenized forms of the god-king's name show either the -ης, -ειους/-ηους, -ει or -ης, -ητος, -ητι that are both characteristic of Egyptian names transcribed directly into Greek. The insertion of the voiced dental stop δ into -νρ- was inevitable due both to the impossibility of the consonant combination -νρ- in Greek and, perhaps, as well to imitation of Greek names in -ανδρος particularly common in the Hellenistic period. As for the disappearance of the first rho (or double rho), it is plausibly to be explained as a case of the common phenomenon of loss of a liquid as a result of dissimilation, namely from the presence of a second rho in -μαν⟨δ⟩ρης at the end of the word—so, for attested example, in ἀκόδρυα for ἀκρόδρυα and φατρία for φρατρία. With the disappearance of rho from a form like Herakleides' Πορε- or Isidoros' Πορρα- the diphthong οι would be the natural result.[109]

106 Leprohon, *The Great Name*, 59. We notice that the name is quite similar to the Demotic etymology proposed by van den Kerchove, ibid., 77–79, who mentions Amenemhet III and the Greek name Porromanres (sic), but sees no connection between him and Poimandres.

107 Jackson, "A New Proposal," 99–100.

108 Cf. Vera F. Vanderlip, *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis* (Toronto: M. Hakkert, 1972).

109 Jackson, "A New Proposal," 105. Van den Kerchove, "Poimandrès," 34, thus wrongly states that Jackson does not account for the disappearance of the rho from Porre- to Poi-.

The suppression of rho need not even be due to a second rho, as evidenced in the transliteration of *P3-šr-Min* as Ψεμμῖνις.[110] The difficulties with the etymology proposed by Jackson is certainly no greater than with the ones listed above, and one might further point to other idiosyncratic Hermetic transliterations of Egyptian theonyms, such as Ἀρνεβεσχῆνις for *Ḥr-nb-Sḫm* and Καμῆφις for *Km ꜣ.t=f*.[111]

But who was this king, and how could he be made into Poimandres, the mind of the sovereign power? Amenemhet III was a popular pharaoh in the Fayum area due to his projects of irrigation and land reclamation there, and he was worshipped in his mortuary temple with the famous labyrinth near the Hawara channel.[112] His cult seems to have gained a new impetus throughout the Fayum after Ptolemy II Philadelphus initiated similar projects,[113] and is attested—either with his own temple or as a coinhabiting god (*synnaos theos*)—in Crocodilopolis, Hawara, Philadelphia, Medinet Madi, Soknopaiou Nesos, Euhemeria,[114] Arsinoë, Theadelphia,[115] Tebtunis,[116] and Apollonias.[117]

110 Ernst Boswinkel and Pieter W. Pestman (eds.), *Textes grecs, démotiques et bilingues* (P. L. Bat. 19; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 203.

111 Cf. above for Harnebeschenis. Cf. also Heinz-Josef Thissen, "ΚΜΗΦ—ein verkannter Gott," *ZPE* 112 (1996): 153–60 at 158, who thinks that Καμῆφις is a mistake for Κμῆφ(ις) = *Km ꜣ.t=f* ("He who completes his moment"), not *Kꜣ mw.t=f* ("Bull of his mother"). Cf. Klotz, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, 133 n. 753.

112 Alan B. Lloyd, "The Egyptian Labyrinth," *JEA* 56 (1970): 81–100. Cf. Eric P. Uphill, *Pharaoh's Gateway to Eternity: The Hawara Labyrinth of King Amenemhat III* (London: Routledge, 2000).

113 Jackson, "A New Proposal," 101; Ghislaine Widmer, "Pharaoh Maâ-Rê, Pharaoh Amenemhat and Sesostris: Three Figures from Egypt's Past as Seen in Sources of the Graeco-Roman Period," in *Acts of the Seventh International Conference of Demotic Studies* (ed. Kim Ryholt; Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002), 377–93; Dorothy J. Crawford, *Kerkeosiris: An Egyptian Village in the Ptolemaic Period* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1971), 108ff.

114 Crawford, *Kerkeosiris*, 40 n. 8.

115 Étienne Bernand, "Épigraphie grecque et histoire des cultes au Fayoum," in *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron* (ed. Jean Vercoutter; Cairo: IFAO, 1979), 2:57–76 at 69.

116 Alexandra von Lieven, "Religiöse Texte aus der Tempelbibliothek von Tebtynis—Gattungen und Funktionen," in *Tebtynis und Soknopaiou Nesos: Leben im römerzeitlichen Fajum* (ed. Sandra L. Lippert and Maren Schentuleit; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 57–70 at 61.

117 Winfried J.R. Rübsam, *Götter und Kulte in Faijum während der griechisch-römische-byzantinischen Zeit* (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1974), 58.

The literary sources refer to him, without the title of king (*Pr-ꜥꜣ*), as Mares or Moiris,[118] and this was a popular name for people in the Fayum.[119]

Poremanres was often portrayed alongside the gods, especially the main god of the Fayum, the crocodile deity Sobek (Gr. Souchos), who was often considered to be his father. In keeping with the henotheism common in Egyptian temples, Sobek was regularly worshipped as the chief creator god in his temples.[120] Thus, like Hermes Trismegistus, it was unclear if Poremanres was a human or a god. This uncertainty is reflected in the aretalogy of Poremanres in the fourth hymn of Isidorus, inscribed between 96 and 80 BCE,[121] together with three hymns to Isis in the southern court of a temple to Isermouthis and Sokonopis (a form of Sobek) at Medinet Madi.[122] Isermouthis or Thermouthis is a serpentine version of Isis that developed from the snake-goddess Renenutet, who had a strong presence in the Fayum.[123] The forty lines of the aretalogy identify Poremanres as the original founder of the temple, which he dedicated "to Deo the Highest, Isis Thermouthis, to Anchoes the Son, and the Agathodaimon, Sokonopis,"[124] and indeed a core of the temple goes

118 Lloyd, "The Egyptian Labyrinth," 82–90; Jozef Vergote, "Le roi Moiris-Marēs," *ZÄS* 87 (1962): 66–76; Inge Uytterhoeven, *Hawara in the Graeco-Roman Period: Life and Death in a Fayum Village* (OLA 174; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 238–47. Manetho has Λάμαρις (fr. 35), Λαχάρης (fr. 34; the chi obviously a corruption of mu) where Λα- must be a corruption either of (Π)-ρα- or the Egyptian *N*(*y*).

119 Crawford, *Kerkeosiris*, 133, 193.

120 Cf. Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many* (trans. John Baines; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 230–37.

121 Vanderlip, *The Hymns of Isidorus*, 12. Cf. however János Bollók, "Du problème de la datation des hymnes d'Isidore," *StudAeg* 1 (1974): 27–37, who argues for a date in the third century BCE. This would not affect our argument however, as the hymn would still be visible in the first century BCE and after.

122 Cf. Étienne Bernand, *Inscriptions métriques de l'Egypte gréco-romaine* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1969), 635ff.; id., *Recueil des Inscriptions Grecques du Fayoum* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1975–1980), 1:90–91 (IG Fayoum 6, 34 & 35); Edda Bresciani, "Iconografia e culto di Premarres nel Fayum," *EVO* 9 (1986): 49–58; Armin Schmitt, "Enkomien in griechischer Literature," in *Auf den Spuren der schriftgelehrten Weisen: FS Johannes Marböck* (ed. Irmtraud Fischer, Ursula Rapp, and Johannes Schiller; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 359–82 at 375–78.

123 George Hart, *Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses* (London: Routledge, 2005), 137; Jan Broekhuis, "De godin Renenwetet" (Ph.D. diss., Groningen, 1971), 110–37. Cf. also, on the use of this goddess in Justin's book *Baruch* ([Hipp.], *Ref.* 5.23–28), Roelof van den Broek, "The Shape of Edem according to Justin the Gnostic," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity* (NHM 39; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 131–41.

124 ln. 4–5: Δηοῖ ὑψίστηι Ἰσιδι θεσμοφόρωι, (5) καὶ Ἀγχόηι υἱῶι καὶ δαίμονι ἀγαθῶι Σοκονῶπ[ι].

back to the twelfth dynasty.[125] Besides listing the awesome powers and deeds of the king, the aretalogy devotes much attention to his birth:

(6–10:)

Αἰγύπτου τινά φασι γενέσθαι θεῖον ἄνακτα,
ὃς πάσης χώρας κύριος ἐξεφάνη
πλούσιον, εὐσεβέα, δυνάμει πάσηι τε μεγίστηι[ι],
ὃς κλέος καὶ ἀρετὴν ἔσχεν ἰσουράνιον.

They say there was born a divine king of Egypt who revealed himself lord of every land, rich and pious, possessed of omnipotent power; (10) his glory and his wondrous excellence was equal to that of heaven.

…

(21–34:)

οὐ γὰρ ἦην βροτὸς ἀνήρ, οὐδ' ἐκ βρότου ἦεν ἄνα[κτος],
ἀλλὰ θεοῦ μεγάλου ἔκγονος ἀενάου,
Σούχου παγκράτορος μεγάλου μεγάλου τε μεγίστου,
δαίμονος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ υἱὸς ἄναξ ἐφάνη.
(25) μητροπάτωρ τούτου δ' ἐστὶν ζωῆς ὁ μερ[ιστής],
Ἄμμων, ὃς καὶ Ζεὺς Ἑλλάδος ἠδ' Ἀσίας.
τοὔνεκα καὶ τῶι πάντα ἐπήκοα, ὅσσ' ἐπὶ γαίηι
ἑρπετὰ καὶ πτηνῶν οὐρανίων τε γένη.
οὔνομα δ' ἦν ποταπὸν τούτωι; καὶ τίς τόδ' ἔθηκε
(30) κοίρανος ἢ βασιλεὺς ἠὲ τίς ἀθανάτων;
ὁ θρέψας Σεσοῶσις, ὃς οὐρανοῦ ἕσπερ' ἀφεῖκται,
οὔνομ' ἔθηκε καλὸν ἡλίου εὐφεγγέος.
ἑρμηνευσάμενοι δ' Αἰγύπτιοι οὔνομα τούτου
Ἰ̣ορραμάνρην κλήζουσι, τὸν μέγαν ἀθάνατον.

For he was not a mortal man, nor was he born of a mortal lord. He was the offspring of a great, ever-flowing god; of Souchos the all-powerful, the great, great, and most great, the Agathodaimon, he the son appeared on earth as lord. (25) His mother's father is the distributor of life, Ammon, who is the Zeus of Greece and Asia; that is why all things obeyed him as well, all things on earth that crawl and all the races of the winged creatures of the skies. What sort of name had he? Who gave it to him? (30) What ruler, what king, which one of the immortals? It was he that nurtured him, Sesoosis, who has gone to the West of heaven, that gave him the name "Virtue of the brilliant Sun," but in their own language the Egyptians call him Porramanres, the great immortal.[126]

125 Vanderlip, *The Hymns of Isidorus*, 11.

126 I have based my translation on those of Jackson, "A New Proposal," 102–3 and Vanderlip, *The Hymns of Isidorus*, 64–65, with some modifications.

Poremanres was born a divine king, and his rule was a divine revelation (ln. 8: ἐξεφάνη) of his powers that were equal to those of heaven (ln. 10: ἰσουράνιον). His father Sesostris III (ln. 31: Σεσοῶσις) was not his real father, but only nurtured him and gave him his name "Virtue of the brilliant sun." I translate καλὸν (ln. 32) as "virtue," instead of "beautiful name," in accordance with *Mꜣʿ*(*.t*) in the Egyptian name.[127] The passage demonstrates that Isidorus knew the meaning of the Egyptian name and could have consulted people who had "read the inscriptions of the temples," as he claims.[128] The real father of Poremanres was Sobek, the Agathodaimon, called "eternal" or "ever-flowing" (ln. 22: ἀενάου) and, importantly, "the great, great, and most great" (ln. 23: μεγάλου μεγάλου τε μεγίστου). The latter epithet, with two adjectives and one superlative, must be related to the development of the thrice-greatest epithet of Hermes, which we found in Saqqara roughly eighty years earlier than the present hymn, though there it was in the form of two superlatives followed by one adjective.[129] We should also take notice that Sobek is called Agathodaimon, a figure not unfamiliar in the Hermetica. Indeed, in a Hermetic fragment from Cyril of Alexandria, we find Osiris addressing Agathodaimon as Trismegistus.[130] Agathodaimon was also the Greek name of the serpentine Egyptian god of fate, Shay, the spouse of Renenutet, who is the deity subsumed under Isis' epithet Thermouthis.[131]

Not content with one divine parent, Poremanres' maternal grandfather is also said to be Ammon, "the distributor of life" (ln. 25: ζωῆς ὁ μερ[ιστής]), called Zeus by the Greeks. Could this be the demiurge of the *Perfect Discourse*, who is called "Zeus who is life" in the Coptic version, and the "treasurer ⟨of life⟩" in the Latin version?[132] In Egyptian texts we also find Amun as "the breath of life in

127 Vanderlip, ibid., translates "a fair name, 'Son of the Golden Sun,'" while Jackson, ibid., translates "the beautiful name of the brilliant sun." On Maat as "virtue," cf. *Wb* 2:19: "Richtiges Handeln, Tugend."

128 ln. 18–19: ὡς οἱ τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμ' ἀναλεξάμενοι φάσκουσίν.

129 Cf. above. Vanderlip, ibid., 70, followed Vogliano in seeing the first century as too early for the thrice-greatest epithet, but that was before the publication of the Hor archive, from the second century BCE.

130 FH 32b (Cyr. Alex., *C. Jul.* 2.30): καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Ὄσιρις, Ὦ τρισμέγιστε Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων, πόθεν ἀνεφάνη ὁ μέγας οὗτος ἥλιος; καὶ εἶπεν ὁ μέγας Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων, Ὄσιρι, ἡλίου γένναν βούλει ἡμᾶς καταλέξαι πόθεν ἐφάνη; ἐφάνη προνοίᾳ τοῦ πάντων δεσπότου.

131 Jan Quaegebeur, *Le dieu égyptien Shaï: Dans la religion et l'onomastique* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1975), 102.

132 NHC VI 75,16–17: ϫεγc ετε ⲡⲱⲛϩ ⲡⲉ. *Ascl.* 27: *Dispensator* ⟨*vitae*⟩*... quem Iouem vocamus* (*vitae* conj. Scott 1:324). Cf. HHE 2:249–50.

the heart of all things" and "omnipresent hidden power of life."[133] It should be noted that Amun as the giver of life can also be identified with Shay: "Amon-Re, le Shaï-Renenet, en qui est toute vie"; "Amon est Shaï."[134]Amun is thus identified with the couple Shay-Renenutet, who are identical to the couple Sobek-Thermouthis in our hymn. The identification between Amun and Sobek-Shay could be alluded to in the hymn, for the term "dispenser" (μεριστής) is basically synonymous with the Egyptian name Shay.[135]

It is unclear if Ammon's daughter and Poremanres' mother is meant to be a mortal woman or a goddess. The motif of a queen impregnated by a god is well known in Egyptian royal propaganda,[136] most famously in the case of Ammon and Alexander.[137] If the mother is a goddess she is probably Isis, who is after all the spouse of Sobek in the hymn. Even though the Heliopolitan theogony makes Geb the father of Isis, her genealogy varies,[138] and it could be that as Thermouthis she has another father.[139] If Isis is his mother, Poremanres would be a full brother of Anchoes, who in Isidorus' second hymn is identified as "the sun that dwells in the ether of heaven."[140] The name Anchoes is not known from elsewhere, but no doubt he is a form of Horus the child (Harpocrates),[141] the god of kingship and the sun. Since the king Poremanres is the "Virtue of the brilliant sun," it does not seem unlikely that they are brothers, or even

133 Jan Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun and the Crisis of Polytheism* (trans. Anthony Alcock; London: Kegan Paul, 1995), 179. Cf. Kurt Sethe, *Amun und die acht Urgötter von Hermopolis: Eine Untersuchung über Ursprung und Wesen des ägyptischen Götterkönigs* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1929), 97–98 (§ 205–206), 115 (§ 246); Reinhold Merkelbach, *Abrasax: Ausgewählte Papyri religiösen und magischen Inhalts. III: Zwei griechisch-ägyptische Weihezeremonien* (*Die Leidener Weltschöpfung. Die Pschai-Aion-Liturgie*) (Köln: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992), 224, connects Amun as giver of life with PGM XII.635–638, where Sarapis appears as μεριστής of life.

134 Quaegebeur, *Le dieu égyptien Shaï*, 79.

135 Ibid., 45–46; Merkelbach, *Abrasax*, 3:59: Shay = "Zuteiler."

136 Reginald E. Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971), 204.

137 Albert B. Bosworth, "Alexander and Ammon," in *Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean in Ancient History and Prehistory* (ed. Konrad H. Kinzl; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1977), 51–75.

138 Cf. Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch: De Iside et Osiride*, 263–64.

139 I can find no reference to the father of Thermouthis = Renenutet, but the latter, as a cobra, was often identified with the Uraeus of the king, commonly seen as Tefnut, who could be considered the daughter of Amun (when Amun takes the place of Atum in the Heliopolitan theogony; Cf. Sethe, *Amun*, 221–22, 238).

140 Hymn II, ln. 13–14: καὶ Ἀγχόης ὁ σὸς υἱός, ὃς οὐρανοῦ αἰθέρα ναίε[ι], ἥλιος ἀντέλλων ἐσθ', ὃς ἔδειξε τὸ φῶς.

141 Hart, *Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, 137.

that Poremanres is an aspect of Anchoes. Poremanres and Harpocrates are juxtaposed in a dedicatory inscription from Soknopaiou Nesos, from the year 104 BCE, "to Isis Sononaei, the greatest goddess, and Harpocrates and Premarres, the beneficient gods."[142] Furthermore, Youri Volokhine has recently suggested that Poremanres is the origin of the sphinx-god Tutu (Gr. Tithoes), developed in early Hellenistic times.[143]

There is nothing in the hymn that presupposes the Hermetic teaching of royal souls, though it is suggestive that the principle of Horus' birth in *KK* is "a birth of the immortal gods," just as Poremanres birth was divine.[144] And just as in SH XXIV, "the gods beget kings worthy of earthly birth," Poremanres "is born from a great ever-flowing god."[145] The birth from an "ever-flowing" god could possibly allude to the king as an emanation, that is, an outpouring (ἀπόρροια) of the creator god.[146] The emphasis that Poremanres "appeared" or "shone forth" on earth as king (ln. 7: κύριος ἐξεφάνη; 24: ἄναξ ἐφάνη), could also be indicative that he is considered an emanation from the gods, a manifest god. Although "shining" and "pouring" are different metaphors, they overlap in some Hermetic treatises. In CH XVI, the sun is said to receive an outpouring (ἐπίρροια) of the good from god, and in turn the light of the sun contains noetic essence that it pours out (ἐπιρρεῖ) on earth.[147] A striking image in CH XVIII describes the light of the sun as giant hands, used to harvest ambrosia from plants, and "in just this way … we have received the effluence of his wisdom."[148]

142 Rübsahm, *Götter und Kulte*, 161; SB 5.8884: [Ἴ]σιδι Σονονάει, θε[ᾶι] μεγίστηι, καὶ Ἁρποχράτηι {Ἁρποκράτηι} καὶ Πρεμά[ρ]ρει, θεοῖς Εὐχαρίστοις. My trans. The inscription also makes reference to a *dromos* of Premarres.

143 Youri Volokhine, "Tithoès et Lamarès," *BSÉG* 27 (2005–2007): 81–92.

144 SH XXIII, 64: εἰς ἀνθρώπους ἀθανάτων ἔλθῃ γένεσις θεῶν; Isid., *Hymn* 4.7: Αἰγύπτου τινά φασι γενέσθαι θεῖον ἄνακτα.

145 SH XXIV, 1: γεννῶσι γάρ, ὦ τέκνον, βασιλεῖς οἱ θεοὶ ἐπαξίους τῆς ἐπιγείου γονῆς; Isid., *Hymn* 4.23 θεοῦ μεγάλου ἔκγονος ἀενάου.

146 SH XXIII, 61, 62, 64; XXIV, 2.

147 CH XVI, 17: ὁ δὲ ἥλιος διὰ τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ αἰσθητοῦ κόσμου τὴν ἐπιρροὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χορηγεῖται τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; 6: εἰ δέ τίς ἐστι καὶ νοητὴ οὐσία, αὕτη ἐστὶν ὁ τούτου ὄγκος, ἧς ὑποδοχὴ ἂν εἴη τὸ τούτου φῶς. πόθεν δὲ αὕτη συνίσταται ἢ ἐπιρρεῖ, αὐτὸς μόνος οἶδεν. Cf. also SH XXIII, 3, where "secret emanations" are connected to the light of the moon and the sun and the movements of the heavenly bodies.

148 CH XVIII, 11: ὥσπερ ὁ ἥλιος … καρποῦται χερσὶ μεγίσταις ὥσπερ εἰς ἀπόδρεψιν τῶν καρπῶν χρώμενος ταῖς ἀκτῖσι, καὶ χεῖρες αὐτῷ αἱ ἀκτῖνες τὰ τῶν φυτῶν ἀμβροσιωδέστατα πρῶτον ἀποδρεπόμεναι, οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἡμῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κρείττονος ἀρξαμένοις καὶ τῆς ἐκείνου σοφίας τὴν ἀπόρροιαν δεξαμένοις…

We shall soon see that it would be chronologically possible for Isidorus to have known about the Hermetic teaching of royal souls, though this is not crucial for the argument presented here. What matters is that Isidorus shows us that Poremanres had become a cosmic deity in the first century BCE, and could therefore have been utilized by Hermetists when the *Poimandres* was written—possibly in the first century CE—as the "mind of the sovereign power" (CH I, 2: ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς). There are indeed some signs of a connection between Poremanres and Hermes-Thoth. A Ptolemaic monument from Crocodilopolis shows a king probably meant to represent Poremanres together with Sobek, Taweret (Gr. Thoeris) and Thoth.[149] A drawing of a proposed palisade, from the Zenon Archive (third century BCE), shows that Poremanres and Hermes had adjacent temples in Philadelphia,[150] which might indicate that their cults were somehow related. And, as we recall, Manetho according to Malalas claimed that Hermes Trismegistus lived in the time of Sesostris III, who was the father of Amenemhet III and is mentioned in his aretalogy.[151]

As Jackson concluded, the identification of Poimandres and Poremanres would entail that the treatise was written by an inhabitant of the Fayum who saw Poremanres as the son of Sobek, and considered the latter to be the chief god of the pantheon. Inge Uytterhoeven doubted the identification, because of the relatively early disappearance of the Marres cult.[152] However, he later goes on to show that the cult in fact "underwent a new impulse" in the early Roman period, and only declined from the second half of the second century CE.[153] Far from disproving Jackson's thesis, the fate of the cult of Poremanres can thus explain how a central figure in an early Hermetic writing virtually disappears from view in later Hermetica.

How then did Poremanres become the mind of the sovereign power, Poimandres? Only a preliminary sketch can be proposed at present. The father of Poremanres, Sobek, was equated with Agathodaimon-Shay in the hymn of Isidorus. Agathodaimon is yet again identified with Kmeph, a serpentine

149 Labib Habachi, "A Strange Monument of the Ptolemaic Period from Crocodilopolis," *JEA* 41 (1955): 106–11.

150 Campbell C. Edgar, *Zenon papyri in the University of Michigan collection* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1931), 162–63 (no. 84). A photo of this papyrus can be found online in the APIS database (michigan.apis.1799), and Naphtali Lewis, *Greeks in Ptolemaic Egypt: Case Studies in the Social History of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986) pl. 3(a). Cf. Harold I. Bell, "Popular Religion in Graeco-Roman Egypt: I. The Pagan Period," *JEA* 34 (1948): 82–97.

151 Joh. Mal., *Chron.* 2.5. Cf. above, p. 94.

152 Uytterhoeven, *Hawara in the Graeco-Roman Period*, 444.

153 Ibid., 448.

hypostasis of the Theban Amun. We thus have a string of identifications, Sobek = Agathodaimon = Kmeph, which is eased by the fact that all three could be considered sons of Neith, the goddess of Saïs. Sobek can also be identified directly with Kmeph.[154] The Hermetic speculations on the Theban Kmeph witnessed by Iamblichus provide a parallel to the role of the Fayumic Poremanres in the *Poimandres*.

3.6 Kmeph and Protology in the Hermetica

Porphyry, in his *Letter to Anebo*, inquired about the first principles of the Egyptians, and Iamblichus started his response, under the alias Abammon, by saying that there is a great diversity of answers, because the sacred scribes of old have written different things, and such elevated subjects are not handed down in a straightforward manner by the sages who are alive now (*Myst.* 8.1): Hermes has explained the universal principles in his many books, whereas other ancients have expounded on the principles of specific beings. Iamblichus proceeds to outline two systems (τάξεις) of Hermes. The first is a demythologized distinction between the One (ἕν) and the Monad (μονὰς): The One is "one god, prior even to the first god and king,"[155] and is beyond all being and intellection. This preprinciple is the paradigm for the Monad, who shines forth from the former as a self-father, "the first principle and god of gods, a monad springing from the one, pre-essential and first principle of essence."[156] Iamblichus may have adapted the end of this description from a Hermetic excerpt preserved in Stobaeus: "It is through the preexistent that essentiality in a universal sense is conceived as common to those that really exist and those that exist as conceived by themselves."[157]

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154 Klotz, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, 123 (#16).

155 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.2: θεὸς εἷς, πρώτιστος καὶ τοῦ πρώτου θεοῦ καὶ βασιλέως. The translations of Iamblichus in the following are taken from Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell, *Iamblichus*, sometimes with minor modifications.

156 Ibid.: Ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ ἑνὸς τούτου ὁ αὐτάρκης θεὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐξέλαμψε, διὸ καὶ αὐτοπάτωρ καὶ αὐτάρχης· ἀρχὴ γὰρ οὗτος καὶ θεὸς θεῶν, μονὰς ἐκ τοῦ ἑνός, προούσιος καὶ ἀρχὴ τῆς οὐσίας. Cf. Kroll, *Die Lehren des Hermes Trismegistos*, 23; FR 4:23; Dominic J. O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 82ff.

157 SH XXI, 1: προὸν [ὂν] γάρ ἐστι, δι' οὗ ἡ οὐσιότης ἡ καθόλου λεγομένη κοινὴ νοεῖται τῶν ὄντως ὄντων καὶ τῶν ὄντων τῶν καθ' ἑαυτὰ νοουμένων. Cf. NF 3:cxvi–cxix for the many problems in this short excerpt. Iamblichus (*Myst.* 8.2, 10.5) is credited with introducing the *proousios* god into Neoplatonism by Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism*

The phrase "Monad from the One" shows reliance on the Pythagorean division between the One and the Monad first attested by Eudorus in the first century BCE, and then elaborated by Moderatus of Gades in the first century CE.[158] The Monad generates itself from the One, and is the principle of all intelligible beings. The fact that he is called "principle of intellection" (νοητάρχης) has led some to infer that he himself is above all intellection, but that does not necessarily follow. The One is specifically said to be unconnected to intellect (οὔτε γὰρ νοητὸν αὐτῷ ἐπιπλέκεται) but is also the "basic root of all the first objects of intellection, which are the forms" (πυθμὴν τῶν νοουμένων πρώτων ἰδεῶν ὄντων), which indicates that the Monad springing from the One is of the noetic order, indeed it is the principle or ruler of all noetic beings.[159]

The second system identifies the indivisible one as Heikton, "in whom is the first thinking and the first thought being."[160] The latter must refer to Kmeph, who is the first mind who thinks himself into being.[161] The two systems likely refer to the same primordial couplet, the first system being demythologized and emphasizing their transcendence, while the second system provides them with Egyptian names and shows how Kmeph thought himself into being from Heikton.[162] An indication of this is that Heikton is also referred to as the One,

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of Iamblichus (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 112–13 n. 7. Cf. however Porp., *In Parm.* 10.25.

158 FR 4:23–25.

159 The unusual expression νοητάρχης resembles the Hermetic expression οὐσιάρχης (*Ascl.* 19; *Disc.8–9* 63,19). The ousiarchs are in *Ascl.* 19 the essential rulers of sensible phenomena such as the seven planets, and are thus not "above" essence: … *dii, quorum est princeps* οὐσία. *hi sensibiles* … NF 2:218 follow Ferguson in emending οὐσία⟨ς⟩, thus making the rulers *over* essence. But it makes sense to say that the rulers *are* essence, ruling over sensible phenomena, similar to the division between the essential (οὐσιώδης) and material human in *Ascl.* 7. The ousiarchs are certainly *not* "pre-essential." Similarly then, the νοητάρχης may be noetic.

160 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.3: τὸ ἓν ἀμερὲς καὶ ὅ φησι πρῶτον μάγευμα προτάττει, ὃν καὶ Εἰκτὼν ἐπονομάζει· ἐν ᾧ δὴ τὸ πρῶτον ἐστι νοοῦν καὶ τὸ πρῶτον νοητόν. In the text I aspirate Εἰκτὼν following Elsa Oréal, "Héka, πρῶτον μάγευμα. Une explication de Jamblique, *De mysteriis* VIII, 3," *RdE* 54 (2003): 279–85. Some commentators take ἐν ᾧ to be impersonal, referring back to Heikton and Kmeph as respectively the first noetic being and the first nous. Mahé (HHE 1:50) reads ἐν so that Eikton is *composed* of the first noetic being and the first nous.

161 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.3: προτάττει θεὸν τὸν Ἡμὴφ τῶν ἐπουρανίων θεῶν ἡγούμενον, ὃν φησι νοῦν εἶναι αὐτὸν ἑαυτὸν νοοῦντα καὶ τὰς νοήσεις εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἐπιστρέφοντα. There is little doubt that Ἡμὴφ should be emended to Κμὴφ, as seen by Scott.

162 Mahé (HHE 1:50–52) like several scholars suppose that Eikton is third in line after the One and Monad, so also Dennis C. Clark, "Iamblichus' Egyptian Neoplatonic Theology

and that Kmeph like the Monad of the first system is self-generated. The second system is derived from the Theban theology of Kmeph, the primordial form of the tutelary god of Thebes, Amun. The identity of Heikton is still unclear. Some have read it as a corruption of Irita, who in Theban theology is the offspring of Kmeph, though in our system Heikton comes before Kmeph.[163] Since Heikton is referred to as "the first magic" (πρῶτον μάγευμα), Elsa Oréal has plausibly suggested an identification with the Egyptian god Heka, whose abstract form is the creative principle of the gods, which is most often translated simply as "magic."[164] Heka is both a god and the power that the other Egyptian gods use in their acts of creation, and it is highly unclear how it has here become elevated to the ontogonical principle beyond all being.

Kmeph corresponds to Kematef, the Theban primordial, self-thought form of Amun, the pre-manifest version of the god which preexists in the primordial ocean in the form of a serpent before the creation of the world.[165] In temple inscriptions from Roman times we still find the theology known from the Ramesside era where a preexistent god manifests himself and becomes manifold, recently published by the Egyptologist David Klotz. The name Kematef means "the one who completes his moment,"[166] which fits well with his identification as the first mind who thinks himself into being. When Kematef emerges from the primordial water, he actualizes himself as Irita: "When the august Ba emerged from Nun, while the earth was filled with darkness, he was Irita, his disk was light."[167] Kematef remains hidden in the primordial ocean

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in *De Mysteriis*," *IJPT* 2 (2008): 164–205. Clark's argument relies mainly on post-Iamblichean Neoplatonic texts. That the two systems refer to the same couplet is also claimed by Grant Adamson, "The Old Gods in Lost Hermetica and Early Sethianism," in *Histories of the Hidden God: Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions* (ed. April D. DeConick and Grant Adamson; Durham: Acumen, 2013), 58–86, though with little argumentation.

163 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.3: τούτου δὲ (sc. Kmeph) … προτάττει (sc. Hermes) … Εἰκτὼν. Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell have "prior to him he places …" though noting (311 n. 410) that if Ikton is Irita, he is the son of Kmeph in the Theban theogony. Klotz, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, 403, largely follows the translation of Clarke et al., but writes that Eikton/Irita came "after him," i.e. after Kmeph, thus harmonizing the translation with Theban theology without noting that this is a correction of the ms reading. Cf. Klotz, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, 121–26, on Irita.

164 Oréal, "Héka." Cf. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 14–28, on Heka. Other editors have tended to emend μάγευμα to μαίευμα, "delivery" or "offspring."

165 Klotz, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, 133–42.

166 Klotz, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, 133.

167 David Klotz, "Kneph: Religion in Roman Thebes" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2008), 165 & cf. 136.

even after he has manifested himself as Irita.[168] There are also certain Egyptian inscriptions which would resonate with Platonists, stating that Amun "came forth from Nun, and birthed the two lands through that which his mind created," and that he "created the earth when he had come into existence, the thoughts of his mind came about immediately."[169] Thus the mind of the hidden one, Amun, is here the creator.

In a similar way, the creator-mind follows Kmeph in the system of Hermes:

Ὁ γὰρ δημιουργικὸς νοῦς καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας προστάτης καὶ σοφίας, ἐρχόμενος μὲν ἐπὶ γένεσιν, καὶ τὴν ἀφανῆ τῶν κεκρυμμένων λόγων δύναμιν εἰς φῶς ἄγων, Ἀμοῦν κατὰ τὴν τῶν Αἰγυπτίων γλῶσσαν λέγεται, συντελῶν δὲ ἀψευδῶς ἕκαστα καὶ τεχνικῶς μετ' ἀληθείας Φθὰ …, ἀγαθῶν δὲ ποιητικὸς ὢν Ὄσιρις κέκληται, καὶ ἄλλας δι' ἄλλας δυνάμεις τε καὶ ἐνεργείας ἐπωνυμίας ἔχει.

For the demiurgic intellect, who is master of truth and wisdom, when he comes to create and brings into the light the invisible power of the hidden logoi, is called Amoun in the Egyptian tongue, when he infallibly and expertly brings to perfection each thing in accordance with truth he is termed Ptah … when he is productive of goods he is called Osiris, and he acquires other epithets in accordance with other powers and activities.[170]

Amun who brings creation to light from what is hidden corresponds to the Theban cosmogony mentioned above, but here the demiurge is also identified with Ptah and Osiris. This is in accordance with the triadic theology of the Ramesside era, which continued into the Greco-Roman times, where various overlapping cosmogonies were integrated in order to elevate the One God who is All.[171] Like Plato's demiurge, the three-fold demiurgic mind here does not create out of nothingness, but out of preexistent matter.

168 Klotz, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, 121–26.

169 Klotz, *Kneph*, 168.

170 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.3. Trans. Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell. Cf. FR 4:23–24, 38–40; Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 137–38.

171 Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 159ff.

ὕλην δὲ παρήγαγεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ τῆς οὐσιότητος ὑποσχισθείσης ὑλότητος, ἣν παραλαβὼν ὁ δημιουργὸς ζωτικὴν οὖσαν τὰς ἁπλᾶς καὶ ἀπαθεῖς σφαίρας ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἐδημιούργησε, τὸ δὲ ἔσχατον αὐτῆς εἰς τὰ γεννητὰ καὶ φθαρτὰ σώματα διεκόσμησεν.

As for matter, God derived it from materiality, which had been split from essentiality; he used this matter, which is endowed with life, to create the simple and impassible (heavenly) spheres, while its lowest residue he crafted into bodies which are subject to generation and corruption.[172]

We are not told which god derived matter from materiality, but presumably it is the demiurge. We shall see how this passage in particular will help us clear up the cosmogony of the *Poimandres*. The realm of creation also has its own powers, namely the sun and the moon, presumably subject to the demiurge:

Ἔστι δὴ οὖν καὶ ἄλλη τις ἡγεμονία παρ' αὐτοῖς τῶν περὶ γένεσιν ὅλων στοιχείων καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς δυνάμεων, τεττάρων μὲν ἀρρενικῶν τεττάρων δὲ θηλυκῶν, ἥντινα ἀπονέμουσιν ἡλίῳ· καὶ ἄλλη τῆς φύσεως ὅλης τῆς περὶ γένεσιν ἀρχή, ἥντινα σελήνῃ διδόασιν.

There is also among them another dominion over all the elements in the realm of generation and the powers resident in them, four masculine and four feminine, which they assign to the sun; and another authority over the whole of nature subject to generation, which they grant to the moon.[173]

The sun thus rules below the demiurge over the four masculine and four feminine powers residing in the elements, who together make up the Hermopolitan Ogdoad. These eight are also said to be guards attending the king of heaven in two magical papyri,[174] and are probably the same as the eight guards related to the sun, statues of whom should be set up to guard the stela on which the

172 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.3. I believe this translation makes better sense than that of Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell, *Iamblichus*, 313–15: "As for matter, God derived it from substantiality, when he had abstracted materiality from it." Proclus repeats the teaching, saying that Iamblichus ascribed it to Hermes (Procl., *In Tim.* 1.386 = FH 18).

173 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.3. Trans. Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell. Cf. FR 4:23–24, 38–40; Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 137–38.

174 PGM XIII.787–789; XXI.19–20.

Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth was supposed to be inscribed.[175] The moon rules over nature, which is likely related to matter.

Supposing that we are correct in making the first and second system of Hermes refer to the same primordial couplet, we see that Iamblichus follows Moderatus of Gades' Neopythagorean scheme of three Ones in decreasing order of transcendence: The One above being and mind; the Monad who is mind thinking himself into being from the One; and the demiurgic mind, who Moderatus associates with the soul; and the Dyad comes to be from a privation of the second One.[176] The Dyad is materiality separated from the Monad, from which the demiurge derives matter and creates the world. The three hypostases, One, Monad, and demiurge, correspond to the Hermetic triad of the Unbegotten, Self-begotten, and Begotten gods.[177] Indeed, the emanatory scheme of Iamblichus' Hermetic systems corresponds to the cosmogonic vision of the *Poimandres*, which is thus a different mythological formulation of the same basic Neopythagorean scheme.[178]

The vision of the *Poimandres* does not outline the relationship between the Unbegotten and Self-begotten gods, but starts when the latter has already come into being: He is Poimandres, the mind consisting of light and

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175 NHC VI 62,4–10: ϣⲙⲟⲩ[ⲛ ⲛ̄]ϕⲩⲗⲁⲝ ⲣⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄[.]... ⲙ̄ϕⲏⲗⲓⲟⲥ. Mahé (HHE 1:84) reconstruct [ⲡ]ϧⲓⲥ, leading to the translation "and the nine of the sun," which would mean that the eight do not necessarily have anything to do with the sun. The emendation is uncertain however, cf. below, p. 369 n. 241.

176 John D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (BCNH.É 6; Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001), 363–72; John Dillon, "Pythagoreanism in the Academic tradition: The Early Academy to Numenius," in *History of Pythagoreanism* (ed. Carl A. Huffmann; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014), 250–73 at 268–70.

177 Cf. Jean-Pierre Mahé, "Générations antédiluviennes et chute des éons dans l'Hermétisme et dans la Gnose," in *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. Roelof van den Broek, Tjitze Baarda, and Jaap Mansfeld; EPRO 112; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 160–177 at 166; id., "Mental Faculties and Cosmic Levels in *The Eighth and the Ninth* (NH VI,6) and Related Hermetic Writings," in *The Nag Hammadi Texts in the History of Religions* (ed. Søren Giversen, Tage Petersen, and Jørgen Podemann Sørensen; Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 2002), 73–83. Mahé also compares the Self-begotten god with Egyptian hymns (HHE 2:291): "Il est αὐτοπάτωρ et αὐτομήτωρ (FH 12b), αὐτογέννετος (NHC VI 57,15. 63,22), *quia ex se et per se ipse sit* (FH 4c) :: 'Tu es ton proper Khnoum' 'Il s'est créé comme celui qui s'est créé lui-même ... Il n'a pas de père qui l'ait engender, pas de mère qui ait été enceinte de sa semence.'"

178 Cf. Mahé, "Générations antédiluviennes," 170. Mahé throughout relates the emanatory scheme with Adam-speculations. For a Jungian interpretation of the myth of the *Poimandres*, cf. Robert A. Segal, *The Poimandres as Myth: Scholarly Theory and Gnostic Meaning* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986).

life. The Unbegotten is only inferred in that Poimandres is said to be "the mind of sovereignty,"[179] meaning that sovereignty is prior to him. There is also reference to a "preprinciple without a beginning," which might refer to Unbegotten.[180] This is admittedly a slim foundation for identifying the *authentia* and Poimandres as respectively the One and the Monad of the Hermetic system in Iamblichus, but the striking parallels in the continuation make this identification likely.

From the light "there was a descending darkness that had come to be apart, horrid and frightful."[181] This darkness is moist nature, and Festugière has pointed out that the descending apart (ἐν μέρει) resembles how materiality is split off from underneath (ὑποσχίζω) essentiality in the Hermetic system in Iamblichus.[182] If essentiality pertains to the Monad, as we have seen, then we should consider materiality to be the Dyad, the Pythagorean principle of matter, as in Moderatus of Gades, Nicomachus of Gerasa, and in the *Theology of Arithmetic*: "the Dyad is the first to have separated itself from the Monad, whence also it is called 'daring';[183] for when the Monad manifests unification,

179 CH I, 2: ὁ Ποιμάνδρης, ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς. Büchli, *Der Poimandres*, 21–6, used the term αὐθεντία to claim that the *Poimandres* is a paganized gospel, since pre-Christian usage of the word has to do with power, while it is used regarding the divine realm only in Christian texts. But as we have seen, the association between power—earthly or not—and religion is wholly intrinsic to Egyptian religion, and the royal souls are figures both of temporal power and of divine authority. Büchli is rightly criticized by Holzhausen, *Der "Mythos vom Menschen"*, 19–20. According to Mahé, "Mental Faculties and Cosmic Levels," the Unbegotten is also inferred when the reverent soul after death traverses the seven spheres to join the powers in the Eighth, from whence it eventually goes to the Ninth, becomes a power, and enters God (CH I, 26: ἐν θεῷ γίνονται).

180 CH I, 8: Εἶδες ἐν τῷ νῷ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος, τὸ προάρχον τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς ἀπεράντου. Mahé, "Générations antédiluviennes," 164, identifies this as the Unbegotten god, but it is also possible that it is in fact Poimandres, since he is the light seen by the visionary.

181 CH I, 4: σκότος κατωφερὲς ἦν, ἐν μέρει γεγενημένον, φοβερόν τε καὶ στυγνόν. My trans.

182 Festugière (FR 4:41) first proposed this Pythagorean interpretation with reference to Moderatus of Gades. Cf. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks,* 114 who translates ἐν μέρει temporally, "in turn"; cf. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5 99,22): ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲥⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉ̄ⲛ̄ ⲡϧⲁⲟⲥ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛⲉⲥϩ̄ⲡϧⲁⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲥⲓ ⲑⲩⲗⲏ ⲉⲥϩ̄ⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ (= ἐν μέρει) ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲩ ("and matter did not come from chaos, but is was in chaos, being in a part of it"). It seems that the *Origin of the World* to some extent reacts against the *Poimandres*.

183 Plotinus and the Valentinians also used the term 'daring' to describe the principle of matter; cf. Einar Thomassen, "The Derivation of Matter in Monistic Gnosticism," in *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures, and Texts* (ed. John D. Turner and Ruth D. Majercik; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 1–17 at 5.

the Dyad steals in and manifests separation."[184] The Dyad is also called Moon, Nature and Isis in the same work.[185] Dark Nature should thus be seen as a sort of noetic matter, as we find also in Plotinus, a potential matter in which the matter of corporeal entities partakes.[186]

In the system of Iamblichus, actual matter is derived from and participates in materiality, and it is made into bodies by the demiurge. The same idea is testified in CH VIII: "and so much as there was of matter set aside by the father's own ⟨will⟩, he made it all into bodies, and having given it extension he made it spherical, and since he bestowed this quality upon all, matter was itself immortal, since it also possessed eternal materiality (ὑλότητα)."[187] This corresponds exactly to the demiurgic activity of Iamblichus' Hermetic fragment, where God takes some matter and makes it into the eternal celestial spheres, which are made of the finest parts of matter, and other bodies from the lowest (ἔσχατον) matter. And again, this exact motif, that the heavenly gods are spheres made of the purest matter while earthly bodies are made of the lowest matter (ϥⲁϵ = ἔσχατον), is found in the Coptic fragment of the *Perfect Discourse*.[188]

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184 [Iamb.,] *Theol. arith.* 9: πρώτη γὰρ ἡ δυὰς διεχώρισεν αὐτὴν ἐκ τῆς μονάδος, ὅθεν καὶ τόλμα καλεῖται· τῆς γὰρ μονάδος ἕνωσιν δηλούσης, ἡ δυὰς ὑπεισελθοῦσα διαχωρισμὸν δηλοῖ. Trans. Robin Waterfield, *The Theology of Arithmetic* (Grand Rapids: Phanes, 1988), 42. The work probably postdates Iamblichus, but incorporates a lot of his work of the same name, which again consists mostly of Nichomachus of Gerasa and Anatolius, cf. John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Ducksworth, 1977), 352–53. On the separation of the Dyad from the Monad in Pythagorean sources, cf. Thomassen, "The Derivation of Matter in Monistic Gnosticism," 11.

185 Thomassen, "The Derivation of Matter in Monistic Gnosticism," 13.

186 Plot., *Enn.* III.5 [50].6: ὕλην δεῖ νοητὴν ὑποθέσθαι, ἵνα τὸ κοινωνῆσαν ἐκείνης ἥκῃ καὶ εἰς ταύτην τὴν τῶν σωμάτων δι' αὐτῆς. Cf. also his treatise *On matter* (II.4 [47]).

187 CH VIII, 3: καὶ ὅσον ἦν τῆς ὕλης ἀποκείμενον τῷ ἑαυτοῦ … τὸ πᾶν ὁ πατὴρ σωματοποιήσας καὶ ὀγκώσας ἐποίησε σφαιροειδές, τοῦτο αὐτῷ τὸ ποιὸν περιθείς, οὖσαν καὶ αὐτὴν ἀθάνατον, καὶ ἔχουσαν ἀΐδιον τὴν ὑλότητα. My trans.

188 NHC VI 67,12–14 & 69,9–19: ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲱⲥ ⲉⲁⲩⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲉⲩⲗⲏ ⲉⲥⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ … ⲭⲟⲩⲟⲛ̄ⲣ̄ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲅⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲛ̄ⲣ̄ⲣⲟⲙⲟⲗⲟⲅⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲭⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲉⲩⲗⲏ ⲉⲥⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲉⲩⲥⲱⲙⲁ ⲉⲉⲛⲁⲡⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲉⲧⲉ. ⲡⲉⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲥⲱⲙ̄ⲧ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲧⲉ· ⲉⲉⲛⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲉ ϩⲛ̄ ϥⲁⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲑⲩⲗⲏ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲟⲩⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲡⲉ ϩⲛ̄ ⲡⲣⲁⲉ ⲛ̄ⲉⲓⲛⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ = *Ascl.* 22–23: *Diis uero, utpote ex mundissima parte naturae effectis … Deorum genus, omnium confessione, manifestum est de mundissima parte naturae esse prognatum signaque eorum sola quasi capita pro omnibus esse. Species uero deorum quas conformat humanitas, ex utraque natura conformatae sunt: ex diuina, quae est purior multoque diuinor, et ex ea quae infra* (emend. Scott; mss. inter/intra) *homines est, id est ex materia qua fuerint fabricatae.* Mahé (HHE 2:226) explains that the bodies of humans are made of the lowest part of matter, while that of the statues of the gods are

A corrupt passage of *On the Common Mind* (CH XII, 22) may also elucidate the relationship between matter and materiality, if interpreted correctly:

εἴτε δὲ ὕλην εἴτε σῶμα εἴτε οὐσίαν φῂς, ἴσθι καὶ ταύτας αὐτὰς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ, ὕλη ἐνέργεια ⟨ἐχούσα⟩ τὴν ὑλότητα, καὶ τῶν σωμάτων σωματότητα, καὶ ἡ οὐσία τὴν οὐσιότητα·	Whether you say matter or body or essence, know that these also are energies of God; matter is an energy ⟨possessing⟩ materiality and the corporality of bodies, and essence (is an energy possessing) essentiality.[189]

Matter is an energy or effect of God, which possesses or partakes of materiality, and it is formed as bodies since it also partakes of corporality. There is however a difference between matter and essence as energies of God: "mind is from the very essence of God, Tat, if there really is an essence of God … Now, mind has not been separated from the essentiality of God, but it is as if it has been extended from him, like the light from the sun."[190] As Festugière pointed out, the mind that is not separate from essentiality seems to be an allusion to the separated materiality in CH I and Iamblichus' Hermetic system: mind is an emanation from the essentiality of God, while materiality was cut off from essentiality.[191]

If materiality is the Dyad in the Hermetic protology, then the third hypostasis, the Triad, is the threefold demiurge, Amun-Ptah-Osiris. Indeed, Plutarch identifies Osiris with the number three, though this seems to be his own speculation.[192] In the *Poimandres* the luminous logos, son of God (§ 5), seems to precede the birth of the demiurgic mind (§ 9). However, the difference is illusory: the first mind creates the second demiurgic mind "with logos" (λόγῳ), that is,

made of the matter that is underneath them, that is, earth. On the spherical planets as "heads," cf. CH X, 11, and Plato, *Tim.* 33d, 40a.

189 My trans. I have emended the passage differently from NF 1:183, who follow Patrizi: ὕλη⟨ς⟩ ἐνέργεια⟨ν⟩ τὴν ὑλότητα, καὶ τῶν σωμάτων ⟨τὴν⟩ σωματότητα, καὶ {ἡ} ⟨τῆς⟩ οὐσία⟨ς⟩ τὴν οὐσιότητα. My emendation is more economical, and is supported by CH VIII, 3, quoted above: ὅσον ἦν τῆς ὕλης… ἔχουσαν ἀΐδιον τὴν ὑλότητα.

190 CH XII, 1: ὁ νοῦς, ὦ Τάτ, ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ οὐσίας ἐστίν, εἴ γέ τις ἔστιν οὐσία θεοῦ· … ὁ νοῦς οὖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἀποτετμημένος τῆς οὐσιότητος τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἡπλωμένος καθάπερ τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς. My trans.

191 FR 4:42 n. 2.

192 Plut., *Is. Os.* 56 (374A). Cf. Joel Kalvesmaki, *The Theology of Arithmetic* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2013), 13.

by speaking.[193] The uttering of the word in § 5 must therefore also be assumed to give birth to the demiurge, though the latter remains up above, presumably in the demiurgic sphere of the Ogdoad, while the word descends into matter and separates the elements. When the demiurge creates the seven governors of the heavenly bodies, "the logos of God immediately leapt up from the elements that weigh downwards, up to the pure craftwork of Nature, and it united with the demiurgical nous, for they were of the same essence."[194] There is actually a near-exact parallel to this in the Memphite theology of Ptah (715–701 BCE): "And great and important is Ptah, who gave life to all the gods and their *kas* as well, through this heart and this tongue through which Horus and Thoth both became Ptah."[195] Heart corresponds to mind, and tongue to logos. Similarly, we recall from Iamblichus that the demiurgic nous as Amun "brings into the light the invisible power of the hidden *logoi*," and as Ptah "infallibly and expertly brings to perfection each thing in accordance with truth." This means that the logos (or logoi) hidden within the first nous is brought to light by the demiurgic nous, who uses it to exert creative force on matter. The difference between the first and second mind is thus parallel to the Stoic immanent (ἐνδιάθετος) and uttered (προφορικός) logos, the former being hidden and the latter manifest.[196]

The identity of the Tetrad in the Hermetic system can be deduced from a fragment preserved by Cyril of Alexandria on the Pyramid, which is a common term for the Tetrad:

193 CH I, 9: ὁ δὲ νοῦς ὁ θεός, ἀρρενόθηλυς ὤν, ζωὴ καὶ φῶς ὑπάρχων, ἀπεκύησε λόγῳ ἕτερον νοῦν δημιουργόν.

194 CH I, 10: ἐπήδησεν εὐθὺς ἐκ τῶν κατωφερῶν στοιχείων {τοῦ θεοῦ} ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος εἰς τὸ καθαρὸν τῆς φύσεως δημιούργημα, καὶ ἡνώθη τῷ δημιουργῷ νῷ (ὁμοούσιος γὰρ ἦν). My trans. Cf. Dodd, *Fourth Gospel*, 40. Compare the oracle of Hermes in the Syriac collection of pagan prophecies, in Sebastian Brock, "A Syriac collection of Prophesies of the Pagan Philosophers," *OLoP* 14 (1983): 203–46 at 219, 230: "so too the mind which is with the father is also the word in light" (ܗܡܢܘܢ ܪܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܡ ܐܒܐ ܐܝܬ ܗܘ ܡܠܬܐ ܒܢܘܗܪܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܗܘ). Cf. also Sebastian Brock, "Some Syriac Excerpts from Greek Collections of Pagan Prophecies," *VC* 38 (1984): 77–90. Mahé ("La voie hermétique," 370 n. 56–57) interprets this light as the engendered hypostasis of God.

195 Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 43.

196 On creation by speech in the Hermetica, cf. Jean-Pierre Mahé, "La Création dans les *Hermetica*," *RecAug* 21 (1986): 3–53 at 9–10. On the philosophy of language and cosmogony, cf. Tilde Bak Halvgaard, *Linguistic Manifestations in the Trimorphic Protennoia and the Thunder: Perfect Mind: Analysed against the Background of Platonic and Stoic Dialectics* (NHMS 91; Leiden: Brill, 2016).

ἡ οὖν πυραμίς, φησίν, ὑποκειμένη τῇ φύσει καὶ τῷ νοερῷ κόσμῳ· ἔχει γὰρ ἄρχοντα ἐπικείμενον τὸν δημιουργὸν λόγον τοῦ πάντων δεσπότου, ὃς μετ' ἐκεῖνον πρώτη δύναμις, ἀγέννητος, ἀπέραντος, ἐξ ἐκείνου προκύψασα καὶ ἐπίκειται καὶ ἄρχει τῶν δι' αὐτοῦ δημιουργηθέντων. ἔστι δὲ τοῦ παντελείου πρόγονος καὶ τέλειος καὶ γόνιμος γνήσιος υἱός

Now the Pyramid, he (Hermes) said, is subordinate to Nature and the noeric cosmos. For it has been placed under the authority of the demiurgic logos of the ruler of everything, who, as the first power after him—unborn, unlimited, and having emerged from him—is placed in authority over that which has been created by himself and rules over them. For it (the logos) is the first-born of the completely perfect, a legitimate son, perfect and productive.[197]

Festugière has demonstrated that the Pyramid here is the first solid, with four planes and four angles, and it represents fire and the cosmos.[198] Nock has pointed out the many similarities with the *Poimandres*: the demiurge is in both texts placed in authority over (ἐπίκειται) the Pyramid, that is fire,[199] and the logos emerges from (προκύψασα) the father, similar to how the primal Human peers out of (CH I, 14: παρέκυψεν) the harmony of the spheres.[200] Logos is also said to be a son in both texts,[201] and it also serves as the creative instrument of the demiurge in other Hermetica.[202] Mahé disagrees with Festugière's numerological interpretation, and instead saw the pyramid as symbolizing the primeval mound which rises out of the Nun, the primal waters.[203] The one does not exclude the other, however. The Tetrad is the first solid and is represented in

197 Cyr. Alex., *C. Jul.* 1.46 (= FH 28). My trans. I differ from the translation of Festugière (NF 4:133–4) in making the Pyramid subordinate (ὑποκειμένη) to Nature and the noeric cosmos, i.e. the Demiurge, not their "fondement." Also, I see the αὐτοῦ as refering to the Demiurge himself as creator, not the father of the demiurgic logos. As Nock notices (ibid., n. 1), the fragment seems to start mid-sentence.

198 André-Jean Festugière, "La pyramide hermétique," in *Hermétisme et mystique païenne*, 131–37.

199 CH I, 13: τὸ κράτος τοῦ ἐπικειμένου ἐπὶ τοῦ πυρὸς.

200 Nock in NF 4:133–34 n. 1.

201 CH I, 6: ὁ δὲ ἐκ νοὸς φωτεινὸς λόγος υἱὸς θεοῦ.

202 CH IV, 1: τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός, οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγῳ; FH 27: ὁ γὰρ λόγος αὐτοῦ προελθών, παντέλειος ὢν καὶ γόνιμος καὶ δημιουργὸς ἐν γονίμῃ φύσει, πεσὼν ἐπὶ γονίμῳ ὕδατι ἔγκυον τὸ ὕδωρ ἐποίησε; cf. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, 116. FH 27 seems to be from the same text as FH 28, though in the latter, logos is apparently called παντέλειος, while in the former it seems to be the first-born from the παντέλειος.

203 Mahé, "La Création dans les *Hermetica*," 29–30.

the *Poimandres* by fire rising up from the primeval water, followed by air, and then earth which remains behind with water. A very similar cosmogony, with the elements rising out of the primal waters, is found in the *Holy Book* (CH III), which has been shown by Jørgen Podemann Sørensen to be based upon native Egyptian cosmogonies.[204]

The creation of the Tetrad thus occurs in the *Poimandres* when the logos lights upon the still undifferentiated Nature, causing unmixed fire, the Pyramid, to leap up into the heights, followed by air, while the two lower elements remain.[205] It is only when the unlimited and undifferentiated Nature is divided into four elements that the first solid appears, and the sensible cosmos is created. This corresponds to how the demiurge crafts the heavenly spheres as well as lower bodies out of matter in the Hermetic system in Iamblichus.

To repeat: The Hermetic source of Iamblichus:

0: Heikton (Heka), the preessential One
1: Kmeph, the Monad, self-begotten nous
2: Materiality
3: Amun-Ptah-Osiris, the demiurgic nous
4: Matter derived from Materiality made into spherical cosmos

corresponds to the process of creation in the *Poimandres*:

0: Authentia, the preessential One
1: Poimandres, the first nous
2: Nature
3: The demiurge, second nous & logos
4: Four elements derived from Nature made into spherical cosmos[206]

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204 Jørgen Podemann Sørensen, "The Egyptian Background of the ἱερὸς λόγος (CH III)," in *Apocryphon Severini* (ed. Per Bilde, Helge K. Nielsen, and Jørgen Podemann Sørensen; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1993), 215–25. Cf. also Christian Wildberg, "*Corpus Hermeticum*, Tractate III: The Genesis of a Genesis," in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lance Jenott and Sarit K. Gribetz; TSAJ 155; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 124–49.

205 CH I, 5: ἐκ δὲ φωτὸς … λόγος ἅγιος ἐπέβη τῇ φύσει, καὶ πῦρ ἄκρατον ἐξεπήδησεν ἐκ τῆς ὑγρᾶς φύσεως ἄνω εἰς ὕψος· κοῦφον δὲ ἦν καὶ ὀξύ, δραστικὸν δὲ ἅμα, καὶ ὁ ἀὴρ ἐλαφρὸς ὢν ἠκολούθησε τῷ πνεύματι, ἀναβαίνοντος αὐτοῦ μέχρι τοῦ πυρὸς ἀπὸ γῆς καὶ ὕδατος, ὡς δοκεῖν κρέμασθαι αὐτὸν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ.

206 Cf. the comparison between Valentinan and Neopythagorean protology in Thomassen, "Derivation of Matter," 14.

The Hermetic protology should thus be seen as a part of the Neopythagorean protological speculations that started with the Pythagorean *Hypomnemata*, first attested in the writings of Alexander Polyhistor in the early first century BCE. This basic system could be given several more or less mythological formulations, some of which were familiar to Iamblichus, and another which we find in the *Poimandres*. Yet another formulation of the same structure, though without any philosophical framework, can be found in the so-called *Leiden Kosmopoiia* (PGM XIII.16off.), where God laughs seven times, and begets 1: Light-Radiance; 2: Primal Water; 3: Nous-Phrenes (= Hermes); 4: Generative power and Procreation (Genna and Spora); 5: Fate (Moira); 6: Time (Kairos); 7: Soul.[207] The first four of these are clearly reminiscent of the Hermetic numerological system. Serge Sauneron has shown the connection between these seven laughs and the seven creative utterances of Methyer, found in the inscriptions of the temple of Esna, where they are moreover explicitly connected with the hidden utterances of Kmeph.[208] Egyptian priests were thus capable of thinking about their own theologies of creation in a framework taken from Neopythagoreanism. Such a numerological scheme of creation was moreover known to the author of the *Refutation of All Heresies* in early third century Rome:

Αἰγύπτιοι δὲ πάντων ἀρχαιότεροι εἶναι νομίζοντες, τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δύναμιν ψηφίσαντες τά τε διαστήματα τῶν μοιρῶν, ἐξ ἐπι⟨π⟩νοίας θειοτάτης ἔφασαν τὸν θεὸν εἶναι μονάδα ἀδιαίρετον καὶ αὐτὴν ἑαυτὴν γεννῶσαν, καὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς τὰ πάντα κατεσκευάσθαι. αὕτη γάρ, φασίν,[209] ἀγέννητος οὖσα τοὺς ἑξῆς ἀριθμοὺς γεννᾷ· οἷον ἐφ' ἑαυτὴν ἡ μονὰς ἐπιπροσ⟨τε⟩θεῖσα

The Egyptians, however, who suppose themselves more ancient than all, calculate the power of God and the intervals of the divisions (of the zodiac or decans), and by a most divine inspiration they asserted that God is an indivisible Monad, begetting itself, and that from this all things were brought about. For the Monad, they say, being unbegotten, begets the succeeding

207 Cf. FR 1:300–3; Hans D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation. Including the Demotic spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986; hereafter *PGMT*), 176–78. Cf. below, chap. 6.3.2.1, for more on this text.

208 Serge Sauneron, "La légende des sept propos de Methyer au temple d'Esna," *BSFE* 32 (1961): 43–48 at 46: "L'enfer divin qui se trouve en cet endroit, c'est l'enfer mystérieux dé Knêph, accompagné de Chou et Tefnout, et d'Atoum qui est enseveli avec eux; c'est l'antre des dieux morts, des Sept Paroles matérialisées de Méthyer."

209 Ms has φησίν. Perhaps the author forgot that he was speaking of the Egyptians here, and the singular reflects Hermes in the original source?

γεννᾷ τὴν δυάδα, καὶ ὁμοίως ἐπιπροστιθεμένη γεννᾷ τὴν τριάδα καὶ ⟨τὴν⟩ τετράδα μέχρι τῆς δεκάδος, ἥτις ⟨ἐστὶν ἡ⟩ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀριθμῶν, ἵνα γένηται πρώτη καὶ δεκάτη ἡ μονάς, διὰ τὸ καὶ τὴν δεκάδα ἰσοδυναμεῖν καὶ ἀριθμεῖσθαι εἰς μονάδα.

numbers; for instance, the Monad added to itself begets the Dyad; and similarly, when added (to the Dyad), produces the Triad and Tetrad, up to the Decad, which is the beginning and end of numbers, so that Monad becomes first and tenth, since the Decad is equipollent and reckoned for a Monad.[210]

Here the Monad is said to be both self-begotten and unbegotten, combining the One and Monad of the Hermetic system in Iamblichus. The author emphasizes the first four numbers, since they together make up the ten, the perfect number. The identification between the Monad and the Decad recurs in CH XIII, 12, and similarly CH IV, 10 states that the Monad is in everything and contains all numbers in itself.[211] The name of the demiurge has become lost, most likely due to textual corruption in the *Refutation*:

ταῦτα δὲ ἐκ τῆς μονάδος ἀρχὴν λαβόντα πρόνοιαν ἀρετῆς[212] ἐχώρισε μέχρι τῶν τεσσάρων στοιχείων, λέγω δὴ τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ πυρός, ὕδατός τε καὶ γῆς. καὶ ἐκ τούτων ⟨δὲ⟩ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον, ἀρρενόθηλυν αὐτὸν κατεσκεύ(α)σε· καὶ δύο μὲν στοιχεῖα εἰς τὸ ἄνω ἡμισφαίριον προσέταξε, τό τε πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ πῦρ, καὶ καλεῖται τοῦτο ⟨τὸ⟩ ἡμισφαίριον[213]

These (numbers), which had taken their beginning from the Monad as the providence of virtue, he distinguished into the four elements—I mean air, fire, water, and earth—and from these he fashioned the cosmos, making it androgynous. And two elements he arranged for the upper hemisphere, namely fire and air, and he called this the hemisphere of the

210 [Hipp.], *Ref.* 4.43.4–5, my trans. Cf. now M. David Litwa, *Refutation of All Heresies* (WGRW; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), xxxii–xlii, arguing against the authorship of Hippolytus of Rome, but affirming that the author lived in Rome in the early third century.

211 Cf. below, pp. 284–90.

212 Marcovich: ⟨ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ⟩ πρόνοια ⟨τῆς⟩ ἀρχῆς; Litwa: πρόνοια[ν] ⟨τῆς ἀρχῆς⟩. I follow the manuscript here, whereas Litwa follows Marcovich in emending from πρόνοιαν to πρόνοια, making Providence the subject. However, the several participles in masculine singular makes this emendation unlikely.

213 Marcovich and Litwa unnecessarily supply ⟨ὄν⟩ here.

τῆς μονάδος, ἀγαθοποιόν τε καὶ ἀνωφερὲς καὶ ἀρσενικόν—λεπτομερὴς γὰρ οὖσα ἡ μονὰς ποτᾶται εἰς τὸ λεπτότατον μέρος καὶ καθαρώτατον τοῦ αἰθέρος·—τὰ δὲ ἄλλα δύο στοιχεῖα, ὄντα παχύτερα, ἀπένειμεν τῇ δυάδι, γῆν τε καὶ ὕδωρ, καὶ καλεῖται τοῦτο τὸ ἡμισφαίριον κατωφερές, θηλυκόν τε καὶ κακοποιόν.

Monad. It is beneficent and ascending and male, for since the Monad is subtle it soars to the most subtle region of the ether. But the other two elements, which are grosser, he allotted to the Dyad, namely earth and water, and he calls this the descending hemisphere, since it is female and harmful.[214]

One would want the subject of this creation to be a demiurge figure, or maybe the logos, but no such entity is found in the text, possibly due to the excerpting of the author of *Refutation* from his Egyptian source. A quite similar teaching is attributed to Marcus Messala, consul in 53 BCE and augur, in Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, referring to the Roman god Janus: "He it is who fashions all things and guide them; he it is who in the compass of the heavens has joined together water and earth—the force which is naturally heavy and tends to fall downward to the depths below—with fire and air, which are light by nature and tend to soar to the boundless heights above; and it is this mighty power of the heavens that has united two opposing forces."[215] As Reitzenstein has pointed out, John Lydus also refers to the work of Marcus Messala on Janus in *On the Months*.[216] Regarding the etymology of the name Janus, Lydus gives several options and then: "or, from *ias* ("one") instead of the *mias* ("one") according to the Pythagoreans, for which reason Messala considered him to be Aion. And

214 [Hipp.], *Ref.* 4.43.8 Marcovich, my trans.

215 Macrob., *Sat.* 1.9.14: *qui cuncta fingit, eademque regit, aquae terraeque vim ac naturam gravem atque pronam in profundam dilabentem ignis atque animae levem in immensum sublime fugientem copulavit, circumdato caelo, quae vis caeli maxima duas vis dispares colligavit*. Trans. Percival V. Davies, *Macrobius: The Saturnalia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 68.

216 Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 274–277; Kroll, *Die Lehren des Hermes Trismegistos*, 67–71; Wilhelm Bousset, "Der Gott Aion," in *Religionsgeschichtliche Studien: Aufsätze zur Religionsgeschichte des hellenistischen Zeitalters* (NTSup 50; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 192–230 at 192. None discuss the passage from *Refutation*. Reitzenstein claims the source of Messala was Egyptian, which Kroll counters is unprovable. Also relevant are two passages pointed out by Bousset, "Der Gott Aion," n. 12: Joh. Lyd., *Mens*. 4.17: disciples of Epimenides interpret the Dioscuri as the male Aion, who is like a Monad, and female Nature, who is like a Dyad; Athen., *Leg.* 22.8: those who write about nature hold that Isis is the nature of Aion.

indeed on the fifth of the month (of January) the ancients celebrated a festival to this Aion."[217] Though it is unclear how the Egyptian arithmetic cosmogony in *Refutation* is related to Messala's account of Janus, the latter adds to the likelihood that Aion, identified with the demiurge, is the proper subject of the cosmogony, yielding a parallel to the Hermetic system in Iamblichus and the *Poimandres*. Indeed, in CH XI Aion is explicitly identified with the demiurge, the second god who makes the world.[218]

After the cosmogony, the Egyptian system identifies the Monad as the base for numbers belonging to life and light, whereas the Dyad is the basis for darkness and death.[219] The important thing to note here is that the Egyptian arithmetic cosmogony, like the Hermetic system we have treated, has a Monad that is light, a Dyad that is darkness, and with some likelihood has a creator who makes the four elements into a well-ordered cosmos. There is therefore some likelihood that the source of the Egyptian system in the *Refutation* was a Hermetic text containing a numerological protology similar to the ones we have in Iamblichus and the *Poimandres*. The likelihood of this increases in view of the similarities to *On the Rebirth* (CH XIII, 12), which will be treated later.[220]

3.7 *De Anima*: The Creation of the Souls and the Primal Human

There are hardly any references to the term "soul" at all in the *Poimandres*, which instead focuses on the mind, but there are nevertheless some indications that the teaching on the souls in *KK* is also relevant for the *Poimandres*.[221] While the anthropogony of *KK* outlines the creation of souls, who join in the creative work of the monarch-god, and are later imprisoned in material bodies, both as a punishment and as a way to fulfill creation, the *Poimandres* depicts

217 Joh. Lyd., *Mens.* 4.1: ἢ ἀπὸ τῆς ἵας ἀντὶ τοῦ τῆς μιᾶς κατὰ τοὺς Πυθαγορείους. ὅθεν ὁ Μεσσάλας τοῦτον εἶναι τὸν Αἰῶνα νομίζει· καὶ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆς πέμπτης τοῦ μηνὸς τούτου ἑορτὴν Αἰῶνος ἐπετέλουν οἱ πάλαι. My trans. Cf. Epiph., *Pan.* 51.22.9–10 on the festival in Alexandria celebrating the birth of Aion from Korê on the eighth day before the Kalends of January, i.e. December 25.

218 CH XI, 2–5, 15.

219 [Hipp.], *Ref.* 4.43.12.

220 Cf. below, pp. 287–88.

221 For the doctrine of the soul in the Hermetica, cf. FR 3. A comparison between the teaching of the soul in the *Poimandres* and Tertullian's *De anima* can be found in Louis Painchaud, "Le cadre scolaire des traits de l'Ame et le *Deuxième Traité du Grand Seth* (CG VII, 2)," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism II: Sethian Gnosticism* (ed. Bentley Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 779–87.

the descent of the noetic primal human into a material body as a consequence of his wanting to create something of his own. However, in the *Poimandres* we also have a cryptic reference to creative souls, stating that the elements of Nature are "from the counsel of God, which received the word and imitated the beautiful cosmos that it saw, having become a cosmos through her own elements and her offspring, the souls."[222] Most commentators of this passage have focused on the counsel of God, and whether it is hypostasized or not, and I follow Festugière in considering the counsel of God to be identical with Nature.[223] The passage refers back to CH I, 5, where the logos descends from the light into dark nature, which causes its differentiation into four elements. By receiving (λαβοῦσα) the demiurgical logos, Nature as the counsel of God begets both the elements and the souls as offspring (γεννήματα). The alchemical creation of soul in *KK* has thus been replaced with a sacred marriage between the demiurgical logos and Nature. As in the *KK*, the souls are instrumental in making Nature into a well-ordered cosmos.

However, Festugière came to feel that the appearance of souls at this point of the creation was inappropriate, and corrected the text to γεννημάτων ἀψυχῶν, "soulless offspring."[224] But if we compare with the *Korê Kosmou*, we there find souls born from the spirit or nature of God (§ 17: πνεύματος ἐμοῦ … ψυχαί; § 19: τῆς ἐμῆς φύσεως γεννήματα),[225] who have been placed in the upper nature of heaven and set the axis of the world spinning,[226] thus creating animals, fish and reptiles from the elements (§ 22–23), according to the counsels of God (§ 17: τἀμὰ … βουλεύματα). This corresponds directly to the subsequent passages of the *Poimandres,* in which the demiurge creates seven governors who set creation in cyclical motion, which produces animals, birds, fish and reptiles from the elements, "as mind wanted" (CH I, 11: καθὼς ἠθέλησεν ὁ νοῦς). Since we

222 CH I, 8: τὰ οὖν, ἐγώ φημι, στοιχεῖα τῆς φύσεως πόθεν ὑπέστη; πάλιν ἐκεῖνος πρὸς ταῦτα, ἐκ βουλῆς θεοῦ, ἥτις λαβοῦσα τὸν λόγον καὶ ἰδοῦσα τὸν καλὸν κόσμον ἐμιμήσατο, κοσμοποιηθεῖσα διὰ τῶν ἑαυτῆς στοιχείων καὶ ψυχῶν. My trans.

223 FR 4:42–43. Cf. Mahé, "La Création dans les *Hermetica*," 21–23; and Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 103, for more references.

224 André-Jean Festugière, "Conjectanea," *CN* 12 (1948): 45–49 at 45–46.

225 Cf. Festugière, "La création des âmes," 102–13.

226 SH XXIII, 16: ἐν μεταρσίῳ διέταξε τῆς ἄνω φύσεως οὐρανοῦ, ὅπως τόν τε κύλινδρον περιστροβῶσι τάξει τινὶ καὶ οἰκονομίᾳ καθηκούσῃ καὶ τὸν πατέρα τέρπωσιν. Nock follows Heeren in bracketing [οὐρανοῦ], but Festugière keeps it, and claims (NF 3:clxxx n. 1) that the souls inhabit all three regions of heaven, ether and air. However, as he also notices (NF 4:29 n. 64), it is only the advanced souls that dwell above the region of the air, namely those souls who "were already advanced, and … have been invited to the land of gods and the places and holy demons close to the stars" (§ 19). In other words, transfigured royal souls.

know that the souls were instrumental in making the counsel of God into an ordered universe, they are likely understood to be involved in this creation, as in the *KK*.

In the *KK*, the souls were embodied as humans after they had transgressed their boundaries in their creative work. Nous is only mentioned twice in the text: the monarchical god is said to be an "imperishable nous," and he calls Hermes "the soul of my soul, and holy nous of my nous."[227] The primal human in the *Poimandres* also became soul and nous in the body: "Nature received the spirit from ether and brought forth bodies in the form of the human. From life and light the human became soul and nous."[228] There is thus some connection between soul and nous in both treatises, and the latter term is treated as the more divine.

Once more, the Hermetic system of Iamblichus can elucidate the relationship between soul and nous. Iamblichus says that Hermes postulates two souls: "One derives from the primary intelligible, partaking also of the power of the demiurge, while the other is contributed to us from the circuit of the heavenly bodies, and into this there slips the soul that sees God."[229] The adjective *theoptikos* is before Iamblichus only found in the *theoptikê dynamis* of SH II A, 6 and SH VII, 3, which demonstrates its Hermetic provenance. Indeed, there is a recently published sentential parallel, in the *Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius*, which has been postulated to go as far back as the first century CE or even BCE:[230]

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227 SH XXIII, 42: τοσαῦτα ὁ θεὸς εἰπὼν ἄφθαρτος νοῦς γίγνεται; 26: ὦ ψυχῆς ἐμῆς ψυχὴ καὶ νοῦς ἱερὸς ἐμοῦ νοῦ. Hermes' role in *KK* is similar to that of Prometheus in Hesiod, and just like the former can sometimes be identified as the first human, so can possibly Hermes as Thoth. At least Zosimus of Panopolis claims that the Egyptians considered Thoth to be the first human (*Mém. auth.* 1.8 & 10 Mertens), and Prometheus is the inner human (ibid. 1.12). There is a possible reference to Poimandres in a saying by "our nous" (ibid. 12; cf. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 105 n. 2; FR 1:270 n. 9), though Mertens is not persuaded that the saying is Hermetic (*Zosime*, 100 n. 79).

228 CH I, 17: ἐκ δὲ αἰθέρος τὸ πνεῦμα ἔλαβε καὶ ἐξήνεγκεν ἡ φύσις τὰ σώματα πρὸς τὸ εἶδος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. ὁ δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἐκ ζωῆς καὶ φωτὸς ἐγένετο εἰς ψυχὴν καὶ νοῦν. My trans.

229 FH 16 = Iamb., *Myst*. 8.6: ἡ μέν ἐστιν ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου νοητοῦ, μετέχουσα καὶ τῆς τοῦ δημιουργοῦ δυνάμεως, ἡ δὲ ἐνδιδομένη ἐκ τῆς τῶν οὐρανίων περιφορᾶς, εἰς ἣν ἐπεισέρπει ἡ θεοπτικὴ ψυχή. Trans. Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell, who point out that ἐπεισέρπει is a *hapax* (p. 321 n. 442), but miss the parallel with SH XV, 7: παρεισέρπει γὰρ (sc. ψυχὴ) τῷ πνεύματι καὶ κινεῖ ζωτικῶς (a verb only testified elsewhere in Phil. Alex., *Prov*. fr. 2.26 and Metochites). This teaching of two souls is probably taken from the *Timaeus* 41–2, where the Demiurge provides the immortal soul, while lesser creator-gods provide a mortal soul. Cf. Charles H. Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans: A Brief History* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 129.

230 HHE 2:278.

τὸ σῶμα αὔξεται καὶ τελειοῦται ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως, ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ πληροῦται ἀπὸ τοῦ νοῦ.
πᾶς ἄνθρωπος σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴν ἔχει, οὔ πᾶσα δὲ ψυχὴ νοῦν ἔχει.
δύο οὖν νόοι εἰσίν, ὁ μὲν θεῖος, ὁ δὲ ψυχικός· εἰσὶ δέ τινες μηδὲ τὸ ψυχικὸν ἔχοντες.

The body increases and reaches perfection due to nature, while soul fills up with nous.
Every man has a body and a soul, but not every soul has nous.
Consequently there are two (types of) nous: the one is divine and the other belongs to soul. Nevertheless there are certain men who do not have even that of soul.

DH VIII, 4[231]

The descent of the two types of souls reported by Iamblichus presents a striking parallel to the descent of the primal human in the *Poimandres*, only there the primal human derives from nous and during its descent assumes the authority (ἐξουσία) of the demiurge, receiving the rank (τάξις), nature (φύσις) or energy (ἐνεργεία) of the heavenly spheres (CH I, 13–14). Instead of two souls, the descent in the *Poimandres* is presented as an accretion of inferior attributes to the essential human being. All the same, the result is a hermaphroditic embodied human with nous and soul (CH I, 17), possessing both the authority of the demiurge and the rank, nature, or energy of the planets. Nature begot the primal Human and seven other humans, corresponding to the natures of the seven planetary rulers, "And everything in the sensible world remained like this until the end of a time-cycle ⟨and⟩ the beginnings of generations."[232] The reference to cycles of time implies, I would suggest, that something like a Golden Age and a Silver Age are presupposed, just like in the *Korê Kosmou*. In the Golden Age the Human lived as a disembodied and divine being in heaven. Then, like the souls of *KK*, he desired to create something of his own and therefore descended to earth, where he was embraced by Nature and became an embodied human. But this is not truly the fall that many commentators have made it out to be: the primal Human and the seven other humans are immortal, for death is only instituted later. We can thus see this era as a Silver Age. The Bronze Age is the true fall of humankind, but this only begins when God divides the hermaphroditic humans into two sexes.

231 Greek text: Paramelle and Mahé, "Nouveaux parallèles," 125. Eng. trans. Mahé, "The Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius," 142. The Greek text permitted a correction of the Armenian parallel, cf. ibid. 150 n. 107, and compare HHE 2:386–87.

232 CH I, 17: καὶ ἔμεινεν οὕτω τὰ πάντα τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ κόσμου μέχρι περιόδου τέλους ⟨καὶ⟩ ἀρχῶν γενῶν. My trans.

3.8 The Bronze Age in CH I: Erroneous Love and Its Remedy

At the end of the Age of Silver, the bond that tied all things together was loosened by the counsel of God, so that everything alive was divided into two sexes.[233] God then spoke a "holy word" to the humans, now men and women: "Increase in increasing and multiply in multitude, all you creatures and craftworks, and let him ⟨who⟩ is mindful recognize that he is immortal, that desire is the cause of death, and let him recognize all that exists."[234] Some commentators, reading the text as Gnostic, insist that the command to multiply is in reality a curse spoken by God, like that of the rulers in *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II 120,3–12), rather than a holy word.[235] However, immediately after God has uttered these words, we are told that providence acts through fate to set in course the process of procreation. The chain of births and deaths is thus providential, not a curse, although it did lead some to mistaken desire which again led to death: "The one who recognized himself attained the chosen good, but the one who loved the body that came from the error of desire goes on in darkness, errant, suffering sensibly the effects of death."[236]

Tage Petersen, who follows Richard Reitzenstein in emending the sentence, reads instead "the one who loved the body because of the error of desire."[237] The question is crucial: does the error of desire cause the body to come into being, or does it cause the love of the body? If the latter is the case, the text could refer to the desire of primordial man directed towards his own reflection in moist Nature, and in that case we could indeed talk of a "fall" of mankind into matter, as most scholars have interpreted the passage.

Petersen, however, claims that it is rather a matter of misplaced desire; of choosing the vulgar instead of the heavenly Aphrodite (Plato, *Symp.* 180d),

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233 CH I, 18: τῆς περιόδου πεπληρωμένης ἐλύθη ὁ πάντων σύνδεσμος ἐκ βουλῆς θεοῦ· πάντα γὰρ ζῷα ἀρρενοθήλεα ὄντα διελύετο ἅμα τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ ἐγένετο τὰ μὲν ἀρρενικὰ ἐν μέρει, τὰ δὲ θηλυκὰ ὁμοίως.

234 Ibid.: ὁ δὲ θεὸς εὐθὺς εἶπεν ἁγίῳ λόγῳ, Αὐξάνεσθε ἐν αὐξήσει καὶ πληθύνεσθε ἐν πλήθει πάντα τὰ κτίσματα καὶ δημιουργήματα, καὶ ἀναγνωρισάτω ⟨ὁ⟩ ἔννους ἑαυτὸν ὄντα ἀθάνατον, καὶ τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα, καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα. Trans. Copenhaver.

235 E.g. Mahé, "La Création dans les Hermetica," 37; Hans Dieter Betz, "The Delphic Maxim ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ in Hermetic Interpretation," *HTR* 63 (1970): 465–84 at 466–67.

236 CH I, 19: ὁ ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν ἐλήλυθεν εἰς τὸ περιούσιον ἀγαθόν, ὁ δὲ ἀγαπήσας τὸ ἐκ πλάνης ἔρωτος σῶμα, οὗτος μένει ἐν τῷ σκότει πλανώμενος, αἰσθητῶς πάσχων τὰ τοῦ θανάτου. Trans. Copenhaver.

237 ὁ δὲ ἀγαπήσας {τὸ} ἐκ πλάνης ἔρωτος σῶμα. Cf. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 334; Petersen, "Alt kommer jo på øjet an, der ser," 149.

carnal pleasures instead of heavenly love.[238] Petersen is programmatically minimising the dualistic readings of the texts, following Ugo Bianchi in seeing the search for dualism as a "dogma-finding device,"[239] and he is certainly correct that the description of the descent and embodiment of primal man as a "wonder most wondrous" (CH I, 16) presents a hermeneutical problem to the reading that sees the body as a result of error. Indeed, before hermaphroditic humankind was split into two genders, love is uniformly seen as something positive: God loved man as his own offspring (§12: ἠράσθη ὡς ἰδίου τόκου), which in fact means that he loved his own form (§12: ὁ θεὸς ἠράσθη τῆς ἰδίας μορφῆς); the celestial governors (διοικηταί) fell in love with (ἠράσθησαν) primal man as he descended (§ 13); nature smiled with love (ἔρωτι) when she saw him, he in turn loved (ἐφίλησε) his own reflection in her waters, and she embraced her beloved (ἐρώμενον), for they became lovers (ἐρώμενοι; § 14).[240] Then follows the division of the sexes and the subsequent mistaken love for the body (§19: ὁ δὲ ἀγαπήσας τὸ ἐκ πλάνης ἔρωτος σῶμα), which is contrasted with those who lovingly worship (ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς) the father (§ 22).[241] Scott (2:37) wished to substitute *eraô* for *agamai* in § 12, since "a father is not 'enamoured of' his son," but the problem can be solved in a better way: there can be no sexual love before the separation of the sexes, and the union of the primal human and female nature is not carnal, as can be seen in the "wondrous" procreation of hermaphroditic children. These children are not produced by the emission of male sperm into the female womb, as described in *Ascl.* 21, but rather "⟨earth⟩ was the female, water the insemination, and the maturing force came from fire; nature received the spirit from ether and brought forth bodies in the form of a human."[242] Nature does all the work here, by means of her four elements, and

238 Ibid., 150.

239 Ugo Bianchi, "Dualism," in *Encyclopedia of Religion* (ed. Mircea Eliade; 16 vols.; Detroit: Macmillan, 1987), 4:506–12.

240 The narrator himself also feels love for this account (αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐρῶ τοῦ λόγου), and has desire (ἐπιθυμία) to hear more (§ 16).

241 Cf. Hans D. Betz, "Hermetism and Gnosticism: The Question of the 'Poimandres,'" in *The Nag Hammadi Texts in the History of Religions* (ed. Søren Giversen, Tage Petersen, and Jørgen Podemann Sørensen; Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2002), 84–94 at 89–91. Betz also emphasizes the role of love in the anthropogony and cosmogony, but fails to distinguish between love before and after the separation of sexes.

242 CH I, 17: θηλυκὴ γὰρ ⟨γῆ⟩ ἦν καὶ ὕδωρ ὀχευτικόν, τὸ δὲ ἐκ πυρὸς πέπειρον. ἐκ δὲ αἰθέρος τὸ πνεῦμα ἔλαβε καὶ ἐξήνεγκεν ἡ φύσις τὰ σώματα πρὸς τὸ εἶδος τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου. My trans. Cf. HO V, 4: τοῦτο (sc. σπέρμα) λαβοῦσα ἡ φύσις μεταβάλλει, χωρίζουσα τὸ ἰχωρῶδες καὶ τὸ διεφθαρμένον, καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν πλάσσει σὺν τῇ ἐν αὐτῷ δυνάμει πνευματικῇ καὶ εἰς μῆκος φέρει, ⟨εἰς⟩ μῆκος δὲ γενόμενον εἰκὼν γίνεται. Mahé does not point out this parallel; although the

she is not impregnated by the primal Human, whose only role is to supply the image. It is thus the image of the human that is the essential part of humankind (§ 15: οὐσιώδης), just as in *Ascl.* 7–8. That the seven primal humans cannot have been born through sexual procreation is also made clear by the fact that they don't die, but remain alive for a whole cycle of time, consistent with the dictum that everything born must also die (e.g., Plato, *Phaed.* 70c–71e).

The love that connects the heavenly human with the body was not a problem until God separated the sexes and ordained sexual procreation, since physical birth inevitably also entails physical death.[243] It is thus accurate, on this background, to state that the body derives from the error of desire—or, more accurately, sexual love (ἔρως). However, the command of God that humans should multiply makes it highly unlikely that we are here dealing with an exhortation to sexual abstinence; the implication is rather that sexual love is necessary and only desire is erroneous.[244] Indeed, we are told that it was providence that effectuated sexual unions and births through fate and the heavenly armature.[245] What matters is that humans in their embodied state learn to direct their love to where it rightly belongs, namely towards the good from which the essential human originated. Those who lack knowledge (οἱ ἀγνοοῦντες), however, deserve death, "because what first gives rise to each person's body is the hateful darkness, from which comes the watery nature, from which the body was constituted in the sensible cosmos, from which death drinks."[246]

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latter deals with sexual procreation, both texts emphasize that nature receives material spirit and creates bodies according to an incorporeal ideal blueprint (HO V, 1–2: σχῆμά ἐστι φάσμα καὶ εἴδωλον τοῦ εἴδους τοῦ κατὰ τὰ σώματα· εἶδος ἐστι τύπος τοῦ σχήματος). Cf. SH XV, and NF 3:lxxxviii–xcvii for a historical overview of the pneumatic power of sperm.

243 *Pace* Festugière, FR 3:87–96, who sees not only one fall, but three in the *Poimandres*. The idea that good and evil is connected with sexual maturity is of course known from the myth of Adam and Eve in *Genesis*, as well as Aëtius, cf. FR 3:100–1.

244 With regards to the primordial descent of the Human into matter, Festugière admits that "ce péché est en quelque sorte nécessaire" (FR 3:95). Cf. CH II, 17: μεγίστη ἐν τῷ βίῳ σπουδὴ καὶ εὐσεβεστάτη τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσίν ἐστιν ἡ παιδοποιΐα, καὶ μέγιστον ἀτύχημα καὶ ἀσέβημά ἐστιν ἄτεκνόν τινα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀπαλλαγῆναι, καὶ δίκην οὗτος δίδωσι μετὰ θάνατον τοῖς δαίμοσιν; *Ascl.* 21: *procreatione enim uterque plenus est sexus et eius utriusque conexio aut, quod est uerius, unitas inconprehensibilis est, quem siue Cupidinem siue Venerem siue utrumque recte poteris nuncupare … ex domino illo totius naturae deo hoc sit cunctis in aeternum procreandi inuentum tributumque mysterium, cui summa caritas, laetitia, hilaritas, cupiditas amorque diuinus innatus est.*

245 CH I, 19: ἡ πρόνοια διὰ τῆς εἱμαρμένης καὶ ἁρμονίας τὰς μίξεις ἐποιήσατο, καὶ τὰς γενέσεις κατέστησε.

246 CH I, 20: ὅτι προκατάρχεται τοῦ οἰκείου σώματος τὸ στυγνὸν σκότος, ἐξ οὗ ἡ ὑγρὰ φύσις, ἐξ ἧς τὸ σῶμα συνέστηκεν ἐν τῷ αἰσθητῷ κόσμῳ, ἐξ οὗ θάνατος ἀρδεύεται. Trans. Copenhaver.

The ignorant mistakenly believe their true self is the body that derives from the darkness, whereas in fact the body burns them with its material passions.[247] The first step towards defeating death is thus to attain knowledge concerning the body and the essential human, so as to despise the lower in favour of the higher. This self-knowledge constitutes the first stage of the Way of Immortality, as we shall see later.[248]

When does the Bronze Age of the *Poimandres* end? After the sacred word of God had been uttered, we are only told that some recognized themselves while others remained errant in darkness. Presumably the former group ascended to heaven, while the rest remained, for in the narrative present it seems that humankind is still in need of a guide (CH I, 26: καθοδηγὸς), and that is precisely the role of the narrator. After having received the revelation from Poimandres, the narrator proclaims "the beauty of reverence and knowledge," admonishing his listeners: "People, earthborn men, you who have surrendered yourselves to drunkenness and sleep and ignorance of God, make yourselves sober and end your drunken sickness, for you are bewitched in unreasoning sleep."[249] We are thus moved far back in time, to an age when ignorance reigned. It is the aspect of Thoth as a civilizing culture hero that is here utilized, one who gave humankind their laws and letters, thus bringing them from a savage state in which they were irrational, like animals.[250] The same motif is found in *Ascl.* 37, where Hermes evokes a time in which mankind was "ignorant about the nature of divinity," before they discovered the way to fabricate earthly gods, a discovery probably ascribed to the homonymous ancestors of Hermes and Asclepius, as well as to Isis and Osiris. The latter two were also taught by Hermes how to execute their civilizing efforts, as we have seen.

Consequently, the *Poimandres* gives us the foundational myth of the Hermetic tradition, telling the devotees about the creation of the world, the heavenly primal human, the earthly semi-divine hermaphrodites, and the division of this primal unity into male and female. The revelation which serves as narrative framework is the myth of how the wisdom of the primordial age was once again rediscovered and transmitted to a group of worthy recipients by

247 CH I, 23: οὐ παύεται ἐπ' ὀρέξεις ἀπλέτους τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων, ἀκορέστως σκοτομαχῶν, καὶ † τοῦτον † βασανίζει, καὶ ἐπ' αὐτὸν πῦρ ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖον αὐξάνει.

248 Cf. below, chap. 4.5.

249 CH I, 27: καὶ ἤργμαι κηρύσσειν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας καὶ γνώσεως κάλλος, ὦ λαοί, ἄνδρες γηγενεῖς, οἱ μέθῃ καὶ ὕπνῳ ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδεδωκότες καὶ τῇ ἀγνωσίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, νήψατε, παύσασθε δὲ κραιπαλῶντες, θελγόμενοι ὕπνῳ ἀλόγῳ. Trans. Copenhaver.

250 Cf. Jerome H. Long, "Culture Heroes," in *Encyclopedia of Religion* (ed. Lindsay Jones et al.; 15 vols.; 3d ed.; Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005), 3:2090–93.

Hermes, the institutor of the tradition. This chain of transmission has already been outlined in depth by Anna van den Kerchove, who however places less emphasis on the reclamation of primordial wisdom.[251] It is such a reclamation we also see in the letter of Manetho, only there it is achieved by means of a rediscovered stela rather than revelation. Van den Kerchove also sees the *Poimandres* as a foundational myth, though in addition she considers it to portray a ritual investiture in order to become a spiritual master.[252] This seems unlikely to me, for foundational myths are usually available also to novices, as indicated in the Hermetica by the fact that Tat knows about the *Poimandres* before his rebirth (CH XIII, 15), and possibly also to outsiders. A rite of investiture, on the other hand, one would expect to be kept secret.

3.9 The Hermetic Transmigration of Souls

In the Hermetic treatise *The Key* (CH X), Hermes reminds Tat about what he had heard earlier in the *General discourses*, namely that all individual souls derive from the World-Soul,[253] and in fact most of the rest of the treatise could be said to be about the soul. The World-Soul is treated elsewhere, for example in CH XI, 4, but the teaching that individual souls derive from it is found only in the *Korê Kosmou* (SH XXIII, 14–16), in the form of a mythological account based on the *Timaeus* but with the Stoic doctrine added that souls were parted off from the World-Soul.[254] Both CH X, 7–8 and SH XXIII, 40–42 agree that the souls undergo several rebirths which for some lucky few will culminate in an apotheosis and a return to their incorporeal original state.[255] It seems likely, then, that both these texts rely on a *General Discourse* of Hermes to Tat, concerning the soul and its manifold rebirths.[256] This could very well be the

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251 Van den Kerchove, "Pratiques rituelles et traités hermétiques," 44–211; shortened in id., *La voie d'Hermès*, 23–79.

252 Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 30, 34, 44f.

253 CH X, 7: οὐκ ἤκουσας ἐν τοῖς Γενικοῖς ὅτι ἀπὸ μιᾶς ψυχῆς τῆς τοῦ παντὸς πᾶσαι αἱ ψυχαί εἰσιν αὗται ἐν τῷ παντὶ κόσμῳ κυλινδούμεναι, ὥσπερ ἀπονενεμημέναι;

254 Cf. Scott 2:243 and NF 1:126 n. 28, neither of whom mentions SH XXIII however.

255 Cf. CH IV, 8: "Do you see how many bodies we must pass through, my son, how many troops of demons, ⟨cosmic⟩ connections and stellar circuits in order to hasten toward the one and only?" Trans. Copenhaver. Cf also SH XXVI, 6–7 on the souls incarnated into humans or animals according to their disposition.

256 CH X, 7: τῶν ψυχῶν πολλαὶ αἱ μεταβολαί, τῶν μὲν ἐπὶ τὸ εὐτυχέστερον, τῶν δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ ἐναντίον; SH XXIII, 40: ἐνομοθέτησα τὰς μεταβολὰς ὑμῶν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον εἴ τι διαπράξετε ἄσχημον, οὕτως ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον εἴ τι βουλεύσεσθε τῆς ἑαυτῶν γενέσεως ἄξιον.

Hermetic teaching known by Albinus, which he claimed was the source of the "ancient account" that Plato uses in his theory of metempsychosis in *Phaedo* 70c.[257] Festugière does not mention this possibility, but uses Albinus to date the general Hermetic teaching of the descent of the soul to 151/2 CE as *terminus a quo*, since Albinus taught Galen at about this time.[258] The reference to Albinus and Hermes is found in Tertullian's treatise on the soul, where we also find a quote of Hermes on the soul, to the effect that individual souls are not reabsorbed into the world soul after death, but retain their individuality.[259] The quote could be taken from the same treatise on the soul that CH X and SH XXIII rely on.

The teaching from the *Genikoi* on the soul seems to be inserted into CH X mainly in order to demonstrate the importance of a gnostic lifestyle, that is, *gnôsis* in the sense of knowing the true nature of things in order to resist the false passions of matter:

κακία δὲ ψυχῆς ἀγνωσία. ψυχὴ γάρ, μηδὲν ἐπιγνοῦσα τῶν ὄντων μηδὲ τὴν τούτων φύσιν, μηδὲ τὸ ἀγαθόν, τυφλώττουσα δέ, ἐντινάσσει τοῖς πάθεσι τοῖς σωματικοῖς, καὶ ἡ κακοδαίμων, ἀγνοήσασα ἑαυτήν, δουλεύει σώμασιν ἀλλοκότοις καὶ μοχθηροῖς, ὥσπερ φορτίον βαστάζουσα τὸ σῶμα, καὶ οὐκ

The vice of soul is ignorance. For the soul, when it is blind[260] and discerns none of the things that are nor their nature nor the good, is shaken by the bodily passions, and the wretched thing becomes—in ignorance of itself—a slave to vile and monstrous bodies, bearing the body like a

257 Plato, *Phaed.* 70c: παλαιὸς μὲν οὖν ἔστι τις λόγος οὗ μεμνήμεθα, ὡς εἰσὶν ἐνθένδε ἀφικόμεναι ἐκεῖ, καὶ πάλιν γε δεῦρο ἀφικνοῦνται καὶ γίγνονται ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων; Tert., *An.* 28.1: *hinc abeuntes sint illuc et rursus huc veniant et fiant et dehinc ita habeat rursus ex mortuis effici vivos … divinum Albinus existimat, Mercurii forsitan Aegyptii.*

258 FR 3:1–2 n. 4, though it should rather be a *terminus ante quem* as far as I can see. As for CH X, Scott 2:231 suggests dating it 2nd–3rd c., leaning toward the later date.

259 Tert., *An.* 33.2 = FH 1: *… quod et Mercurius Aegyptius novit, dicens animam digressam a corpore non refundi in animam universi, sed manere determinatam, uti rationem, inquit, patri reddat eorum quae in corpore gesserit*. Festugière points out SH XXV, 3 as the closest parallel, whereas Nock affirms that the fragment is independent (NF 4:104). Tertullian also mentions that the Egyptian Mercury was supposedly a god and revered by Plato: *An.* 2.3: *… quia plerosque auctores etiam deos existimavit antiquitas, nedum divos, ut Mercurium Aegyptium, cui praecipue Plato adsuevit*. Cf. also Gilles Quispel, "Hermes Trismegistus and Tertullian," *VC* (1989): 188–90, who suggests that Tertullian relies on a Hermetic sentence in *Test.* 2.2: *Deus bonus … sed homo malus* = SH XI, 2: ὁ θεὸς ἀγαθός, ὁ ἄνθρωπος κακός.

260 Cf. DH VII, 3: "a soul which has (got) no nous is blind" (ա̈նձն միտս ոչ ունելով կոյր է).

ἄρχουσα ἀλλ' ἀρχομένη. αὕτη κακία ψυχῆς.
τοὐναντίον δὲ ἀρετὴ ψυχῆς γνῶσις· ὁ γὰρ γνοὺς καὶ ἀγαθὸς καὶ εὐσεβὴς καὶ ἤδη θεῖος.

burden, not ruling but being ruled. This is the vice of the soul. The virtue of the soul, by contrast, is knowledge; for one who knows is good and reverent and already divine.[261]

Two distinct choices thus present themselves—the path of knowledge or that of ignorance—a motif we will see recurs in other Hermetica, and that was also common in other Platonic treatises on the soul.[262] Similar to the commandment of God in the *Poimandres*, knowledge of oneself, of the nature of things and of the good is necessary to avoid being ruled by bodily passions, and the one who possesses it "is good and reverent and already divine." This is in sharp contrast to the subsequent sentence that states that the human being is not only not good, but even evil insofar as it is mortal (CH X, 12). Likewise, the teaching on the migrations of irreverent souls into animal bodies (CH X, 7–8) is later in the treatise apparently contradicted by calling it a great error (CH X, 19–20). Festugière explains this by postulating that the "Gnostic" current of Hermetism has been mixed with the "cosmic" one in this treatise.[263]

Rather than assuming that the author or editor was not able to discern such a blatant incongruity, however, it is possible to resolve the paradox with reference to the ontological consequences of the epistemological level of each person. We are told about several kinds of persons: those who are irrational like animals, those who are human, and those who are demonic or divine. The human soul is the median kind between gods and animals, and its mind, although originally divine, became human when it entered the body (§ 18: νοῦς … ἀνθρώπινος ὢν τῇ οἰκήσει).[264] There are two choices available to this soul: being reverent turns it into something demonic and divine, and eventually transforms the whole soul into nous (§ 19).[265] This must be the human soul that is extolled in the conclusion of the treatise as the authentic human, the mortal

261 CH X, 8–9. Trans. Copenhaver.

262 Cf. FR 3:17.

263 FR 3:35; 4:55: "soyons sûrs que l'auteur hermétique n'a pas senti ces contradictions. Il répète simplement des schèmes d'école." See also Scott 2:252, 269, who concludes that CH X, 19b–22a is from a different hand than the rest, though he admits that there is no real contradiction that mortal man is evil, while the true man is good.

264 This possibly alludes to how the heavenly human, consisting of life and light, becomes soul and nous when it enters the human body (CH I, 17).

265 CH X, 19: ψυχὴ δὲ ἀνθρωπίνη, οὐ πᾶσα μέν, ἡ δὲ εὐσεβής, δαιμονία τίς ἐστι καὶ θεία· καὶ ἡ τοιαύτη καὶ μετὰ τὸ ἀπαλλαγῆναι τοῦ σώματος τὸν τῆς εὐσεβείας ἀγῶνα ἠγωνισμένη (ἀγὼν δὲ εὐσεβείας, τὸ γνῶναι τὸ θεῖον καὶ μηδένα ἀνθρώπων ἀδικῆσαι), ὅλη νοῦς γίνεται. Cf. *Ascl.* 18: *sensus autem*

god. On the other hand, if the soul is irreverent it remains in its own essence and will be separated from its mind after the death of the body (§ 19)[266] to be judged according to its merits and demerits (§ 16).[267] Indeed the mind itself, once separated from the soul, becomes the soul's punishing demon. It is this human soul that returns to earth, looking for a new human body to enter, and it must be this kind of human that is characterized as evil, since it is moved and mortal. There is also a third kind, however: if the soul is overly sluggish, the mind will leave it while it is still in the body.[268] Such a soul should however not be called human (§ 24),[269] and it must thus be this soul that is reincarnated into animal bodies after death (§ 7–8), since only human souls are protected from such an undignified rebirth (§ 19). Indeed, a soul deprived of mind is like an irrational animal (§ 24)[270] and can therefore be reincarnated as an animal. The same teaching is found in *Ascl.* 12, where it is stated that the irreverent are denied entry into heaven and instead undergo a foul migration into foreign bodies, unworthy of a holy soul,[271] just as transmigration into animals is said to be unworthy of a human soul in CH X, 19.

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cum semel fuerit animae commixtus humanae, fit una ex bene coalescente commixtione materia.

266 CH X, 19: ἡ δὲ ἀσεβὴς ψυχὴ μένει ἐπὶ τῆς ἰδίας οὐσίας, ὑφ' ἑαυτῆς κολαζομένη, καὶ γήινον σῶμα ζητοῦσα εἰς ὃ εἰσέλθῃ, εἰς ἀνθρώπινον δέ· Cf. Scott 2:265; Plut., *Fac.* 943Aff. on *nous* and *psyche* after death.

267 CH X, 16: καταλιπὼν (sc. νοῦς) τὴν ψυχὴν κρίσει καὶ τῇ κατ' ἀξίαν δίκῃ. Cf. DH VII, 4: ψυχὴ κατ' ἀνάγκην εἰσέρχεται εἰς τὸ σῶμα, νοῦς δὲ κατὰ κρίσιν εἰς ψυχήν (Greek text in Paramelle and Mahé, "Nouveaux parallèlles grecs," 123; Cf. Mahé, "La voie hermétique," 358).

268 Cf. John M. Dillon, "Plutarch and Second Century Platonism," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman* (ed. Arthur H. Armstrong; New York: Crossroad, 1986), 219–29 at 222, comparing Plut., *Fac.* 945B–C.

269 CH X, 24: ἡ δὲ τοιαύτη ψυχή, ὦ τέκνον, νοῦν οὐκ ἔχει· ὅθεν οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπον δεῖ λέγεσθαι τὸν τοιοῦτον· Cf. DH IX, 1: "Every man, by the very (fact) that he has (got) a notion of God, is a man, for it is not (given) to every man to have (such a) notion." Trans. Mahé, "The Definitions of Hermes," 115. The sentence is based on both the Greek and Armenian versions, which are both corrupt and require emendation in light of each other: Πᾶς ἄνθρωπος τὸν θεὸν νομίζει· ⟨εἰ γὰρ ἄνθρωπός ἐστι, καὶ τὸν θεὸν οἶδε. Πᾶς ἄνθρωπος αὐτῷ τῷ τὸν θεὸν νομίζειν ἄνθρωός ἐστιν⟩· οὐ γὰρ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου νομίζειν; Ամենայն մարդ զաստուած կարծէ, քանզի եթէ մարդ է եւ զաստուած գիտէ: Ամենայն մարդ զնոյն աստուած կարծելով մարդ է ⟨քանզի ոչ ամենայն մարդոյ կարծել:⟩ Texts in Paramelle and Mahé, "Nouveaux paralléles," 126–27.

270 Cf. Ingvild S. Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Ideas* (London: Routledge, 2006), 264.

271 *Ascl.* 12: *reditus denegatur in caelum et constituitur in corpora alia indigna animo sancto et foeda migratio.*

Three kinds of people are thus expressly mentioned in *The Key*.[272] Those deprived of mind will descend on the ladder of rebirths into animals, since they do not even merit being called human, and it is expressly the human soul that is said to be immune to this fate. Another kind of people is endowed with mind, but since they are irreverent this mind is merely human, not divine, and they are thus stuck in their median position. Their souls will not migrate into animals after death, but are rather punished by their own demonic mind before they enter into new human bodies. Both of these kinds correspond to the human called evil, since they are both mortal and movable. The third kind is called demonic and divine. In fact, it is likely that these are two separate kinds of people, as in *Ascl.* 5, where divine people attach themselves to heavenly gods, while demonic people attach themselves to demons.[273] However, CH X does not distinguish between the two, except in stating that the demonic is a stage in the chain of rebirths leading to the divine. These people are paradoxically called "mortal gods," for they are still mortal insofar as their bodies will eventually dissolve, but at that point they have already become wholly mind and ascended to divinity.

While the first group of people seems to be doomed to a downward spiral of bestial reincarnations, the second group can after several reincarnations transcend their human nature and be filled by the divine nous. This is of course the goal of the way of Hermes, to which we shall return.

3.10 Hermes, Nature, and the Royal Souls in Manilius' Astronomica

An important piece of evidence for dating the Hermetic teaching of royal souls is furnished by a generally overlooked passage in Manilius' *Astronomica*, written during the reign of Augustus and/or Tiberius.[274] Manilius informs us that

272 Tripartition of mankind is far from uncommon in the period. Cf. Iamb., *Myst*. 5.18; Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the "Valentinians"* (NHMS 60; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 50–51; Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 458.

273 Cf. CH IV, 8; SH XXIII, 19; below, chap. 9.2.

274 Katharina Volk, *Manilius and his Intellectual Background* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 137–61, provides an overview on the different positions regarding date, and proposes an Augustan date of 9–14 CE herself. Ferguson draws attention to the parallel with SH XXVI, but in his view the kings here are mere Egyptian glosses on a Hellenistic list of first inventors. Cf. Ioan P. Culianu, "Ordine e disordine delle sfere: Macrob. *In S. Scip.* I 12, 13–14, p. 50, 11–24 WILLIS," *Aevum* 55 (1981): 96–110; id., *Psychanodia I: A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and Its Relevance* (EPRO 99; Leiden: Brill, 1983); Carl Thulin, *Die götter des Martianus Capella und der Bronzeleber von Piacenza*

Hermes, called in his poem simply the Cyllenian, was the first inventor and ruler of the sacred art of astronomy.[275] Thereafter, certain royal souls and then priests gained knowledge of the stars from God, and became the second founders of the art, so to speak:

et natura dedit vires seque ipsa reclusit
regales[276] *animos primum dignata movere*
proxima tangentis rerum fastigia caelo,
qui domuere feras gentes oriente sub ipso,
quas secat Euphrates, in quas et Nilus abundat[277]
qua mundus redit et nigras superevolat urbes.
tum qui templa sacris coluerunt omne per aevum
delectique sacerdotes in publica vota
officio vinxere deum; quibus ipsa potentis
numinis accendit castam praesentia mentem,
inque deum deus ipse tulit patuitque ministris.

Moreover, Nature gave power and revealed herself, deigning first to inspire those royal souls who reach out to the summits of the world bordering on heaven, kings who civilized savage peoples beneath the eastern sky, whose lands are cut off by the Euphrates and flooded by the Nile, where the stars return to view and soar above the dark cities. Then priests who all their lives offered sacrifice in temples and were chosen to voice the people's prayer secured by their devotion the sympathy of God; their pure minds were kindled by the very presence of the powerful deity, and the God of heaven brought his servants to a knowledge of heaven and disclosed its secrets to them.[278]

Modern editors have tended to see the royal souls as references to Zoroaster and Belus, who some ancient authors considered to have been early kings of the Chaldeans.[279] But this interpretation is not really supported by the text;

(Gieszen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1906), 68f.; Maria Valvo, "Considerazioni su manilio e l'ermetismo," *Siculorum gymnasium* 9 (1956): 108–17.

275 Man., *Astr.* 1.30: *tu princeps auctorque sacri, Cyllenie, tanti.*

276 ms: *regales* according to Housman. Goold gives *regalis*, but offers no critical apparatus: George P. Goold, *Manilius: Astronomica* (LCL 469; London: William Heinemann, 1977).

277 ln. 44 suppressed by Bentley & Goold, as well as Ferguson (Scott 4:xxxix), but cf. Wolfgang Hübner, "Manilius als Astrologe und Dichter," *ANRW* 32.1:126–320 at 136 n. 39. Housman gives *inundat* instead of *abundat*.

278 Man., *Astr.* 1.40–50. I have modified the translation of Goold quite extensively.

279 Alfred E. Housman, *M. Manili Astronomicon* (5 vols.; London: A.J. Valpy, 1828), 1:40, n. ad 41, followed by Goold xvii–xviii. This view is also uncritically adopted by Emma Gee, *Ovid,*

the land is "cut off" (*secat*) by the Euphrates and inundated by the Nile, which might mean that the land of Egypt at this time was thought to have Euphrates as its boundary, as was supposedly the case during the reign of one of the conqueror kings, such as Osiris, Sesostris or Ramesses, whose legends are often conflated. The meaning of the obscure "dark cities" (*nigras … urbes*) is also best explained as a reference to the native name for Egypt, Kemet, the Black Land.[280] Hermes is thus likely to be the Egyptian Trismegistus, even though he is here referred to as the Cyllenian, for only the Egyptian Hermes was known as the inventor of astronomy. Even though the Babylonian god of wisdom, Nabu, could be equated with Hermes, there are no Greek astronomical treatises in his name, and the Babylonian god who was claimed to be the inventor of astronomy was Bel.[281] The mention of the kings and priests as secondary inventors of astronomy brings to mind king Nechepsos and his priest, Petosiris, whose treatises deferred to Hermes.[282] But the most important indication that the prooemium of Manilius used a Hermetic source is the mention of royal souls (*regales animos*) who reach out towards, or touch (*tangentis*), the summits of the world, bordering on heaven.[283] Even the sequence of the revelations in *KK*

Aratus and Augustus: Astronomy in Ovid's Fasti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 59. Gee also identifies these kings with the first founders in ln. 51, although these must also include the priests of lns. 46–50.

280 David Bain, "Μελανῖτις γῆ, an unnoticed Greek name for Egypt: New evidence for the origins and etymology of alchemy?" in *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the first International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4–8 May 1997* (ed. David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery and Einar Thomassen; Bergen: The Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999), 205–26.

281 Ach., *Isag.* 1.27. Cf. Franz Cumont, *Le mysticisme astral dans l'Antiquité* (Brussels: Hayes, 1909), 280.

282 Cf. Hübner, "Manilius als Astrologe und Dichter," 136. Housman makes this connection, but strangely sees both Petosiris and Nechepsos as priests. I will in the following write Nechepsos rather than the more common Nechepso, following Kim Ryholt, "New Light on the Legendary King Nechepsos of Egypt," *JEA* 97 (2011): 61–72, discussed below.

283 Both Giovanna Vallauri, "Gli 'Astronomica' di Manilio e le fonti ermetiche," *RFIC* 32 (1954): 133–67, and Volk, *Manilius and his Intellectual Background*, 234–39, miss this text in their evaluation of possible Hermetic sources. Volk also (ibid. 232f.) points out that the earlier tendency to see Posidonius behind much of the *Astronomica* was the result of German romanticism. There is nothing resembling the Hermetic royal souls in any of the fragments assembled by Ludwig Edelstein and Ian G. Kidd, *Posidonius* (3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989–1999), frgs. 139–149 on soul. Cf. Franz Cumont, *Lux Perpetua* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1949), 157ff. on Posidonius. (162 n. 4 on his lack of influence on the *Dream of Scipio*); FR 3:27, 33; André-Jean Festugière, "Les thèmes du Songe de Scipion," in *Eranos Rudbergianus* (Gothenborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag,

is followed: first Hermes discovers divine nature (§ 5; *Ascl.* 37), then he passes it on to the king Osiris (§§ 66–68), and finally to the priests (§ 68). Humanity could not have discovered the art by themselves, argues Manilius, so it must have been divinely inspired, and Hermes assumes a Promethean aspect in transmitting the knowledge of the divine fire to humans. However, Hermes is not mentioned in the transmission of knowledge to the royal souls; rather it was Nature who revealed herself (*seque ipsa reclusit*). Here the normally veiled Nature is temporarily unveiled, a motif extensively investigated by Pierre Hadot in his monograph on the Heraclitean aphorism that "Nature loves to hide."[284] Nature is here a cosmic entity, the force by which the universe is vitalized and governed, as is signaled by Manilius' declaration of intent in writing his poem: "And since from the heights of heaven my song descends and thence comes down the established rule of fate, first must I sing of Nature's true appearance and describe the whole universe after its own likeness."[285] The rule of fate emanating from the heavens is connected to the form (*forma*) of nature and the image of the world (*imago mundi*)—*mundus* meaning either world or heaven. Manilius will thus describe the hidden laws by which the stars rule earth,[286] laws which were first discovered by Hermes, then by the royal souls and the priests.

It is likely that this notion of a celestial Nature that reveals herself has also been adapted from the *KK*. In this text, Nature is born by God in order to fill heaven, ether, and air, the three upper parts of the cosmos, with life. She then produces a daughter, Heuresis—"Invention"—who unites or has intercourse with Ponos—"Toil."[287] To this daughter God gives dominion of the mysteries

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1946), 370–88; Pierre Boyancé, *Études sur le Songe de Scipion* (Paris: Boccard, 1936); André Piganiol, "Sur la source du *Songe de Scipion*," *CRBL* 1 (1957): 88–94.

284 Cf. Pierre Hadot, *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

285 Man., *Astr.* 1.118–121: *Et quoniam caelo descendit carmen ab alto | et venit in terras fatorum conditus ordo, | ipsa mihi primum naturae forma canenda est | ponendusque sua totus sub imagine mundus*. Trans. Goold.

286 Ibid. 63–65: *deprendit* [sc. the priests] *tacitis dominantia legibus astra | et totum aeterna mundum ratione moveri | fatorumque vices certis discernere signis*.

287 SH XXIII, 13: καλὴν Πόνῳ συνελθοῦσαν θυγατέρα ἐποίησεν, ἣν Εὕρεσιν ἐκάλεσε. NF 4:4 follow Canter in emending συνελθοῦσα{ν}, making Invention the offspring of Nature and Toil. Cf. also NF 4:27 n. 46, where it is pointed out that Isis is called εὑρέτις in her aretalogies, and she shows the route of the stars (Kyme 13: ἐγὼ ἄστρων ὁδοὺς ἔδειξα). In that case Toil would correspond to Osiris, and in the myth of Isis and Osiris we find two instances where it is said that Isis discovered (εὑρίσκουσαν/εὗρε) the limbs of the dismembered Osiris "with toil" (σὺν πόνῳ): Theod., *Cur.* 1.113; Ps.-Nonn., *Schol. myth.* 5.37. Cf. however SH XXIII, 29,

of heaven. The allegorical interpretation is obvious: The discovery or invention of the nature of heaven can only be found through toil—*per ardua ad astra*. In the Silver Age humans could effortlessly witness the mysteries of nature and lead their thoughts up to the limits of the earth, according to Momus, the spirit of reproach.[288] In other words, they enjoyed the bounties of nature without toil, a situation to which Hermes put an end by making the nature of the enveloping spirit invisible and setting up the goddess Adrasteia—"Inevitability"—over humanity, together with a certain "hidden instrument" which enslaved them.[289] The enveloping divine spirit is the area between heaven and earth (SH XXV, 11). Now that humans have been subjected to fate, a new ordering division takes place: "heaven appeared up above, embellished with its own mysteries,"[290] stabilizing earth, and then God took from "the surrounding layer of everything given existence by Nature" and gave it to earth in order for it to be fruitful.[291] Here, celestial Nature shows herself and gives power, just as in line 40 of Manilius' poem: *et natura dedit vires seque ipsa reclusit*.

In *KK*, after fate has been instituted the Silver Age ends and the Bronze Age starts, when humans practice mutual indiscriminate slaughter. This is only ended by the emanation of the king, as discussed above, and this emanation is said to be from the nature of God.[292] Now, we cannot tell from the text if this nature is meant to mean the "essence" of god, or if it is the personalized goddess Nature, who is of course also herself a creation of God. A similar ambiguity is also present in the *natura* of Manilius, since the priests are subsequently said to be brought to knowledge by the god of heaven. It is scarcely believable that Manilius intends that the royal souls were taught by a lower divinity than the one who taught the priests, neither is it in fact said that the kings were taught by Nature, but they were "moved" or "inspired" (*movere*) by it. Any interpretation of such terse verses must remain uncertain, but it seems likely that the royal souls who touch the upper limits of heaven refer to the souls of the kings

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where Hermes says he will not cease to be together with Invention (οὐ παύσομαι τῇ Εὑρέσει συνών).

288 SH XXIII, 44: τὸν ὁρᾶν μέλλοντα τολμηρῶς τῆς φύσεως τὰ καλὰ μυστήρια… καὶ μέχρι τῶν περάτων γῆς τὰς ἑαυτοῦ μελλήσοντα πέμπειν ἐπινοίας.

289 SH XXIII, 48: οὐκ ἐναργὴς γενήσεται πνεύματος θείου φύσις ἡ τοῦ περιέχοντος· εἶπε γὰρ εἶναί με ταμίαν καὶ προνοητὴν ὁ τῶν συμπάντων δεσπότης. ἐπόπτειρα τοίνυν ταγήσεται τῶν ὅλων ὀξυδερκὴς θεὸς Ἀδράστεια, καί τι κρυπτὸν ὄργανον ἐγὼ τεχνάσομαι. The hidden instrument is fate, operated by the revolving stars, cf. NF 4:41 n. 179.

290 SH XXIII, 51: ἐφάνη μὲν οὐρανὸς ἄνω, συγκεκοσμημένος τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μυστηρίοις πᾶσι.

291 SH XXIII, 52: πληρώσας δὲ τὰς ἰσοστασίας χεῖρας τῷ περιέχοντι τῶν ἐκ τῆς φύσεως ὑπαρχόντων κτλ.

292 SH XXIII, 62: τις ἤδη τῆς ἐμῆς ἀπόρροια φύσεως.

before they were embodied, who in the Hermetic teaching reside in the top layer of the World-Soul close to the moon, and that these were then "moved" by nature down into bodies, so that they could rule over "the savage people under the eastern sky" mentioned in the next line. Just as *KK*, Manilius also claims that before the civilizing efforts of the kings, humans lived in ignorance.[293]

The importance of the Hermetic source of Manilius is that we can now give at least parts of the teachings contained in the Hermetic dialogues of Isis and Horus a *terminus ante quem* in the reign of Augustus. This must include at least the teachings about the royal souls and the emanation of souls from different layers of the World-Soul, as well as some speculation regarding Nature revealing herself. Indeed, we already knew from Tertullian's reference to Albinus that a Hermetic doctrine of the soul had to predate the mid second century CE,[294] but otherwise the general consensus has long been that only technical Hermetica predate the Common Era. However, as we shall see, the distinction between the two groups is not as clear-cut as is commonly assumed, and some astronomical Hermetica will be found to presuppose some of the speculations on kings that we have found thus far.

3.11 Hermes, Nature, and the Royal Souls in Petosiris and Nechepsos

In recent years there has been a marked progress in our understanding of the figures of Nechepsos and Petosiris. Kim Ryholt has identified Demotic fragments belonging to the tradition about these astrological authorities, which permitted him to identify king Nechepsos with king Necho II carrying the epithet "the Wise" (*Ny-kꜣ.w pꜣ šš*), while the figure bearing the common name Petosiris is identical with Petese, a priest associated with the legends of the aforementioned king.[295] The historical king was likely connected to astrology by posterity because of a lunar eclipse that took place before his accession. Stephan Heilen has recently updated the old list of testimonia and fragmenta

293 Man., *Astr.* 1.66: *Nam rudis ante illos nullo discrimine vita.*

294 Tert., *An.* 28.1: *Quis ille nunc uetus sermo apud memoriam Platonis de animarum reciproco discursu, quod hinc abeuntes sint illuc et rursus huc ueniant et fiant et dehinc ita habeat rursus ex mortuis effici uiuos? Pythagoricus, ut uolunt quidam; diuinum Albinus existimat, Mercurii forsitan Aegyptii.*

295 Ryholt, "New Light." Cf. John D. Ray, "Pharaoh Nechepso," *JEA* 60 (1974): 255–56; Rolf Krauss, "Necho II. alias Nechepso," *GM* 42 (1981): 49–60.

of Nechepsos and Petosiris given by Ernst Riess, though a new edition is still lacking.[296]

As noted earlier, the kings and priests mentioned by Manilius have often been associated with these famous Egyptian astrologers, and in a fragment preserved by Vettius Valens we find mention of kings ascending to heaven:

ζηλωτὴς τυγχάνω τῶν παλαιῶν βασιλέων τε καὶ τυράνων [καὶ] τῶν περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐσπουδακότων … εἰς τοσοῦτον γὰρ ἐπιθυμίας καὶ ἀρετῆς ἔσπευσαν ὡς τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς καταλιπόντας οὐρανοβατεῖν, ἀθανάτοις ψυχαῖς καὶ θείαις καὶ ἱεραῖς γνώμαις συνεπιστήσοντας, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Νεχεψὼ ἐμαρτύρησε λέγων·

ἔδοξε δή μοι πάννυχον πρὸς ἀέρα
καὶ μοί τις ἐξήχησεν οὐρανοῦ βοή,
τῇ σάρκας [μὲν] ἀμφέκειτο πέπλος κυάνεος
κνέφας προτείνων,

καὶ τὰ ἑξῆς.

I happen to be a zealous admirer of the old kings and rulers who studied these things earnestly … For they developed such a desire and strove so eagerly for virtue that, after leaving earthly things behind, they walked in heaven, installing themselves along with immortal souls and divine and sacred intelligences, as Nechepso, too, bore witness saying: "All night long I directed my attention towards the sky,[297] and a shout sounded forth to me from heaven. Around its flesh a veil of dark blue color was wrapped, stretching out darkness before itself," and so forth.[298]

Both Richard Reitzenstein and Franz Cumont early on saw the relevance of this fragment for the history of heavenly ascents, which we find later in e.g. the *Dream of Scipio*.[299] Is it possible that Manilius took the royal souls near heaven from Nechepsos and Petosiris, and not from a Hermetic work?

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296 Stephan Heilen, "Some Metrical Fragments from Nechepsos and Petosiris," in *La poésie astrologique dans l'Antiquité* (ed. Isabelle Boehm and Wolfgang Hübner; Paris: Boccard, 2011), 23–93 at 31–34; Ernst Riess, "Nechepsonis et Petosiridis fragmenta magica," *Philologus* Suppl. VI:1 (1891–1893): 325–94.

297 All commentators since Usener have postulated a missing verse after ἀέρα, since a verb complementing ἔδοξε is missing. I have opted here to translate ἔδοξε μοι more unconventionally, as an absolute sense of "seem to oneself," "be determined," "think." (LSJ s.v. δοκέω). For an overview of different translations, see Heilen, "Some Metrical Fragmens from Nechepsos and Petosiris," 43.

298 Vett. Val., *Ant.* 6.1. Translation modified from Heilen, "Some Metrical Fragments from Nechepsos and Petosiris," 38–39.

299 Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 4–5; Cumont, *Le mysticisme astral*, 280, 284.

It must first be pointed out that neither Vettius nor the direct quote of Nechepsos actually mention any particular quality of the souls of kings. Second, we should not draw too strict a line between the tradition about Nechepsos and that of Hermes: several testimonies attest that Nechepsos and Petosiris ascribed their teachings to Hermes, thus placing themselves in the chain of tradition going back to the god himself. The anonymous 2nd century BCE authors behind the Nechepsos-Petosiris texts likely wished to hitch their wagon to the upmost astrological authority, Hermes, but elected the temporally closer king and priest as authors, in order to anchor the primordial teachings in a more recent past. A credible—at least to ancient readers—chain of tradition was thus created, with the king of the 26th Saïte dynasty serving as guarantor of its authenticity. On the basis of the probably Theban papyrus Louvre 2342 bis, Kim Ryholt identified Hermes, the teacher of Nechepsos and Petosiris, with the deified Theban sage Amenhotep, son of Hapu.[300] The papyrus, which is a horoscope from the year 137 CE for a man named Anoubion, reads: "After examination of many books as it [sc. the tradition?] has been handed down to us from ancient wise men, that is the Chaldeans and Petosiris and especially also King Necheus, just as they themselves took counsel from our lord Hermes and Asclepius, that is Imouthes, son of Hephaestus, …"[301] The identification of Asclepius with Imhotep is uncontroversial, and is also attested in Hermetic sources, as we have seen. In order to arrive at the identification of Hermes with Amenhotep, son of Hapu, Ryholt relies on Clement of Alexandria, who speaks of two deified mortals, the Memphitic Asclepius and the Theban Hermes.[302] Moreover these two share a shrine in Thebes.[303] However, Ryholt does not take into account the other testimonia about the divine predecessors of Nechepsos and Petosiris, for example the Pseudo-Manethonic *Apotelesmata*, which mentions only Petosiris:

300 Ryholt, "New Light on the Legendary King Nechepsos," 71.

301 Otto Neugebauer and Henry B. van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes* (Philadelphia: The Americal Philosophical Society, 1987), 42: σκεψαμενος απο πολλων βιβλων ως παρεδοθη ημειν απο σοφων αρχαιων τουτεστιν χαλδαικων και [π]ετοσιρις μαλιστα δε και ο βασιλευς νεχευς ωσπερ και αυτοι συνηυδρευσαν απο του κυριου ημων ερμου και ασκληπιου ο εστιν ιμουθου υιος ηφηστου κτλ.

302 Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 1.21.134: ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις ἀνθρώπων ποτέ, γενομένων δὲ ἀνθρωπίνῃ δόξῃ θεῶν, Ἑρμῆς τε ὁ Θηβαῖος καὶ Ἀσκληπιὸς ὁ Μεμφίτης.

303 Klotz, *Caesar in the City of Amun*, 51–52; Adam Łajtar, "The Cult of Amenhotep Son of Hapu and Imhotep in Deir el-Bahari in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods," in *"Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que des villages …": Thèbes et sa région aux époques hellénistique, romaine et byzantine* (ed. Alain Delattre and Paul Heilporn; Brussels: Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 2008), 113–23.

Ἐξ ἀδύτων ἱερῶν βίβλων, βασιλεῦ Πτολεμαῖε,
καὶ κρυφίμων στηλῶν, ἃς ηὕρατο πάνσοφος Ἑρμῆς
σύμβουλον πινυτῆς σοφίης Ἀσκληπιὸν εὑρών,
οὐρανίων τ' ἄστρων ἰδίαις ἐχάραξε προνοίαις,
ἀντιτύπῳ κηρῷ ἀπομαξάμενος, κεκόμισται
ἀνθολόγου μούσης βλύζον δώρημα μελισσῶν,
ᾗ διὰ νύκτα μέλαιναν ὑπ' οὐρανίων χοροῦ ἄστρων
μοιραίοισι μίτοισι λάλον τὸ μάθημα καθεῦρον·

οὐ γάρ τις τοίης σοφίης ἔτ' ἐμήσατο κῦδος,
ἢ μοῦνος Πετόσιρις, ἐμοὶ πολὺ φίλτατος ἀνήρ·
οὐ βαιὸς κάματος δ' οὗτος, Πτολεμαῖε, πέφυκεν.

From holy books from shrines, king Ptolemy, and secret stelae, which All-Wise Hermes discovered, finding in Asclepius a counselor of prudent wisdom; he engraved his own premonitions from heavenly stars, making an impression of beeswax—he had received from a flower-gathering Muse a gift of bees—by which through the dark night, under a place of heavenly stars, I have found the teaching loquacious with fateful threads. For none has yet attained the glory of such wisdom, except Petosiris alone, a man to me by far the most beloved. This labor has put forth shoots not to be despised, Ptolemy.[304]

We also find the chain of tradition in the *Matheseos Libri VIII* of Firmicus Maternus, for example in his discussion of the birthchart of the universe, the *thema mundi*:

Quare illi divini viri atque omni admiratione digni Petosiris ⟨et⟩ Nechepso, quorum prudentia ad ipsa secreta divinitatis accessit, etiam mundi genituram divino nobis scientiae magisterio

Those divine men, altogether worthy and admirable, Petosiris and Nechepso, who approached the very secrets of divinity, also handed down to us the birthchart of the universe

304 Ps.-Man., *Apotel.*, 5 [6 Köchley].1–11. My trans. The *Apotelesmatica* are considered to be compiled before the fourth century CE, while books 2, 3, and 6 (1, 2, and 3 K.) were written by the same author who was born 80 CE; cf. Joseph D. Reed, "Pseudo-Manetho and the Influence of Bion of Smyrna," *Rheinisches Museum* 104 (1997): 91–93. Book 5 (6 K.) and 1 (5 K.) may have the same author (Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 163). Both are dedicated to Ptolemy II, and both mention Petosiris, although the latter is not as effusive about him, saying that he spoke "glibly" or "cursorily" (ἐπιτροχάδην) about the astrological teachings.

tradiderunt. ut ostenderent atque monstrarent hominem ad naturam mundi similitudinemque formatum isdem principiis, quibus ipse mundus regitur et continetur, perenniter perpetuitatis sustentari fomitibus. Mundi itaque genituram hanc esse voluerunt secuti Aesculapium et Hanubium, quibus potentissimum Mercurii numen istius scientiae secreta commisit.

in order to show us that man is made in the likeness of the universe according to those same principles by which the universe itself is ruled; and that he is sustained forever by those same everlasting fires. Petosiris and Nechepso in this doctrine followed Aesculapius and Hanubius. To them Most Powerful Mercury entrusted the secret.[305]

Here we learn that Hermes passed on to Asclepius and Anubis not only the *thema mundi*, but also the familiar Hermetic teaching that humans are made in the image of the universe.[306] In the writings of Nechepsos and Petosiris, Hermes is thus clearly superior to Asclepius and prior to him in the *traditio mystica*, just as he is in the Hermetica. This relationship cannot be transferred to Amenhotep son of Hapu and Imhotep, where the latter is by far the most ancient.[307] Clement's Theban Hermes might conceivably be identified with Amenhotep son of Hapu, but the predecessor of Nechepsos and Petosiris can be none other than Trismegistus, who can also be associated with Thebes, as in *Disc.8–9*, where he refers to his temple in this city.[308]

Did Petosiris and Nechepsos simply refer to Hermes as a pious gesture, or did the authors use astronomical books of Hermes as sources? At least parts of the *Liber Hermetis* have been demonstrated to be Hellenistic, and here we find that certain horoscopes can produce "a king, a god manifest, and human by participation in humanity."[309] Likewise, an early second-century BCE papyrus

305 Firm. Mat., *Math.* 3.proem.1–1.1. Trans. Rhys Bram, *Ancient Astrology*.

306 CH VIII, 1; XI, 15; SH XI, 2; *Ascl.* 8, 10; DH I, 1–2, 4.

307 Cf. Dietrich Wildung, *Egyptian Saints: Deification in Pharaonic Egypt* (New York: New York University Press, 1977).

308 NHC VI 61,19.

309 *Lib. Herm.* 26.34 (75.41 Gundel): *Sol in ascendente in signo masculino et Luna in medio caeli gradatim in nocturna nativitate locis, in quibus gaudent, sine aspectu Saturni vel Martis, ex claris parentibus natum ostendunt et ipsum regem deum existentem hominem humanitatis participem*. My translation makes the king both a manifest god (*deum existentem*) and a human by participation in humanity (*hominem humanitatis participem*), while that of Feraboli makes him a god who only *appears* to be human: "un dio che ha assunto sembianze umane per farsi partecipe delle vicende degli uomini," in Paolo Scarpi, *La rivelazione*

from the archive of Ptolemaios, the recluse of the Memphite Serapeum, contains an astronomical writing with the title "Art of Eudoxus," but with the label "within, concerns of Hermes" and the epilogue "To the kings, celestial teaching of Leptines."[310] The text itself has no clear connections with the astrological writings of Nechepsos and Petosiris or Hermes, but the label demonstrates that astrology was considered to fall under the auspices of Hermes already in second century BCE Egypt. And it is certainly the Egyptian Hermes, for we find illustrations on the papyrus of a mummified ibis, a baboon, and a scarab in a circle. We note briefly also the Hermetic treatises on divination from thunder, and on the twelve astrological places, which have been dated to the second century BCE.[311]

Returning to the fragment of Nechepsos in Vettius Valens, we might say that the motif of Nechepsos' mind soaring aloft to heaven might well have been based on the Hermetic doctrine of the elevated status of royal souls, although we cannot be certain that this doctrine was current already in the second century BCE.[312] We know that Manetho, a century earlier, wrote of king Amenhotep III that he "desired to become a beholder of gods, as Horus, one of his predecessors on the throne had done; and he communicated his desire to Amenôphis, Paapis' son, who, in virtue of his wisdom and knowledge of the future was reputed to be a partaker in the divine nature."[313] John Dillery

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segreta di Ermete Trismegisto (2 vols.; Roma: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 2009–2011), 2:339. Cf. CH XII, 1: "Therefore some of the humans are gods, and their humanity is close to divinity" (διὸ καί τινες τῶν ἀνθρώπων θεοί εἰσι, καὶ ἡ αὐτῶν ἀνθρωπότης ἐγγύς ἐστι τῆς θεότητος. My trans.). Cf. Wilhelm Gundel, *Neue astrologische Texte des Hermes Trismegistos* (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1936), and below, chap. 7.3, for more on the *Liber Hermetis*.

310 Cf. Dorothy J. Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 252ff.; Jacco Dieleman and Ian Moyer, "Egyptian Literature," in *A Companion to Hellenistic Literature* (ed. James J. Clauss and Martine Cuypers; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 429–47 at 443.

311 Peter M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 1:439ff., 2:633ff.

312 It is possible, though unverifiable, that Cicero might have based the central motif of the *Dream of Scipio* on this doctrine, namely that those who perform admirable deeds for their country are elevated to heaven, although as a good republican he obviously replaced kings with patriots.

313 Manetho, fr. 54 = Jos., *C. Ap.* 1.232: ἐπιθυμῆσαι θεῶν γενέσθαι θεατὴν, ὥσπερ Ὧρος εἷς τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ βεβασιλευκότων· ἀνενεγκεῖν δὲ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ὁμωνύμῳ μὲν αὐτῷ Ἀμενώφει, πατρὸς δὲ Παάπιος ὄντι, θείας δὲ δοκοῦντι μετεσχηκέναι φύσεως κατά τε σοφίαν καὶ πρόγνωσιν τῶν ἐσομένων. Trans. Waddell. Amenophis son of Paapius is the sage more commonly known

points out that the expression to be a "beholder" (θεατὴς) of gods is parallel to CH IV, 2, and conceptually close to CH V, 5 as well as two spells in the "Book of Thoth" as described in the first tale of Setne Khamwas.[314] It is unclear whether the predecessor who saw God before is the eighteenth dynasty king whom Manetho calls Horus, or the god Horus,[315] as both could be said to be predecessors to Amenhotep III on the throne. It is also unclear which gods the kings would see, and how. Josephus polemically states that it could not be the earthly gods, for they were in plain view as sacred animals, and it could not be the heavenly gods, for "how could he see them?"[316] The latter is clearly not a valid objection. John Dillery points out that in the normal state of affairs, the Egypian king *should* be able to see the gods, as their representative on earth, and that Amenhotep's failure to see them indicates that the gods have abandoned Egypt.[317] To restore the proper order of things, Amenhotep is told to cleanse the land of lepers, and the gods will once again appear to view. The lepers are thus portrayed as soiling the ritual purity necessary to behold the gods. By associating the lepers with the Jews, and their leader Osarsiph with Moses, Manetho contributed to a topos in the history of anti-semitism, but that is not our present concern.[318]

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as Amenhotep son of Hapu, mentioned above. On this passage, cf. Redford, *Pharaonic King-Lists*, 250–51.

314 John Dillery, "The θεατὴς θεῶν: Josephus *Cap* 1.232 (*FgrHist* 609 F 10) Reconsidered," *CJ* 99 (2004): 239–52 at 240–41. Cf. also id., "The First Egyptian Narrative History," 107–10; David Frankfurter, "The Consequences of Hellenism in Late Antique Egypt: Religious Worlds and Actors," *ARG* 2 (2000): 162–94 at 181 n. 73; Jørgen Podemann Sørensen, "Native Reactions to Foreign Rule and Culture in Religious Literature," in *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt* (ed. Per Bilde et al.; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1992), 164–81 at 168–70.

315 The chronology between the different recensions of Manetho is completely garbled. The historical Amenhotep son of Hapu lived under Amenhotep III, who is the king portrayed in the Memnon-statue. Both Africanus and Eusebius (Armenian version and Syncellus) place this king *before* Horus. Josephus, on the other hand, places his Amenhotep after Sethos/Ramesses/Aigyptos, Harmaïs/Danaos, and Rampses, and claims that Manetho did not supply the number of years in his reign. Africanus and Eusebius have an Amenophath/Menophis after their Harmaïs/Danaos, and Ramesses/Aigyptos (no Rampses), but numbers his reign respectively 19 and 40 years.

316 Jos., *C. Ap.* 1.255: τοὺς οὐρανίους δὲ πῶς ἐδύνατο;

317 John Dillery, "Manetho," in *The Romance Between Greece and the East* (ed. Tim Whitmarsh and Stuart Thomson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 38–58 at 54–55.

318 Cf. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 29–44; Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 163f.

In contrast to Amenhotep's cleansing of lepers, the visionary method used by Nechepsos is reminiscent of that used in the *Poimandres*:

Nechepsos apud Vettius Valens	**CH I**
ἔδοξε δή μοι πάννυχον πρὸς ἀέρα	1: ἐννοίας μοί ποτε γενομένης περὶ τῶν ὄντων … καθάπερ οἱ ὕπνῳ βεβαρημένοι … **ἔδοξά** τινα ὑπερμεγέθη
καὶ μοί τις ἐξήχησεν οὐρανοῦ **βοή**,	4: σκότος κατωφερὲς ἦν… καπνὸν ἀποδιδοῦσαν … εἶτα **βοὴ** ἐξ αὐτῆς (sc. φύσεως) ἀσυνάρθρως ἐξεπέμπετο
τῇ σάρκας [μὲν] ἀμφέκειτο πέπλος κυάνεος κνέφας προτείνων	

Heilen believes πρὸς ἀέρα to be a mistake for πρὸς α⟨ἰθ⟩έρα, since he considers the ether to be a more appropriate place than the atmosphere for heavenly revelations.[319] However, in view of the cosmology outlined in the Hermetic dialogues of Isis and Horus, the air is just the region through which a royal soul would soar before being taken up to walk in heaven, more precisely the part of the air closest to the moon. The voice comes from heaven down to the air.

The method of achieving the vision is similar in the case of both Nechepsos and the *Poimandres*: When the attention of the visionary stretches out towards heaven, the revealer descends.[320] However, the revealer in *Poimandres* is a being of light, and it is only later in the vision that a dark nature appears. The latter is *not* a revelatory figure, but it is striking how similar it is to the revealer of Nechepsos: Both are descending dark entities, emitting a cry. Is the dark cry descending to Nechepsos meant to represent Nature, just as Nature revealed herself to royal souls in Manilius? First it must be pointed out that Vettius Valens several times notes that king Nechepsos wrote "mystically," presenting his teachings as an enigma.[321] We are therefore justified in reading the passage allegorically. Accordingly, Richard Reitzenstein argued that κνέφας was an

319 Heilen, "Some Metrical Fragments from Nechepsos and Petosiris," 45–47.

320 Festugière (FR 1:314) points out a possible critique against Nechepsos in the tale of Thessalos of Tralles, where it is said that Nechepsos did *not* receive from a divine voice the same secrets as those granted by Asclepius to Thessalos. However, it is not certain if this denies that Nechepsos had divine revelations at all, or simply that Thessalos sees himself as completing the revelation given to Nechepsos. I tend toward the latter option, for the overall view on Nechepsos in the text of Thessalos is positive.

321 Vett. Val., *Anth.* 2.3, 3.11 (Pingree, 3.14 Kroll), 9.1, etc.

allusion to the deity Kneph,[322] an opinion shared by Stephan Heilen, who adds that Kneph was said by Porphyry to be dark blue,[323] is also associated with the color black,[324] and is a didactic authority in the Hermetic literature.[325]

However, Kneph *is* dark blue, but he does not have a dark blue veil. As Heilen notices, such a veil is worn by Demeter in her Homeric hymn, but he does not see the connection that this creates to the famous inscription of the goddess Neith at Saïs in the Delta: "I am all that has been, that is, and that shall be; no mortal has yet raised my veil."[326] Neith was commonly identified with Isis, as most Egyptian goddesses were by the Late Period, and Plutarch interpreted Isis as representing Nature.[327] Also, in both the passages adduced by Heilen that connect Kneph to blackness, Kneph gives this "perfect dark" to Isis: "Pay attention, my son Horus, for you are listening to secret contemplations, which the forefather Kamephis got by listening to Hermes, the scribe of all deeds, ⟨and I⟩ from the ancestor of all things, Kamephis, when he also honored me with the perfect black. And now you yourself from me."[328] The other text adduced by Heilen is an incantation directed at the moon: "I call on you, Lady Isis, whom Agathodaimon permitted to rule in the perfect black."[329] Read together, the two texts seem to identify Kamephis and the Agathodaimon, and Philo of Byblos indeed identifies the latter with Kneph.[330] We must leave aside the question of the identity of Kamephis for the moment, and merely note that in both texts Isis is given "the perfect black," and it is she who acts as the revealer,

322 Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 132.

323 Porph., *Cult. sim.* fr. 360F Smith: τὴν δὲ χροιὰν ἐκ κυανοῦ μέλανος ἔχοντα.

324 SH XXIII, 32; PGM VII.492–493.

325 Heilen, "Some Metrical Fragments from Nechepsos and Petosiris," 49–52.

326 Plut., *Is. Os.* 9 (354C): ἐγώ εἰμι πᾶν τὸ γεγονὸς καὶ ὂν καὶ ἐσόμενον καὶ τὸν ἐμὸν πέπλον οὐδείς πω θνητὸς ἀπεκάλυψεν. Trans. and commentary, Hadot, *The Veil of Isis*, 265f.

327 Plut., *Is. Os.* 53 (372E). Griffiths in his commentary (*Plutarch: De Iside et Osiride*, 502) refers to Apul., *Metam.* 11.5, where Isis is called *rerum naturae parens*.

328 SH XXIII, 32: πρόσεχε, τέκνον Ὧρε, κρυπτῆς γὰρ ἐπακούεις θεωρίας, ἧς ὁ μὲν προπάτωρ Καμῆφις ἔτυχεν ἐπακούσας παρὰ Ἑρμοῦ τοῦ πάντων ἔργων ὑπομνηματογράφου, ⟨ἐγὼ δὲ⟩ παρὰ τοῦ πάντων προγενεστέρου Καμήφεως, ὁπότ' ἐμὲ καὶ τῷ τελείῳ μέλανι ἐτίμησε· νῦν δὲ αὐτὸς σὺ παρ' ἐμοῦ.

329 PGM VII.492–493: ἐπικαλοῦμαί σε, κυρία Ἶσι, ᾗ συνεχώρησεν ὁ Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων βασιλεύειν ἐν τῷ τελείῳ μέλανι. Trans. modified from Morton Smith, who translates "entire black [land]," with no reference to the parallel in *KK* (*PGMT*, 131).

330 On Kneph/Kmeph/Kamephis, see Thissen, "ΚΜΗΦ—Ein bekannter Gott"; NF 3:clxii–clxviii; Bruno H. Stricker, *Camephis* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1975).

not Kamephis/Agathodaimon. Another epiclesis of Isis is highly relevant here, found on a cryptographic 1st to 2nd century CE papyrus, which contains a definite allusion to the saying of Saïs:

[ˆΙσι,] ἁγνὴ Κούρα, σημεῖόν μοι τῶν ἀποτελεσμάτων [δός, ἀ]νακάλυψον τ[ὸ]ν ἱερὸν πέπλον, τίναξόν σου τὴν μέλαι[ναν ..]χην καὶ κίνησον τὸ σύμπλεγμα τῆς ἄρκτου, ἅγιε [...]η πνουν γμ οηρ.	[Isis,] holy maiden, [give] me a sign of the influences of the stars, lift your holy veil, brandish your black [...] and move the constellation of the bear, holy [...], Nun, great power etc.[331]

The invocation is astrological in nature, asking Isis to move the bear, which is the role she has in her manifestation as Sothis,[332] and demanding the *apotelesmata*, the calculated effect of the stars on human lives.[333] The revelation is effectuated by Isis lifting her veil, a clear allusion to the veil of Neith at Saïs, and she is asked to shake or brandish something black that she has, which has unfortunately largely disappeared in a lacuna, possibly τύ]χην or ψύ]χην.[334] Although the chi is marked as certain, one is still tempted to suggest simply μέλαι[ναν] γῆν. The black object is at any rate probably related to the "perfect black," but there is no clarity as of yet as to what this enigmatic expression means; proposals involve the land of Egypt, as the Black Lands, and the art of Alchemy (χημία).[335] Perhaps the most likely proposition identifies the "perfect

331 PGM LVII.16–19. My trans.

332 Note also that the she is also called Isis Sothis in the invocation of the moon (PGM VII.495).

333 Cf. SH VI, 16; NF 3:42 n. 31; Bouché-Leclerq, *L'astrologie grecque*, 348–542.

334 Karl Preisendanz, "Ein Papyrus in griechischer Geheimschrift," *Gnomon* 5 (1929): 457–58, first suggested Psyche, which he understood to here mean Physis, but later changed his mind to Tyche: Karl Preisendanz, *Papyri graecae magicae. Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (3 vols.; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1928–1973), 2:185. Alternatively one could conjecture λόγ]χην, a lance, possibly referring to Athena–Neith, but the word is probably too long. It would however go well together with the verb τινάσσω which is used for brandishing weapons. Preisendanz restores the lacuna in the last line as [Ἰωθ]η, since this otherwise unknown nomen appears in the following line.

335 Black Land (following Plut., *Is. Os.* 33 [364C]): Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 139–42 (also mentions alchemy as an alternative); NF 3:clxviii; Ritner in *PGMT*, 131 n. 70; Jackson, "Κόρη Κόσμου," 117–18. A rite of initiation: Scott 3:478–79. Alchemy: Zielinski, "Hermes und die Hermetik," 356–58; Festugière, "La creation des âmes," 116. Bain, "Μελανῖτις γῆ," 216–21, points out the polysemy of the term. Cf. Elsa Oréal, "Noir parfait," *REG* 111 (1998): 551–65; Christian H. Bull, "Wicked Angels, and the Good Demon: The Origins of Alchemy according to the Physika of Hermes," *Gnosis* 3 (2018): 3–33.

black" with the nocturnal heaven, drawing on a parallel to PGM VII.492–494 in a Greco-Coptic papyrus, which connects Isis' ruling over the "perfect black" with her role as mistress of heavenly gods.[336]

A passage in the famous book 11 of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses,* also known as *The Golden Ass*, makes it likely that the nocturnal sky should be connected to the black veil of Isis. The goddess appears to the narrator in a dream, clothed in a multicolored tunic covered by a "cloak of deepest black, resplendent with dark sheen … along the embroidered border and in the very body of the material there gleamed stars here and there, and in their midst a half moon breathed a flame of fire."[337] Isis is elsewhere also called "dressed in black" (μελανηφόρος), as were some of her priests, and there is iconographical material which shows her dressed in a black robe embroidered with stars and the moon.[338] The fire-breathing moon could perhaps be compared to the dark moist Nature of the *Poimandres*, which "emitted smoke as from fire,"[339] since Nature and the moon are tightly connected in the Hermetica.

We must also point out, in the last line of the invocation quoted above, the Egyptian formula transcribed with Greek letters, "Nun, great power" (πνουν γμ οηρ = *pꜣ Nwn gm wr*). As creator, Neith was tightly connected with Nun, the primeval water. She is "the expanse of water, who made Tanen and who made Nun, and the birth from whom all that exists comes forth."[340] Neith made the primeval hill, Tanen, and even Nun, which is elsewhere most often portrayed as an uncreated precondition for existence. Lastly, we should keep in mind that Necho II was a native of Saïs, and thus Neith would be a natural choice for a divine encounter.

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336 Jacques van der Vliet, "Varia magica coptica," *Aegyptus* 71 (1991): 217–42 at 228–31: ἐπικαλοῦμαι σε, τὴν μεγίστην Ἶσιν, τὴν βασιλεύου[σα]ν ἐν τῷ τελείῳ μέλανι, ἡ δέσποιν[α] ⟨τῶν⟩ θεῶν ⟨τοῦ⟩ οὐρανοῦ, ⟨ἡ⟩ γένεσι⟨ς τοῦ οὐρανίου κόσμου⟩ ("I call on you, greatest Isis, who rules over the perfect black, the queen of heavenly gods, beget⟨ting of the heavenly world?⟩…" My trans.). Papyrus first published by William H. Worrell, "Coptic magical and medical texts," *Orientalia* 4 (1935): 1–37 at 17–37.

337 Apul., *Metam.* 11.3–4: *palla nigerrima splendescens atro nitore … per intextam extremitatem et in ipsa eius planitie stellae dispersae coruscabant earumque media semenstris luna flammeos spirabat ignes.* Trans. John Gwyn Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros: The Isis-Book* (*Metamorphoses, Book XI*) (EPRO 39; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 73–75.

338 Gwyn Griffiths, *Isis-Book*, 128–29; Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 62 and plate XIV.

339 CH I, 4: εἶτα μεταβαλλόμενον τὸ σκότος εἰς ὑγρᾶν τινα φύσιν, ἀφάτως τεταραγμένην καὶ καπνὸν ἀποδιδοῦσαν, ὡς ἀπὸ πυρός.

340 Serge Sauneron, *Le temple d'Esna V: Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna aux derniers siècles du paganisme* (Cairo: IFAO, 1962), 111.

The invocation of Isis (PGM LVII.16–19) makes it likely that the darkly veiled voice from heaven, which reveals astrological knowledge to Nechepsos and seems to elevate him to heaven, is Isis-Neith, who was later equated with Nature by Manilius. She "holds out darkness" (κνέφας προτείνων), a verb which can be taken to mean that she either lifts her veil for Nechepsos, or that she offers him the darkness, just as Isis offered the "perfect black" to Horus in *KK*. In effect, this is likely the same thing, namely the revelation of the secrets of Nature or of the stars. In the Kyme aretalogy of Isis, she is also hailed as the one who "showed the paths of the stars."[341] At any rate, from the context Valens provides it is clear that the result of the revelation was that Nechepsos was able to walk in heaven, among the beings there (οὐρανοβατεῖν).[342] Although the descending dark Nature of the *Poimandres* is not a revealer, it seems that the description of her is somehow related to that of Nechepsos.

3.12 The Importance of Myth in the Hermetic Tradition

Bruce Lincoln has emphasized that besides being narratives that are meant to *explain* and *extol*, myths are also vehicles of *authority*. He has demonstrated, with regard to Upanishadic reinterpretations of Vedic material, that even myths that concern abstract and lofty notions can act to reify and naturalize a certain order of things. Cosmic order becomes the absolute transposition of social order.[343] A relevant question is therefore always whose interests a particular myth or mythological complex serves. In the case of Hermetism, this question gains additional importance since we do not know who the empirical authors were. By delineating the order imposed and categories erected in the Hermetic myths, we may advance a step closer to the empirical authors behind the guise of Hermes.

The question of power is of course of paramount importance in myths concerning the king. We have seen that the Hermetic treatises that deal with the king place the royal souls at the peak of a continuum of increasingly pure

341 Kyme ln. 13: ἐγὼ ἄστρων ὁδοὺς ἔδειξα. Cf. Louis V. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis at Her Temple at Philae* (Hannover: University Press of New England, 1988), 140; Françoise Dunand, *Isis, mère des dieux* (Paris: Errance, 2000), 136; Griffiths, *Isis-Book,* 323; Dieter Müller, *Ägypten und die griechischen Isis-aretalogien* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 39.

342 Cf. Luciano Landolfi, "Οὐρανοβατεῖν: Manilio, il volo e la poesia," *Prometheus* 25 (1999): 151–65.

343 Cf. Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), 3–50; id., *Theorizing Myth* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999); id., *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012).

souls, arranged in layers around the earth and going up to the moon. The royal souls are thus not categorically different from other souls, but they are far more elevated, and they are in touch with the heavenly gods. This ideology could work both for the Egyptian Pharaoh and the Roman Emperor. Both are essentially human, but have a privileged relationship with the gods, often formulated as a filiation. Since the Roman Emperor assumed the symbolic space occupied by the Pharaoh in the iconography and rituals of the Egyptian temples, it is not easy to use this mythical motif as a dating criterium. But we may come closer to the cultural affiliation of the authors: as we have seen, the kingship ideology corresponds closely to the double Pharaonic identity of the king as son of Osiris and Ra. Also, in the discussion of the peculiar qualities of different souls, Horus asks Isis why the people of Egypt are so much wiser than their neighbours. The answer given to him by Isis is highly instructive of how the author viewed the world (SH XXIV, 11–15). The earth, as Isis explains, is a man lying on his back, looking up at heaven, his father. Egypt is placed in the center of this body, as its heart, while the head lies to the south, its feet to the north, the left shoulder to the west and the right shoulder to the east.[344] The qualities of these body-parts are then directly applied to describe the people living in these regions. Since the heart is the traditional seat of intelligence, Egyptians are naturally blessed in this area. Conversely, the head lying to the south confers upon those dwelling there only "handsome heads and beautiful hair."[345] Those living on the right hand, to the east, are good at fighting and "Sagittarian," that is, good archers, while those to the west fight well on their left flank. Those living to the far north, "under [the constellation of] the Bear," are good runners and have strong legs, while those living a little closer to the waist, the Greeks and Italians, have exceptionally nice buttocks, and for this reason have sexual intercourse with other men![346] Only the Greeks and Italians are mentioned by name, and whereas all the other limbs have some admirable quality, the

344 SH XXIV, 11: ἡ γῆ μέσον τοῦ παντὸς ὑπτία κεῖται, καὶ κεῖται ὥσπερ ἄνθρωπος οὐρανὸν βλέπουσα, μεμερισμένη δὲ καθ' ὅσα μέλη ὁ ἄνθρωπος μελίζεται· ἐμβλέπει δ' οὐρανῷ καθάπερ πατρὶ ἰδίῳ, ὅπως ταῖς ἐκείνου μεταβολαῖς καὶ αὐτὴ τὰ ἴδια συμμεταβάλλῃ. καὶ πρὸς μὲν τῷ νότῳ τοῦ παντὸς κειμένην ἔχει τὴν κεφαλήν, πρὸς δὲ τῷ ἀπηλιώτῃ ⟨τὸν⟩ δεξιὸν ὦμον, ⟨πρὸς δὲ τῷ λιβὶ τὸν εὐώνυμον⟩, ὑπὸ τῆς ἄρκτου τοὺς πόδας, ⟨τὸν μὲν δεξιὸν ὑπὸ τὴν οὐράν⟩, τὸν δὲ εὐώνυμον ὑπὸ τὴν κεφαλὴν τῆς ἄρκτου· τοὺς δὲ μηροὺς ἐν τοῖς μετὰ τὴν ἄρκτον· τὰ δὲ μέσα ἐν τοῖς μέσοις.

345 SH XXIV, 12: καὶ τούτου σημεῖόν ἐστι τὸ τοὺς μὲν νοτιαίους τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ κορυφῇ οἰκοῦντας εὐκορύφους καὶ καλλίτριχας· The only other instance of the adjective εὐκόρυφος is in Dionysios of Halicarnassus, where it is used metaphorically for sentences "well wound up, ending well" (LSJ).

346 Ibidem.: τοὺς δὲ μετὰ τούτους καὶ μικρῷ πόρρω, τὸ νῦν Ἰταλικὸν κλίμα καὶ τὸ Ἑλλαδικόν, πάντες δὴ οὗτοι καλλίμηροί εἰσι καὶ εὐπυγότεροι, ὥστε τῇ τοῦ κάλλους τῶν μερῶν τούτων ὑπερβολῇ καὶ τοὺς ἐνταῦθα ἀνθρώπους καταβαίνειν πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀρρένων ὁμιλίαν.

author has nothing positive to say about the Romans and Greeks, other than that they are good at practicing male homosexuality. We do not find much discussion of homosexuality elsewhere in the Hermetica, but sexuality is praised as an image of God in the *Perfect Discourse* (19–21) solely because of the procreative exchange of power between male and female, and it follows that nonreproductive sexuality is not seen as equally laudable. The traditional Egyptian view on homosexuality likewise seems to have been negative, as in the myth where the wicked Seth tries to have his way with Horus: "The Majesty of Seth said to the Majesty of Horus: 'How beautiful are thy buttocks.'"[347] Likewise, the priestly oath precluded a priest from sleeping with boys.[348] The quip about the homosexuality of the Greeks and the Romans is clearly satirical, possibly meant to associate them with Seth, the archetypical foreigner, and should likely be considered a response to the subordinate position of Egyptians in the power relations of Greco-Roman Egypt. As such, the passage does not predate the first century BCE, when the Romans started to exert power over Egypt.

The passage makes it highly unlikely that the doctrine of royal souls was ever meant as Roman Imperial propaganda. The myth does not justify foreign rule over Egypt, since other nations are subordinate to the "holy land:"

πάντα δὲ ταῦτα τὰ μέλη πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ἀργὰ ὄντα ἀργοτέρους ἤνεγκε καὶ τοὺς ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἀνθρώπους.
ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἐν τῷ μέσῳ τῆς γῆς κεῖται ἡ τῶν προγόνων ἡμῖν ἱερωτάτη χώρα, τὸ δὲ μέσον τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου σώματος μόνης τῆς καρδίας ἐστὶ σηκός, τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς ὁρμητήριόν ἐστι καρδία, παρὰ ταύτην τὴν αἰτίαν, ὦ τέκνον, ἐνταῦθα ἄνθρωποι τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ἔχουσιν οὐχ ἧττον ὅσα καὶ πάντες, ἐξαίρετον δὲ τῶν πάντων νοερώτεροί εἰσι καὶ σώφρονες, ὡς ἂν ἐπὶ καρδίας γενάμενοι καὶ τραφέντες.

Since all these parts (the other lands) are sluggish in all other respects, they also make the humans living on them even more sluggish.
But since the most holy land of our ancestors lies in the middle of the earth, and the middle of the human body is the precinct of the heart alone, and the base of the soul is the heart; for this reason, my son, the humans here possess other faculties no worse than those of everyone else, but they are singled out among everyone else as more understanding and temperate, since they are born and raised upon the heart.

SH XXIV, 13

347 Herman te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of His Role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 38.

348 Reinhold Merkelbach, "Ein ägyptischer Priestereid," *ZPE* 2 (1968): 7–30 at 17, 20, 23.

All other peoples have one speciality each, and are otherwise sluggish, whereas Egyptians are exceptionally bright, and also excel in other qualities, since Egypt is the heart of the cosmos, the seat of intelligence and the vital spark. The passage perfectly mirrors the sentiment of the *Perfect Discourse*, that Egypt is the temple of the world and the school of reverence (*Ascl.* 24–25). It is, I think, highly unlikely that anyone else than someone born and raised in Egypt would have written the passage, someone who was deeply committed to the idea of Egypt as the centre of the world and home of the gods.

To place one's own native country in the symbolic centre of the earth is no Hermetic innovation, but a literary device also used earlier by Greek and Roman writers. As Bruce Lincoln points out, the device serves to endow the centre with the best qualities of the surrounding extremities.[349] Thus, Greeks and Romans saw themselves as balancing the excessive "moistness" of Northern Barbarians, and the "dryness" of Southern climates.[350] As Vitruvius wrote: "Truly, within the space of the whole world and the regions of the earth, the Roman people possess the territory at the very middle. For in Italy the people are best balanced in both the members of their body and the aspects of their mind, for vigor and fortitude."[351] To occupy the symbolic centre of the world is thus a way to represent one's own culture as superior to surrounding countries, and grants it the birth-right to dominate the world, as the heart dominates the body.

The Egyptian origin of the passage is further demonstrated by the spatial orientation of the body lying on its back: The head lies towards the south, and thus south is "up" while north is "down," the complete opposite of the orientation of Greeks and Romans, which we have inherited in the modern West. The Egyptians naturally viewed the sources of the Nile as "up," flowing downwards to the north.[352]

The paradox is of course that the most excellent region, Egypt, was conquered by the "buttocks of the world," first Greece—or rather Macedonia—and then Rome. Isis tries to portray this defeat as the result of the overbearing benevolence of the king, probably the king of the universe. Echoing the Pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis* (987a), Isis explains that the climates of all other regions cloud their minds, while the pure and undisturbed air of Egypt facilitates

349 Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 114–18.

350 Cf. Maria M. Sassi, *The Science of Man in Ancient Greece* (Trans. Paul Tucker; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

351 Vitr., *Arch.* 6.1.10–11. Trans. in Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 115, 257 n. 52.

352 Phiroze Vasunia, *The Gift of the Nile: Hellenizing Egypt from Aeschylus to Alexander* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2001), 106–9.

celestial observations. Even the traditional excellence of the Chaldeans in this science is denied here, since the proximity to the rising sun allegedly bewilders them and makes pure observation impossible.[353] Because of her serene climate, Egypt "gives birth, puts in order, and educates; and it is only in these fields she both competes and triumphs, and once victory is imposed she gives the vanquished part of it, just like a good satrap."[354] Egypt has chosen not to compete in war, and has benevolently yielded dominion in this field to other nations. She only gives birth, orders and educates (γεννᾷ καὶ κοσμεῖ καὶ παιδεύει), probably meaning that she brings forth produce, as the "bread basket of the Empire"; she maintains cosmic order through the temples, as is also apparent from the prediction of the *Perfect Discourse*;[355] and she educates the world, having allegedly given the initial impetus to Greek philosophers such as Plato and Pythagoras. The implication is that Egypt, *capta ferum victorem cepit*: Conquered Egypt in turn conquered her rude conqueror Rome, or at least that is the idea our text tries to convey. Another dramatic illustration of this power-relation is found in the Great Paris Magical Papyrus (PGM IV.2446ff.) where Pachrates, the prophet of Heliopolis, astounds the Emperor Hadrian with his magical feats. The historicity of the tale is dubious, yet the patriotic strain of this image of Egypt as the birthplace of magic, in service to Roman imperial power, is instructive.[356]

The mention of a satrap was used by W. Flinders Petrie to argue that the *KK* dated from the fifth century BCE, when such a term still held political significance, though Walter Scott has demonstrated that the term was amply used also in post-Hellenistic literature.[357] Still, the notion of a satrap implies someone who is given power subordinate to the king.[358] This probably refers back to the idea about the earthly rulers who hold power thanks to being emanations

353 SH XXIV, 14: ὁ δὲ ἀπηλιώτης, ὦ μεγαλόδοξε Ὧρε, τῇ συνεχεῖ τοῦ ἡλίου ἀνατολῇ θορυβούμενος καὶ ἐκθερμαινόμενος… οὐδεμίαν εἰλικρινῆ ἐπίστασιν ποιοῦνται τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς γεννωμένων ἀνθρώπων.

354 SH XXIV, 15: τῇ γὰρ συνεχεῖ ἀμεριμνίᾳ γεννᾷ καὶ κοσμεῖ καὶ παιδεύει καὶ μόνον τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐρίζει καὶ νικᾷ καὶ ἐφιστάμενον τὴν ἰδίαν νίκην ὥσπερ σατράπης ἀγαθὸς τοῖς νενικημένοις καὶ ἐπιδίδωσι.

355 Cf. below, chap. 9.4.

356 Richard Gordon, "Reporting the Marvellous: Private Divination in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Envisioning Magic* (ed. Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 65–92 at 78–79.

357 Scott 3:579–80; W.M. Flinders Petrie, *Personal Religion in Egypt Before Christianity* (London: Harper, 1909), 40.

358 Scott solved this by emending to accusative—σατράπην ἀγαθὸν—so that the king gives the victory to his satrap.

of the king (SH XXIV, 2). The message is clear, even though the wording is not: Egypt has conquered the world in the areas of nutrition, religion, and learning, and then gave the conquered part of its abundance. Likewise, the present Greek or Roman colonial rulers would do well to share the power it has accrued with the conquered, remembering that the earthly king only holds power as a satrap of the heavenly king.

What the myth legitimizes is thus Pharaonic kingship, an institution which could accommodate itself to foreign kings—both Macedonian and Roman—as long as they were willing to play the part, that is, to formally appear as the benefactors and heads of the many temples of Egypt. The Ptolemies had followed the example of Alexander in observing the decorum demanded of this role, and played the part of benefactors of the temples, in turn receiving worship within the temples as "temple-sharing gods" (σύνναοι θεοί).[359] Jonathan Z. Smith has characterized this as an *apocalyptic situation*: the foreign king is made aware that any abuse of the decorum of temple and kingship will inevitably bring about cosmic disasters.[360] Smith sees the Babylonian *Akitu*-festival in the Selucid era as a paradigmatic case: In this ritual one first recites the epic of the creation of the world, the *Enuma Elish*, in which Marduk is the paradigm of the king who brings the cosmos into being from chaos. Then the king is ritually humiliated in order to remind him of the catastrophes which would occur if he was to violate the order created by Marduk.[361] Similarly, if we consider SH XXIII–XXVI as a whole, we find an account starting from the creation of the world and ending with the imposition of the current order by the king, who is an emanation of God. As in the ritual humiliation of the *Akitu*-festival, the king is warned about what would happen should he go against the divine ordinances (τὴν τοῦ θείου νόμου παραγγελίαν πεπραχυῖαι): "Such souls the providence above

359 Cf. Arthur D. Nock, "Σύνναος θεός," *HSCP* 41 (1930): 1–62. Recently, Rudolf Strootman, "The Hellenistic Royal Court: Court Culture, Ceremonial and Ideology in Greece, Egypt and the Near East, 336–30 BCE" (Ph.D. diss., Utrecht University, 2007), 19, has argued that the Egyptian antecedents of Ptolemaic kingship has been overrepresented in previous research, for example Dorothy J. Thompson, "The Ptolemies and Egypt," in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (ed. Andrew Erskine; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 105–20; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*.

360 Jonathan Z. Smith, "Wisdom and Apocalyptic," in *Map is not Territory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 67–87 at 73–74; id. "Native Cults in the Hellenistic Period," *HR* 11 (1971): 236–49.

361 Cf. Stefan Maul, "Kosmologie und Kosmogonie in der antiken Literatur: Das sog. babylonische Weltschöpfungsepos *enūma eliš*," in *Cosmologies et cosmogonies dans la littérature antique* (ed. Michael Erler, Therese Fuhrer, and Pascale Derron; EAC 61; Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 2015), 15–49.

banish to the lower regions, according to the degree of their transgressions, just as it can lead up those souls inferior in power and worth from the lower regions to the better and higher ones."[362] The king is warned that his high position in this life is the result of his soul's gradual ascent through the layers of the World-Soul, and that if he now performs his duties well, he will eventually be admitted into the company of gods, whereas if he transgresses he will once more relapse to the lower strata.[363] Such an exhortation to kings have similarities with the Wisdom-genre of royal instructions.

The myth then legitimizes Pharaonic kingship by means of the Pythagorean-Platonic doctrine of metempsychosis. But whose interests are served by the myth? Clearly it was someone with vested interests in this royal ideology. We can approach the question through the different kinds of privileged rebirths, where the best professions for humans are listed:

αἱ δικαιότεραι δ' ὑμῶν καὶ τὴν εἰς τὸ θεῖον μεταβολὴν ἐκδεχόμεναι εἰς μὲν ἀνθρώπους βασιλεῖς δίκαιοι, φιλόσοφοι γνήσιοι, κτίσται καὶ νομοθέται, μάντεις οἱ ἀληθεῖς, ῥιζοτόμοι γνήσιοι, ἄριστοι προφῆται θεῶν, μουσικοὶ ἔμπειροι, ἀστρονόμοι νοεροί, οἰωνοσκόποι σαφεῖς, ἀκριβεῖς θύται καὶ ὁπόσων ἐστὲ καλῶν κἀγαθῶν ἄξιαι·

But the more righteous amongst you can expect the transition towards the divine, and when they turn into humans they become righteous kings, genuine philosophers, founders and lawgivers, truthful seers, genuine rootcutters, the best prophets of the gods, skilful musicians, insightful astronomers, unerring augurs, precise sacrificers, and as many good and honorable (professions) that you are worthy of.

SH XXIII, 41–42

362 SH XXVI, 2: ἄσπερ ἡ ἄνω πρόνοια πρὸς μέτρον τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων εἰς τὰς ὑποκάτω χώρας ἐξορίζει, ὥσπερ καὶ τὰς ὑποδεεστέρας δυνάμει τε καὶ ἀξίᾳ, ἐκ {γὰρ} κατωτέρων ἐπὶ μείζονας καὶ ὑψηλοτέρας ἀνάγει.

363 In SH XXIV, 4–6, an explanation is given as to why different kings have different characters: Their souls are all of the same quality, being from the same stratum, but their attending angels and demons are different, some loving war, others philosophy. This is no doubt connected with the astrological doctrine that the moment of birth decides which personal demons are assigned to the souls. Cf. also Hecataeus of Abdera (apud Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.70) that rulers generally become evil only because of those around them.

These are then the kinds of souls one can find at the top of the human stratum. Some of the professions are political: kings, founders, and lawgivers. The latter two are particularly revered by the Greeks, and not generally found in Egyptian texts, but Herodotus and Hecataeus of Abdera both found great Egyptian founders and lawgivers among the Egyptian Pharaos. However, we can obviously rule out the supposition that our author belongs to any of these three categories. Three of the other professions belong to the sciences and arts—philosophers, musicians and astronomers—while the remaining five belong to the sphere of religion: seers, rootcutters, prophets, augurs and sacrificers. The Egyptian narrative setting and the juxtaposition with priestly professions make it unlikely that the author had in mind the Greek, "secular" version of philosophers, musicians and astronomers. The qualification that the philosophers should be "genuine" demonstrates that what is intended is the Egyptian brand of philosophers, so often evoked in Greek doxographies, namely the priests.[364] Since philosophy is elsewhere said to be an art that belongs to prophets (SH XXIII, 68), presided over by the god Harnebeschênis (SH XXVI, 9), this is fairly obvious.[365] Likewise, the "insightful" (νοεροί) astronomers are likely meant to represent the temple astrologers, responsible for keeping watch of the hours during the night, and the musicians are likely temple-musicians, particularly since being a "secular" musician was not a particularly honorable profession in the Greco-Roman world. Clement of Alexandria mentions both the astrologer and the musician in his description of a procession of Egyptian priests.[366]

Both the prophets and the sacrificers are positions with distinct responsibilities in the daily operations of the temples. Prophet is the Greek designation for the "servant of god" (*ḥm-nṯr*), the high priest of the temple.[367] He was the one who was responsible for going into the innermost sanctum, where the statue of the god stood, to perform the daily liturgies on behalf of the king—to "lay his hands upon the gods."[368]

364 Cf. below, chap. 7.

365 Cf. above, chap. 3.4.

366 Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 6.4. calling them ὡροσκόποι and ᾠδοί. Cf. Walter Otto, *Priester und Tempel: ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte des Hellenismus* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1905–1908), 1:89–92; Serge Sauneron, *Les prêtres de l'ancienne Égypte* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1957), 77ff., 170ff.; Franz Cumont, *L'Égypte des astrologues* (Bruxelles: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1937), 124–26.

367 To be distinguished from the ἀρχιερεύς, who was the chief administrator. Cf. Otto, *Priester und Tempel*, 1:38ff., 1:75ff.

368 SH XXIII, 68: ὁ μέλλων θεοῖς προσάγειν χεῖρας προφήτης. Cf. below, p. 401.

The sacrificers likely refer to the temple personnel we know elsewhere as "calf-sealers," responsible for killing the victuals as representatives of Set, carving them up, and then carrying the meat into the offering chambers.[369] In a Greek context, a *hierothytes* is found in Doric inscriptions, either for ritual assistants or, in the cases where no other priest is mentioned, as the main ritual magistrate.[370] An office of *prothytes* is found in the Imperial Cult, possibly with the function of sacrificing on behalf of the Emperor.[371] Otherwise the term could be nearly synonymous with the more marginal *goês* or *magos*, as an itinerant ritual entrepreneur.[372] But again, our *thytai* at the apex of the ladder of rebirths likely refer to the Egyptian sacrificers.[373]

The term οἰωνοσκόποι can be used for the Roman college of augurs, and in general to the taking of omens from the flight and cries of birds. Egypt did not have a college of augurs in the Roman sense, but birds were especially prevalent among their sacred animals, and it is possible that such people as "the servants of the Ibis and the servants of the Hawk"[374] are meant. These birds were able to give oracles,[375] which it was the duty of the priests to interpret.

The root-cutter is again found in Egyptian temples as "the one who cuts the plants."[376] This is no mere gardener: he also needs ritual knowledge of which gods to invoke when cutting plants, and how to make the sacred incense called *kyphi*. Hermetic works existed that treated the different decans that

369 Cf. Merkelbach, "Ein ägyptischer Priestereid," 12–13; Christian H. Bull, "No End to Sacrifice in Hermetism," in *Philosophy and the End of Sacrifice* (ed. Peter Jackson and Anna-Pya Sjödin; Sheffield: Equinox, 2016), 148, 160 n. 43.

370 Jean Winand, *Les hierothytes. Recherche institutionelle* (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, 1990).

371 Simon R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 211–12.

372 George Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds. A Collection of Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 508; Flint, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, 2:101.

373 Cf. Cumont, *L'Égypte des astrologues*, 130; Otto, *Priester und Tempel*, 1:163f.; 2:295–97, 321.

374 Ray, *Archive of Hor*, 137.

375 Ibid., 144. Cf. Karl-Theodor Zauzich, "Teephibis als Orakelgott," *Enchoria* 4 (1974): 163; Jan Quaegebeur, "Teeïphibis, dieu oraculaire," *Enchoria* 5 (1975): 19–24.

376 Sydney H. Aufrère, *Thot Hermès l'Égyptien: de l'infiniment grand à l'infiniment petit* (Paris: Harmattan, 2007), 273f.; id., "Le rituel de cueillette des herbes médicinales du magicien égyptien traditionelle d'après le Papyrus magique de Paris," in *Encyclopédie religieuse de l'Univers végétal. Croyances phytoreligieuses de l'Égypte ancienne* (ed. Sydney H. Aufrère; 4 vols; Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry-Montpellier, 1999–2005), 2:331–61.

were related to different plants, for medicinal purposes or in order to make amulets.[377]

Finally, the *mantis* is a general designation for a wide array of diviners, who could interpret signs such as the flight of birds, entrails, stars, omens or dreams, or who could enter an ecstatic state.[378] The Greek seer is often itinerant, attaching himself to a wealthy patron. It is impossible to know if our author has a specific type of seer in mind; we are only told that they should be "truthful," which assumes also the existence of false seers.

The list of advantageous rebirths reveals a preoccupation of the author with the diverse staff of Egyptian temples. True, most of the terms, taken by themselves, can likewise refer to Greek or Roman occupations, but their combination and the narrative context clearly point toward Egyptian temples. The list is similar to occupations associated in astrological treatises with specific conjunctions, often of the planets Mercury and Saturn, and we recall the guarantee of Hermes in our text to be of assistance to those who are born in his sign (SH XXIII, 29). Firmicus Maternus, who used Hermetic astrological sources extensively, tells us that Mercury in the ninth house "makes priests, haruspices, augurs, astrologers, astronomers, physicians, etc."[379] The ninth house[380] is the house of the sun-god, and signifies social position and religion. The examples could be multiplied,[381] and I restrict myself to two more from Firmicus: "Saturn in the ninth house will make famous magicians, renowned philosophers, or temple priests noted for their reputations for magic … he also makes seers, diviners, and astrologers."[382] Mercury together with Venus in this house makes

377 Cf. below, chap. 7.3.

378 Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1985), 111–14; Michael Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 22ff. (for the period 800–300 BCE); id., "The Iamidae: A Mantic Family and Its Public Image," in *Practitioners of the Divine: Greek Priests and Religious Officials* (ed. Beate Dignas and Kai Trampedach; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 187–206.

379 Firm. Mat., *Math.* 3.7.19–20: *faciet sacerdotes divinos haruspices augures mathematicos astrologos medicos*. Trans. Rhys Bram, *Ancient Astrology*.

380 Or "places" as they are often called, to differentiate from the zodiacal signs which are the "houses" in which planets have their exaltation.

381 Cf. Cumont, *L'Égypte des astrologues*, 219–48, for an index of Greek and Latin terms. A multitude of occupations are listed synoptically in the notes of this work, using several astrological sources going back to *Liber Hermetis*.

382 3.2.18: *In nono* ⟨*loco*⟩ *Saturnus ab horoscopo constitutus magos* [*ac*] *famosos faciet vel philosophos opinatos vel sacerdotes templorum in magica semper opinione famosos; facit etiam pro qualitate signorum haruspices vates mathematicos vera semper interpretatione*

similar fates: "they will seek a livelihood from some kind of temple duties. They will be priests or diviners or haruspices, astrologers, augurs, magicians, or those who explain omens."[383] The latter list of occupations does not make sense in the context of a Greek or Roman temple; rather, the Hermetic source points towards the Egyptian temple complex.[384]

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fulgentes et quorum responsa sic sint quasi quadam divinitatis auctoritate prolata. Trans. Rhys Bram, *Ancient Astrology*.

383 3.12.16: *... facient et quibus ex templorum officiis vitae praesidia quaerantur. Facient autem aut sacerdotes aut hos, qui in templis constituti futura praedicant aut haruspices aut astrologos aut augures aut magos aut qui omina explicare consueverunt*. Trans. Rhys Bram, *Ancient Astrology*.

384 Cumont, *L'Égypte des astrologues*, 15: "Les auteurs inconnus qui prétendaient interpréter la sagesse d'Hermès-Thoth ou empruntaient les noms du roi Néchepso et de son confident, le prêtre Pétosiris, étaient certainement eux-mêmes des clercs hellénisés, appartenant au sacerdoce indigène, comme le furent aussi l'historien Manéthon et plus tard le philosophe Chérémon." Cf. Wilhelm Kroll, "Kulturhistorisches aus astrologischen Texten," *Klio* 18 (1923): 213–25 at 219. Cf. however below, chap. 7.3.

Conclusion to Part 1

The main goal of the first part has been to show that Hermes Trismegistus was a "figure of memory" stemming directly from the Egyptian "great and great god Thoth, the great lord of Hermopolis," whom both Greeks and Egyptians associated with the traditional Egyptian priesthood, in fact he was its tutelary god. By following the trajectory of the myth of the Egyptian Hermes we also came closer to a dating for the earliest appearance of philosophical treatises attributed to him. While Herodotus mentions the god only briefly, Plato treats him as the fount of Egyptian wisdom, and Aristoxenus sees him as a predecessor of Pythagoras as the inventor of mathematics and astronomy. The letter of Manetho to Ptolemy II Philadelphus, though containing pseudepigraphic tropes and possibly redacted subsequently, indicates that the 3rd century BCE high priest of Helipolis saw his work not only as annals of the kings of Egypt, but as a prophecy derived from thrice-greatest Hermes predicting the start of a new Sothic cycle. This golden era was supposed to start with the accession to the throne of Ptolemy III Euergetes, and the king-list linked him to the reign of Amosis 1461 years earlier, and ultimately back to the gods, the first rulers of Egypt. The letter of Manetho further attests to the myth of two Hermeses, one primordial god and a later deified human, a myth that reappears in the works of Cicero and Diodorus Siculus in the first century BCE.

Around this time there must also have been circulating astrological treatises attributed to Hermes, which perhaps first appeared already in the second century BCE, though here the chronology is sketchy. What has not been noticed earlier, however, is that a teaching of royal souls similar to the one we find in the Hermetic dialogue between Isis and Horus was known by the early astrological authors behind the pseudepigraphic Petosiris and Nechepsos literature—perhaps dating to the second century BCE—and by the early first century CE Roman astrologer Manilius. Around the time of Manilius, Thrasyllus and Dorotheus also associate the name Hermes Trismegistus with astrological treatises. The astrological sources thus indicate that there were already Hermetic treatises dealing with royal souls in the first century BCE. The description in these treatises of Nature as a revealer is furthermore similar to the Nature we find in the *Poimandres* and the *Korê Kosmou*. The name Poimandres most likely stems from the deified king Porremanres, who had a cult in the Fayum in the first century BCE, and when we couple this with the similarities to the hymns of Isidorus to Isis, we may with some probability hypothesize that a *Poimandresgemeinde* was in existence in this period in the Fayum. A comparison between the *Poimandres* and the Hermetic protological system reported

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by Iamblichus shows that the same basic emanatory scheme was formulated in Thebes, where the local deity Kmeph took the place of Poimandres. We cannot know when this Theban Hermetic system first appeared, but should not underestimate the fact that Strabo travelled to Egypt around the turn of the Common Era, and claimed that the priests in Thebes were wont to ascribe both their astronomy and their philosophy to Hermes.[1] The local theology of Amun-Kneph, which continued into the Roman period, like the Hermetica features a hidden god who remains unbegotten, though he manifests himself as a self-begotten hypostasis, who creates the world with the use of his mind.

In the late first or early second century, Plutarch refers to books of Hermes dealing with Egyptian gods as the powers behind celestial bodies such as the sun and Sirius, and Philo of Byblos identifies Hermes Trismegistus with the Phoenician Taautos, whom the Egyptians call Thoth. By the middle of the second century Albinus claimed that Plato had likely taken his doctrine of the soul from the Egyptian Hermes, which indicates that Albinus himself knew about Hermetica dealing with the soul. In the late 170s, Athenagoras links Hermes Trismegistus with a teaching of deified kings, identified as his ancestors, and the divinity of the celestial bodies. These data indicate that there were treatises attributed to Hermes in circulation already in the first century CE, perhaps mainly astrological in nature but at least containing teachings on the soul, and especially royal souls, as well as on Nature, that are included in the philosophical corpus. If the *Poimandres* and the *Korê Kosmou* as we have them had not yet been composed, then at least teachings and mythological motifs later incorporated into these treatises were circulating under the name Hermes Trismegistus. Perhaps these teachings circulated as collections of sentences, which J.-P. Mahé has proposed was the earliest form of Hermetica, though they would probably have been presented in a narrative framework, explaining how the teachings were delivered to Hermes from a superhuman revealer such as Poimandres, Agathodaimon, or Kneph.[2] The teachings and myths in these early treatises, it has been argued, reflect the self-image, and advance the interests of Egyptian priests, who are therefore the most likely authors.

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1 Strab., *Geo.* 17.1.46: λέγονται δὲ καὶ ἀστρονόμοι καὶ φιλόσοφοι μάλιστα οἱ ἐνταῦθα ἱερεῖς· … ἀνατιθέασι δὲ τῷ Ἑρμῇ πᾶσαν τὴν τοιαύτην μάλιστα σοφίαν.

2 Poimandres: CH I and CH XIII, 15; Agathodaimon: CH XII, 8; Kmeph/Kamephis: SH XXIII, 32, though here Hermes is the one who gave Kamephis the teaching of the soul. However, in §§ 4–5 the craftsman of the universe, who is likely the same as Kamephis since the latter is called "forefather of everyone" (§ 32: τοῦ πάντων προγενεστέρου Καμήφεως), as God is the "forefather" (§ 10: προπάτωρ). Cf. Bull, "Wicked Angels, and the Good Demon," 23–24.

PART 2

What is the Way of Hermes?

Introduction to Part 2

Jean-Pierre Mahé and Garth Fowden have altered the scholarly consensus on the Hermetica by proposing that the extant texts reflect different stages on a "Way of Hermes," which would account for their mutual inconsistencies that had previously been seen to preclude any Hermetic community.[1] On the basis of the *Disc.8–9*, which earlier scholars had not had access to, they both postulated a course starting with "general" and "detailed" lectures, going "step-by-step" forward until the candidate was ready to be born again, and thus made divine.

Mahé and Fowden both kept the previous categorization of Hermetic texts as either monistic-optimistic philosophical or dualistic-pessimistic gnostic (or "mixed"), claiming that the Way of Immortality went from world-affirming monism, becoming progressively more "spiritual" and consequentially world-rejecting, until the candidate finally transcended the world altogether. Tage Petersen challenged this scheme in his doctoral dissertation, claiming that the so-called dualistic texts were not dualistic at all, and that the predominant world-view of Hermetism is world-affirming monism.[2] Petersen pointed out how "dualism" is used as a "dogma-finding device" in scholarly literature,[3] and that the question of monism vs. dualism was not necessarily something that the Hermetists were too concerned with, or at least not dogmatic about. Recently Anna van den Kerchove has written extensively on the Way of Hermes, agreeing with Mahé and Fowden that the general and detailed discourses precede the rebirth stage, though she does not address the issue of dualism and monism.[4] Roelof van den Broek has objected that there is "no irrefutable proof" for the existence of an initiatory way of Hermes, but then again there seldom is irrefutable proof in the realm of textual hermeneutics.[5] We shall see that the texts do in fact presume and refer to a set progression in the different treatises, and often indicate their own position in the course.

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1 Mahé, "La voie d'immortalité"; id. "L'hermétisme alexandrin," 344–45; HHE 1:132, 2:455–56; Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 111f.

2 Petersen, "Alt kommer jo på øjet an, der ser"; id., "Hermetic Dualism?" 95–105.

3 In this regard Petersen follows the article of Bianchi, "Dualism," 4:506–12.

4 Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 65–72.

5 Van den Broek, "Hermetic Literature 1: Antiquity," 488. Cf. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Altered States of Knowledge: The Attainment of Gnosis in the Hermetica," *IJPT* 2 (2008): 128–63 at 135.

In the following, we shall further explore the notion of a "way" in Hermetism. In contrast to Mahé and Fowden, we shall postulate that the itinerary went from a stage in which the candidate was expected to alienate him- or herself from the world, towards becoming one with the world in the rebirth. Thereafter we shall show that the rebirth is not identical to the visionary ascent of the *Disc.8–9*, but rather a prerequisite for it. In order to demonstrate this, we shall plot our course by assigning a certain number of Hermetic treatises to the main stages of the way. This was considered to be impossible by Mahé,[6] but as we shall see, that was because of his presupposition that the Way went from monism to dualism.

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6 HHE 1:132.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction to the Way of Hermes

4.1 Testimonies to the Existence of a "Way"

We should first take notice that there is nothing called the "way of Hermes" in our sources; this is an abstraction created in scholarly literature, and the closest we come is when Iamblichus states that Hermes has led the way on the path of theurgy.[1] The goal of theurgy is ascent and indeed we find in the Hermetica mention of a "way leading upwards,"[2] which the souls must follow in order to reach God, the good,[3] the beautiful[4] or truth.[5] The diversity of terms used makes it unlikely that the "way" here is a technical term; rather, it is a metaphor like "way of life": if life is a journey, then sticking to one specific path implies determination and the promise of a safe arrival at the desired destination.[6]

A more technical use of the term seems to be found in the *Disc.8–9*, which is the point of departure from which Mahé and then Fowden derived their thesis. After Tat has attained his visionary ascent, Hermes instructs him to write a commemorative stela, which should not be available to anyone who has not gone through the preliminary stages of general and detailed teachings, and then undergone rebirth: "But going step by step he enters the way of immortality, and in this manner he comes into the understanding (νόησις) of the Eighth which reveals the Ninth."[7] We cannot be sure if the term "the way of immortality" is a technical term here either, as the expression does not recur in other texts, but at least it demonstrates that there is a set course with several

1 Iamb., *Myst*. 8.5: ὑφηγήσατο δὲ καὶ ταύτην τὴν ὁδὸν Ἑρμῆς.

2 CH IV, 11: εὑρήσεις τὴν πρὸς τὰ ἄνω ὁδόν. Cf. Mahé, "Mental Faculties," 75.

3 CH XI, 21: τὸ δὲ δύνασθαι γνῶναι καὶ θελῆσαι καὶ ἐλπίσαι, ὁδός ἐστιν εὐθεῖα ἰδία τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φέρουσα καὶ ῥᾳδία.

4 CH VI, 5–6: ἐὰν περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ζητῇς, καὶ περὶ τοῦ καλοῦ ζητεῖς. μία γάρ ἐστιν εἰς αὐτὸ ἀποφέρουσα ὁδός, ἡ μετὰ γνώσεως εὐσέβεια… ὁδεύσαντες τὴν περὶ τῆς εὐσεβείας ὁδόν.

5 SH II B, 5: αὕτη γὰρ μόνη ἐστίν, ὦ τέκνον, ἡ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ὁδός, ἣν καὶ οἱ ἡμέτεροι πρόγονοι ὥδευσαν καὶ ὁδεύσαντες ἔτυχον τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. σεμνὴ αὕτη ὁδὸς καὶ λεία, χαλεπὴ δὲ ψυχῇ ὁδεῦσαι ἐν σώματι οὔσῃ. This way is implicitly going upwards: ibid., 4: ποῦ αὐτὴν δεῖ ἀναπτῆναι; ibid., 8: οὗτός ἐστιν, ὦ τέκνον, ὁ τῆς ἐκεῖσε ὁδοῦ ἀγωγός.

6 Cf. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), 45, 90.

7 NHC VI,6 63,9–14: ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲃⲁⲑⲙⲟⲥ ⲉⲩⲙⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲉⲩⲛ̄ⲛⲏⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲑⲓⲏ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲙⲟⲩ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲧ̀ⲣⲉ ⲉⲩⲛ̄ⲛⲏⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲧⲙⲟⲛⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲑⲟⲅⲇⲟⲁⲥ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲱⲙ̄ⲣ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉⲛⲛⲁⲥ.

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steps[8] which one must follow in order to reach the Hermetic goal of salvation. Such steps are also mentioned elsewhere in the treatise, where we find a requirement for the initiand to recall each of the steps of instruction,[9] so that spiritual advancement comes step by step and brings about understanding (νόησις).[10] The sequence is important: First one must enter the way of immortality, and follow it step by step, and only then may one eventually attain the ascent. To enter onto the way is thus a conscious decision, which sets one apart from other people. Likewise, the *Poimandres* distinguishes between "those who wander astray"[11] on the "way of death,"[12] and those who accept the narrator as a guide (καθοδηγὸς), and thus—by way of implicit antonym to the way of death—they follow the way of immortality.[13] The latter is imagined as a community of people whom Hermes teaches how to be saved, into whom he sows seeds of wisdom, and whom he nourishes with ambrosial water. At the evening they sing prayers of thanksgiving together.[14] The journey-metaphor continues in the concluding prayer of thanksgiving, in which the narrator prays to God "not to stray from the knowledge of our essence,"[15] and testifies: "I go towards life and light."[16] As in *Disc.8–9*, where Tat is said to have spiritual brothers,[17] we are thus led to envision a community of people who see themselves as fellow

8 NHC VI 52,10–13, 54,27–30, 56,27–31, 63,9–11; William Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 124 n. 372; HHE 1:89f.

9 NHC VI 52,10–13: "For I told you when I first made the promise (to lead Tat into the Eighth and Ninth), I said: 'If you remember each one of the steps'" (ⲁⲓϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲛ̀ⲧⲁⲣⲓ̀ⲣⲁⲣⲭⲉⲓ ⲙ̀ⲡⲉⲣⲛⲧ· ⲁⲓϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲱϫⲉ ⲕ̀ⲣ̀ⲡⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲙ̀ⲡⲟⲩⲁ ⲡⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̀ⲛ̀ⲃⲁⲑⲙⲟⲥ).

10 NHC VI 54,27–30: "the edification comes to you step by step; let understanding come to you and you will be taught" (ⲡⲕⲱⲧ ⲉⲣⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲃⲁⲑⲙⲟⲥ· ⲛⲁⲣⲉⲧⲛⲟⲏⲥⲓⲥ ⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲕⲛⲁⲧⲥⲉⲃⲟ). I follow Mahé in reading ⲧⲥⲉⲃⲟ as passive, cf. HHE 1:98, or rather ingressive, cf. Benton Layton, *A Coptic Grammar* (2d ed.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 135 (§ 174).

11 CH I, 28: οἱ συνοδεύσαντες τῇ πλάνῃ.

12 CH I, 29: τῇ τοῦ θανάτου ὁδῷ ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδεδωκότες.

13 Cf. CH I, 28: μεταλάβετε τῆς ἀθανασίας.

14 CH I, 29: ἐγὼ δὲ ἀναστήσας αὐτοὺς καθοδηγὸς ἐγενόμην τοῦ γένους, τοὺς λόγους διδάσκων, πῶς καὶ τίνι τρόπῳ σωθήσονται, καὶ ἔσπειρα αὐτοῖς τοὺς τῆς σοφίας λόγους καὶ ἐτράφησαν ἐκ τοῦ ἀμβροσίου ὕδατος. ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἡλίου αὐγῆς ἀρχομένης δύεσθαι ὅλης, ἐκέλευσα αὐτοῖς εὐχαριστεῖν τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἀναπληρώσαντες τὴν εὐχαριστίαν ἕκαστος ἐτράπη εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν κοίτην.

15 CH I, 32: αἰτουμένῳ τὸ μὴ σφαλῆναι τῆς γνώσεως τῆς κατ' οὐσίαν ἡμῶν ἐπίνευσόν μοι. My trans.

16 CH I, 32: διὸ πιστεύω καὶ μαρτυρῶ· εἰς ζωὴν καὶ φῶς χωρῶ.

17 NHC VI 52,27–53,15.

travelers on the way of immortality, a way conceived of as a mixture of instruction and religious rituals.[18]

4.2 The Way of Thoth

It has long been recognized that the expression "way of life," or "way of God," can be found in both Jewish[19] and Egyptian sapiential literature,[20] denoting general ethical conduct and the adherence to a god. Jean-Pierre Mahé has already shown the similarities between the way of life found in the wisdom texts and the way of Hermes.[21] We should like to dwell further on the texts found in the tomb of Petosiris, chief prophet of Thoth in Hermopolis at the beginning of the Macedonian domination of Egypt.[22] These texts admonish their readers, "every prophet, every priest, every scribe, every wise man, who enter this necropolis and see this tomb,"[23] to enter onto the way of God:

> Come, let me lead you to the way of life,
> That you may reach the abode of generations,
> Without coming to grief!...
> Serving God is the good way,
> Blessed is he whose heart leads him to it!
> I speak to you of what happened to me,

18 Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 19–180, emphasizes that there is a ritual aspect also to the instruction.

19 *Prov.* 8.20: "I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice"; the "paths of uprightness" are contrasted to the "ways of darkness." (2.13–14). *Sap.* 5.6–7: Some "strayed from the way of truth," on "paths of lawlessness and destruction," as opposed to the "way of the Lord." Cf. also Christian use in *Act.* 9.2, 18.25, 19.9 & 23, 22.4, 24.14 & 22; esp. 24.14: "according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our ancestors."

20 Bernard Couroyer, "Le chemin de vie en Égypte et en Israël," *RB* 56 (1949): 412–32; id., "Le 'Dieu des Sages' en Égypte, I," *RB* 94 (1987): 574–603; id., "Le 'Dieu des Sages' en Égypte, II," *RB* 95 (1988): 70–91; Didier Devauchelle, "Le chemin de vie dans l'Égypte ancienne," in *Sagesses de l'Orient ancien et Chrétien* (ed. René Lebrun; Paris: Beauchesne, 1993), 91–122; Robert K. Ritner, "Khababash and the Satrap Stela—A Grammatical Rejoinder," *ZÄS* 107 (1980): 135–7.

21 HHE 2:295–300.

22 Probably in the last quarter of the fourth century, cf. Nadine Cherpion, Jean Pierre Corteggiani, and Jean-François Gout, *Le Tombeau de Pétosiris à Touna el-Gebel* (Cairo: IFAO, 2007), 2. Cf. Couroyer, "Le chemin de vie," 416–22; Devauchelle, "Le chemin de vie," 112–19.

23 Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3:45.

I let you perceive the plan of God,
I let you discern knowledge of his might!
I have come here to the city of eternity,
Having done the good upon earth,
Having filled my heart with God's way,
From my youth until this day![24]

As in the Hermetica, following the way of God entails serving the deity with reverence:

Petosiris 62, ln. 2; 116, ln. 3–4 Serving God is the good way, Blessed is he whose heart leads him to it!	CH VI, 5 Only one road travels from here to the beautiful—reverence combined with knowledge.[25]

The metaphor of a way of God or way of Thoth is repeated numerous times in the inscriptions of the priestly family, and it is made clear that following this way entails ethical conduct, as well as divine service. As a recompense, the follower of Thoth will reach the afterlife as a justified soul:

– Si je suis arrivé ici, à la ville d'éternité, c'est que j'ai fait le bien sur la terre … (inscr. 116, ln. 4),
– j'ai fait tout cela, en pensant que j'arriverais à Dieu après ma mort (inscr. 116, ln. 6),
– tu as marché sur la voie de ton maître Thot; aussi, après avoir accordé que ces faveurs t'échussent sur terre, il te gratifiera de faveurs semblables après (ta) mort (inscr. 61, ln. 31).[26]

The favour of God will also make itself felt in this life. Thoth will show his beneficence to the one who follows his path, by enriching him and guiding his heart:

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24 Inscr. 116, ln. 3–6; I have modified the translation of Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3:50, from "every scholar," to "every scribe, every savant" following Gustave Lefebvre, *Tombeau de Petosiris* (3 vols.; Cairo: IFAO, 1923–1924), 1:43, who points out (n. 5) that the latter term, *rḫ-ḥt*, is translated ἱερογραμματεύς in Canopus ln. 14.

25 μία γάρ ἐστιν εἰς αὐτὸ ἀποφέρουσα ὁδός, ἡ μετὰ γνώσεως εὐσέβεια. Trans. Copenhaver.

26 Lefebvre, *Tombeau*, 1:41.

– Père, père, écoute ce qui est dit à ton sujet par tout le monde, depuis que tu marches sur la voie de ton Dieu Thot, tant sont grands les bienfaits dont Il t'a comblé! Il t'a enrichi en toutes bonnes choses. Il a conduit ton coeur à faire ce qu'il aime: c'est là l'oeuvre qu'il a faite pour celui qu'il chérit.[27]

Certainly the way of Thoth is not, as the way of life mentioned in some wisdom-texts, merely a designation for good ethical conduct. It denotes something more, namely a reverence paid to Thoth, who will then act as a guide and a patron for the heart of his devotee. Is the way then synonymous to pursuing a priesthood in the cult of the deity? Perhaps, although the exhortation to all bypassers to follow the way makes this an unlikely proposition. Probably what is meant is some form of personal piety towards the god, in which the temple and priesthood would play some role, perhaps by providing oracles from the deity in return for offerings and, in the case of wealthy clients, patronage. In the Ptolemaic period we know of lay associations with some connections to the temples in the Fayum.[28] Perhaps similar groups existed in Hermopolis, but our evidence is insufficient to say for sure.

We notice also that following the path makes one renowned in one's community, and indeed the biographical inscriptions of Petosiris make his acts of benevolence to his community comparable to those of kings: he has repaired and established temples, and he has protected his city. A testimony to his renown can be seen from later Greek graffiti on the tomb, among which is a verset, probably from the 3rd–2nd century BCE:[29]

Πετόσειριν αὐδῶ τὸ(ν) κατὰ χθονὸς νέκυν,	I invoke Petosiris, a corpse in the underworld,
νῦν δ' ἐν θεοῖσι κείμενον· μετὰ σοφῶν σοφός.	yet now reposing among the gods, a sage among sages.[29]

Perhaps this grafitto was made by one of those priestly visitors whom the family of Petosiris addressed from the grave, calling on them to follow the way of Thoth? Or perhaps the visitor was Greek, with a native guide who explained to him the Hieroglyphic texts? At any rate the graffito testifies that someone, probably more familiar with Greek than with Egyptian, knew of Petosiris'

27 Inscr. 58, ln. 21ff.: Lefebvre, *Tombeau*, 1:90. Cf. further inscr. 61 ln. 13ff. and ln. 30–31 (ibid., 1:101, 105), and more examples in Devauchelle, "Le chemin de vie," 113–15.

28 Françoise de Cenival, *Les associations religieuses en Égypte d'après les documents démotiques* (2 vols.; Cairo: IFAO, 1972).

29 Lefebvre, *Tombeau*, 1:24. My trans.

claim to have attained a blessed afterlife due to his wisdom and privileged relationship with Thoth. Unfortunately we have little information elsewhere to inform us of the later trajectory of the way of Thoth among the successors of Petosiris in Hermopolis,[30] until we reach the papyri of Theophanes about 600 years later, in the early fourth century CE. Here the chief prophet Anatolius is still organizing the festivals in honor of Thoth, whom he refers to as Hermes Trismegistus in one of his letters.[31]

That the notion of a way of Thoth was not limited to Hermopolis is however clear from the previously mentioned archive of Hor, which contains the writings of two homonymous officials of the Ibis-cult in Saqqara whose careers spanned the first half of the second century BCE.[32] One Hor, hereafter called the Memphite, was the secretary of another Hor from Sebennytos in the Delta. This Memphite Hor wrote: "in the name of the great god Thoth (whose) might is known (in) every matter which concerns the Ibis (in) his heart … He who walks upon the path named, it is favourable for his life for a long time, while benefit is performed for the Ibis."[33] John Ray, who edited the archive, cautiously suggested that the repeated mention of the path of Thoth might refer to an initiation, especially in light of the statement by Hor, this time probably the Sebennyte: "I spend (my) days (in) the House-of-Thoth, petitioning upon the (things) which the great god Thoth has said. I have not abandoned his path."[34] Again we find the dichotomy between those who follow the path, who will prosper from their adherence, and those who stray from the path. What is conceived to happen to the latter can be seen from the glimpse we get of a quarrel that the Memphite had with some prominent men, whom he proceeds to curse: "those whom he (Thoth) made pre-eminent (are) the ones who abandoned the path: Thoth, the lord of ⟨lifetime⟩, and his strength, may they perform the slaughtering (of) his progeny! Disaster in their midst!"[35] We need not assume that these men were initiates of Thoth, although that is a possibility,

30 Roman tombs were built around that of Petosiris, but according to Dieter Kessler, "The Personality of Petosiris and his Cult," in *Horizon: FS M.A. Nur el-Din* (ed. Basem S. El-Sharkaway; Cairo: Supreme Council of Antiquities Press, 2009), 321–38 at 337 n. 56, this was because the service at the tomb of Petosiris had ceased.

31 John Matthews, *The Journey of Theophanes: Travel, Business, and Daily Life in the Roman East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 21–22; Brinley R. Rees, *Papyri from Hermopolis, and Other Documents of the Byzantine Period* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1964), 2–7. Cf. also Bull, "Hermes between Pagans and Christians," 215.

32 Ray, *The Archive of Ḥor*, 117–24.

33 Text 16, r.1–6. Cf. Ray, *The Archive of Ḥor*, 61–3.

34 Text 23, r.6–8. Cf. Ray, *The Archive of Ḥor*, 88–9.

35 Text 17, 6–9. Cf. Ray, *The Archive of Ḥor*, 65, 135.

but rather we see a familiar stratagem of Egyptian curses: one slanders the victims by denouncing them as transgressors against the gods.[36] Nevertheless, the curse shows that it is conceived as a grave offense to stray from the way of Thoth, which would imply some sort of apostasy, which again presupposes a corporate identity with mutual bonds of loyalty. Of course, we know that such an association existed, since we have "the minutes of a session of the Council of the ibis-cult, held in the temple of Ptah at Memphis on 1 June 172 BC."[37] The question here, as in the Petosiris-texts, is whether this community included anyone other than the priests.

Finally, we must mention the so-called *Book of Thoth*, a Demotic dialogue between "the one of Heseret," probably Thoth, and "the one who loves knowledge," his disciple.[38] Several fragmentary manuscripts testify to this book, dating from the first century BCE to the second century CE.[39] We will have more to say about this text elsewhere, but presently we should point out the sole reference in this work to what seems to be the way of Thoth:

> May one open for me the roads of going (to) the House of Life … May one open for me the path of going-and-coming. // Let me show the path with my own feet. Let me hurry to (or 'look to') the love of the great god, the Lord of Hedenus [= Thoth] … Let me hurry to the (hieroglyphic) signs of the foremost one under the wings (of Thoth). Let me hurry to (or 'look to') the Ibis who is at the top of his brush (?), he who has ordered the earth with his measuring-scale plates (or 'palette'). Let me see the baboon who has joined with the snake, he who has judged the earth with

36 František Lexa, *La magie dans l'Égypte antique* (Paris: Geuthner, 1925), 1:56–58; Samson Eitrem, "Die rituelle ΔΙΑΒΟΛΗ," *SO* 2 (1924): 43–61.

37 Ray, *The Archive of Ḥor*, 80.

38 Richard Jasnow and Karl-Theodor Zauzich, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth: A Demotic Discourse on Knowledge and Pendant to the Classical Hermetica* (2 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 1:133, note that some manuscripts have "the one who praises knowledge," *Ḥs-rḫ*, instead of *Ḥsr.t*. Cf. also id., "A Book of Thoth?" in *Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists. Cambridge, 3–9 September 1995* (ed. Christopher Eyre; OLA 82; Louvain: Peeters, 1998), 608–18; and now id. *Conversations in the House of Life: A New Translation of the Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), 18–19; Martin Stadler, *Einführung in die ägyptische Religion ptolemäisch-römischer Zeit nach den demotischen religiösen Texten* (EQÄ 7; Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012), 177–87; Richard Jasnow, "Between Two Waters: The Book of Thoth and the Problem of Greco-Egyptian Interaction," in *Greco-Egyptian Interactions: Literature, Translation, and Culture, 500 BC–AD 300* (ed. Ian Rutherford; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 317–56.

39 Jasnow and Zauzich, *Conversations*, 11–12, place them in Dime and Tebtunis in Fayum.

> his scale. May I proceed from the eclipse as a servant of Isten. I will make a glorification of the secrets of Thoth. May I enter therein, namely, the character (?) of all the ibises, that I betake myself to the place of the servants of Thoth. May I see heaven.[40]

As the editors of the text point out, the imagery here is all about gaining access to secret knowledge, to come before Thoth where he sits perched as an ibis on top of his scribal brush, in the House of Life. The text reflects an initiatory "ritual (of) entering the Chamber of Darkness," which refers both to an actual room in the House of Life of individual temples, and a portion of the underworld.[41] We will not here dwell any further on the content of the *Book of Thoth*, only note the similarity with the Greek Hermetica with regards to the dialogical structure between master and disciple, and the mention of a way of Thoth which will lead the candidate to see divine secrets and to see heaven, which will also have beneficial consequences for the afterlife.[42] Since some manuscripts date from the Roman period, we can be sure that the way of Thoth was still known in priestly circles at the time when the Hermetica were written.

4.3 The Order of the Tradition

As mentioned above, the didactic course set out by *Disc.8–9* is that the *Genikoi* and the *Diexodikoi* teachings are preliminary to the rebirth, which again is necessary to reach an understanding of the Eighth and the Ninth. This tells us that CH XIII, *On the Rebirth*, precedes *Disc.8–9* in the cursus.[43] Unfortunately, the *Genikoi* and the *Diexodikoi* treatises can in general not be securely identified.[44]

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40 Jasnow and Zauzich, *Conversations*, 123–25. This translation is somewhat different from their first one, in id., *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth*, 1:241–42 (and cf. p. 60).

41 Ibid., 36–37. Joachim F. Quack, *Einführung in die altägyptische Literaturgeschichte III: Die demotische und gräko-ägyptische Literature* (EQÄ 3; 2d ed.; Münster: Lit, 2009), 160–68, is of the opinion that the whole book should be called "Das Ritual zum Eintritt in die Kammer der Finsternis," since Thoth is referred to in the third-person in the text, and therefore can not be the interlocutor. Cf. also Joachim F. Quack, "Die Initiation zum Schreiberberuf im Alten Ägypten," *SAK* 36 (2007): 249–95 at 261. However, in the Greek Hermetica we find Hermes speaking about his homonymous divine predecessor.

42 Cf. Jean-Pierre Mahé, "Preliminary Remarks on the Demotic *Book of Thoth* and the Greek *Hermetica*," *VC* 50 (1996): 353–63.

43 *Pace* van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 324–58; Mahé, passim. Cf. below, chap. 6.

44 Cf. Christian Wildberg, "The *General Discourses* of Hermes Trismegistus," in *Handschriften- und Textforschung heute: Zur Überlieferung der griechischen Literatur. Festschrift für Dieter*

In order to get closer to the actual practice of the way of Hermes as a concrete *paideia*, one should be wary of drawing together bits and pieces haphazardly from different Hermetica. If there was in fact a progress with a set curriculum, we should expect to find treatises that would suit the pedagogical needs of each stage. Of course, every treatise we are in possession of need not have belonged to a specific pedagogical stage. Some may have been written as exoteric texts, to be spread to a larger audience, or as supplementary texts expounding on specific topics of interest to Hermetists but not necessarily integrated in the *cursus*. Likewise, we should keep in mind that our surviving Hermetica are far from representing a complete picture. Several treatises of great importance may still be missing, just as the crucial *Disc.8–9* came to us by chance with the Nag Hammadi discovery. Furthermore, there is no reason to expect a great uniformity of content. The texts are less concerned with doctrinal orthodoxy than with spiritual growth, and we should expect local variants to develop their own idiosyncrasies, as disciples often tend to expound upon the teachings of their masters once they themselves become masters of the tradition.[45] Iamblichus explains the variety of Hermetic doctrines by referring to a multitude of first principles handed down by tradition, from the "sacred scribes of old" to the living sages, but insists that "the whole gamut, however, has been covered by Hermes."[46] The implication is that the cohesiveness of diverse doctrines is secured by attribution to Hermes.

Another explanation for the apparent incohesion of the Hermetica can be found in the warning of Asclepius to King Ammon (CH XVI): "My teacher, Hermes—often speaking to me in private, sometimes in the presence of Tat—used to say that those reading my books would find their organization very simple and clear when, on the contrary, it is unclear and keeps the meaning of its words concealed."[47] Asclepius then goes on to lament the future

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Harlfinger aus Anlass seines 70. Geburtstages (ed. Christian Brockmann et al.; Serta Graeca 30; Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2014), 137–46.

45 Cf. CH XVI, where Asclepius develops doctrines he first learned from Hermes.

46 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.1: ἔν τε γράμμασι τῶν ἀρχαίων ἱερογραμματέων πολλαὶ καὶ ποικίλαι δόξαι περὶ τούτων φέρονται, καὶ παρὰ τοῖς ἔτι ζῶσι τῶν σοφῶν τὰ μεγάλα οὐχ ἁπλῶς ὁ λόγος παραδίδοται. λέγω δὴ οὖν ὡς πολλῶν οὐσιῶν ὑπαρχουσῶν καὶ τούτων διαφερουσῶν πάμπληθες, πολλαὶ παρεδόθησαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἀρχαὶ διαφόρους ἔχουσαι τάξεις, ἄλλαι παρ' ἄλλοις τῶν παλαιῶν ἱερέων· τὰς μὲν οὖν ὅλας Ἑρμῆς ἐν ταῖς … βίβλοις … τελέως ἀνέδειξεν. Trans. Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell. Cf. Athanassiadi, *La lutte pour l'orthodoxie*, 161.

47 CH XVI, 1: Ἑρμῆς μὲν γὰρ ὁ διδάσκαλός μου, πολλάκις μοι διαλεγόμενος καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ τοῦ Τὰτ ἐνίοτε παρόντος, ἔλεγεν ὅτι δόξει τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσί μου τοῖς βιβλίοις ἁπλουστάτη εἶναι ἡ σύνταξις καὶ σαφής, ἐκ δὲ τῶν ἐναντίων ἀσαφὴς οὖσα καὶ κεκρυμμένον τὸν νοῦν τῶν λόγων ἔχουσα. Trans. Copenhaver.

translation of the teachings of Hermes into Greek, which will cause even greater confusion. There were thus two impediments to understanding the books of Hermes, in the perspective of the author of CH XVI, who seems to have had a good grasp of Hermetic teachings: the meaning of the words is enigmatic, and the books are not arranged in the correct order (σύνταξις).[48] The notion of a set order of the cursus is confirmed by *Disc.8–9*, where Hermes states that the "order (τάξις) of the tradition" will lead the candidate to be introduced to the Eighth and the Ninth, if he "recalls each of the steps."[49] Our task will thus be to reconstruct a likely order of texts that would lead towards rebirth and the subsequent introduction to the Eighth and the Ninth, notwithstanding the fact that we doubtlessly lack several pieces of the puzzle.

As we have seen, to enter the way of Hermes entails a conscious decision, which places the candidate apart from most people who follow the "way of death" according to the *Poimandres*. The first thing we should look for in our corpus is thus texts dealing with conversion. These protreptic texts will diagnose the problems facing those who are not inducted into the way, and convince them to join by outlining the rewards to be gained and the dangers of continuing their present way of life. Once the decision is taken to join, the candidate will initially have to go through certain basic teachings. This stage will be shown to consist of self-knowledge, which is to learn that one's essential self (οὐσιώδης) is foreign to the body it inhabits, and can eventually return to whence it came. The next stage deals with the world, for by knowing oneself, one also knows the world, namely that it is as foreign to the essential human as is the body. Over a period of time the candidate is therefore admonished to alienate himself from the world, in order to be born again.

The rebirth is the essential rite of initiation, in which the candidate is brought out of his body and filled with ten divine powers that are henceforth his new, immaterial, and immortal body. This crucial turning point has often been misunderstood, in my view, and should not in fact be seen as an anticosmic, gnostic idea. True, the candidate is meant to dissociate from his body, and to alienate himself from the world, but the next step is generally overlooked: in the closing hymn of the rebirth, the candidate is *reintegrated* with the world. He becomes identical to Aion, the cosmic deity. Only by thus becoming like God is one able to see God, and that is precisely what takes place in the final stage. Having been born again, the candidate is ready to be inducted into the Eighth and Ninth sphere. After this *visio beatifica*, he remains on earth,

48 It is however also possible that the *syntaxis* refers to the composition of the individual works, not the order of the books.

49 NHC VI,*6* 52,7: ⲧⲁⲓ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲧⲁϫⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲁⲣⲁⲇⲟⲥⲓⲥ; 52,12–13: ⲉⲫϫⲉ ⲕ̄ⲡⲓⲛⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲁ ⲡⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲃⲁⲑⲙⲟⲥ.

but his mind is henceforth perpetually singing hymns to the unbegotten god. That is the culmination of the way, which will secure a blessed existence also after the body finally expires. We must assume that the candidate can now act as a master and in turn receive new applicants who wish to set out on the way of Hermes. In the following we shall therefore follow the way step by step—conversion, self-knowledge, knowledge of the world, rebirth, and ascent—and place some treatises on the different stages of teaching.

4.4 Conversion

Our main sources for the Hermetic view of conversion are CH I, 26–29, CH IV, 4, and CH VII, but while CH I and IV only give a mythical account of the call for conversion in a distant past, CH VII may have been used as a protreptic tool to convince outsiders to join the group.[50] As already mentioned, Poimandres commands Hermes to become a guide (CH I, 26: καθοδηγὸς) for those who are worthy, so that the human race, which I argued was then yet in its Bronze Age, could be saved.[51] Hermes then went out to proclaim (CH I, 27: κηρύσσειν) the virtue of reverence and knowledge, in a diatribe[52] calling for the ignorant to sober up, and to convert (CH I, 28: μετανοήσατε) from the path of death. Of those who heard Hermes proclaiming his message, some derided him and kept following the way of death, whereas those who accepted his message fell to their knees. Hermes only became a guide for the latter, and taught them how to become saved. The text does not worry further about those who belong to the way of death.

There is no universal message of salvation in Hermetism then, on the contrary, those who are worthy are frequently described as being few in number.[53] However, oddly enough the conversion of the few worthy ones will lead to the salvation of the human race (CH I, 26).[54] This must either mean that the human race properly speaking is considered to consist only of the worthy few,

50 Although as Pierre Hadot pointed out, all written dialogues are paraenetic and protreptic: they "work from afar" as propaganda, attracting adherents to the school. Cf. Hadot's preface to Marie-Dominique Richard, *L'enseignement oral de Platon* (2d ed.; Paris: Cerf, 2005), 13.

51 CH I, 26: οὐχ ὡς πάντα παραλαβὼν καθοδηγὸς γίνῃ τοῖς ἀξίοις, ὅπως τὸ γένος τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος διὰ σοῦ ὑπὸ θεοῦ σωθῇ; On worthiness, cf. FR 3:109; Apul., *Metam.* 11.21: *magni numinis dignatione destinatus*; Iobacchoi inscription (SIG 1109.31); Iamb., *Vita Pyth.* 17.72.

52 Nock, "A New Edition," 128–33.

53 E.g., CH I, 22; IV, 3; IX, 5; *Ascl.* 7, 18, 21–22. Cf. HHE 2:213.

54 Büchli, *Der Poimandres*, 146, does not see the difference between the worthy and the human race.

while the rest are deemed to be savage beasts, or that all humankind may at some later stage become worthy, or that the worthy few will somehow save the many. The latter option is preferable if we view the passage as taking place in the time when the brutish Bronze Age humans were being civilized: Hermes and those he taught gave humankind the gifts of civilization, which save the humans from their savage state. That the human race is saved (σωθῇ) by God, through Hermes, should consequently not be understood as a message of universal salvation in a Christian sense,[55] but indicates that Hermes and his fellow culture heroes are considered to be saviors because they made civilized life possible.[56] Hermes' message is thus beneficial for humanity at large, but he became the guide of only a small group of worthy people, who see themselves as somehow set apart from society.[57] They will eventually be saved from the vicissitudes of fate and the demons who enforce fate, as we can learn from other Hermetica.[58] The episode is not necessarily conceived of as a model for Hermetic conversion, necessitating Hermetic preachers of conversion. Rather, it is a foundational event, in which the *traditio mystica* of Hermes is initiated.

A similar mythical description of conversion is found in *The Mixing Bowl*, where there is also a herald (κῆρυξ)[59] giving a proclamation (κηρύσσω).[60]

—κρατῆρα μέγαν πληρώσας τούτου κατέπεμψε, δοὺς κήρυκα, καὶ ἐκέλευσεν αὐτῷ κηρύξαι ταῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καρδίαις τάδε· βάπτισον σεαυτὴν ἡ δυναμένη εἰς τοῦτον τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ πιστεύουσα ὅτι ἀνελεύσῃ πρὸς

He (i.e. God) filled a great mixing bowl with it (i.e. mind) and sent it down below, appointing a herald whom he commanded to make the following proclamation to human hearts: "Immerse yourself in the mixing bowl if your heart has the strength, if it believes you will rise up

55 Contra Büchli, *Der Poimandres*, 147.

56 Cf. Arthur D. Nock, "*Soter* and *Euergetes*," in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (ed. Zeph Stewart; 2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 1:720–35.

57 Arthur D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 117–18. Cf. *Ascl.* 20; CH IX, 4.

58 CH IX, 5; XII, 14; XIII, 1; SH VIII, 5.

59 The only other mention of *kêrykes* is in SH VI, 16, where comets are said to be heralds of future events: οἵτινες φανεροὶ ἄγγελοι καὶ κήρυκες καθολικῶν ἀποτελεσμάτων γίνονται μελλόντων ἔσεσθαι.

60 Cf. André-Jean Festugière, "Hermetica," *HTR* 38 (1931): 1–20 at 3.

τὸν καταπέμψαντα τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ γνωρίζουσα ἐπὶ τί γέγονας.

ὅσοι μὲν οὖν συνῆκαν τοῦ κηρύγματος καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός, οὗτοι μετέσχον τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τέλειοι ἐγένοντο ἄνθρωποι, τὸν νοῦν δεξάμενοι·

ὅσοι δὲ ἥμαρτον τοῦ κηρύγματος,

οὗτοι μὲν οἱ λογικοί, τὸν νοῦν μὴ προσειληφότες, ἀγνοοῦντες ἐπὶ τί γεγόνασιν καὶ ὑπὸ τίνων,

αἱ δὲ αἰσθήσεις τούτων ταῖς τῶν ἀλόγων ζῴων παραπλήσιαι, καὶ ἐν θυμῷ καὶ ὀργῇ τὴν κρᾶσιν ἔχοντες, οὐ θαυμάζοντες [οὐ] τὰ θέας ἄξια, ταῖς δὲ τῶν σωμάτων ἡδοναῖς καὶ ὀρέξεσι προσέχοντες, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα τὸν ἄνθρωπον γεγονέναι πιστεύοντες.

again to the one who sent the mixing bowl below, if it recognizes the purpose of your coming to be." All those who heeded the proclamation and immersed themselves in mind partook of knowledge and became perfect humans when they had received mind. But as for those who missed the point of the proclamation, some are people of reason, although they did not receive mind as well, and are ignorant about why they have come into being and through whose agency, whereas the sensations of some are much like those of unreasoning animals, and, since their temperament is willful and angry, they feel no awe of things that deserve to be admired; they divert their attention to the pleasures and appetites of their bodies; and they believe that mankind came to be for such purposes.[61]

The herald of CH I was to become a guide for the worthy ones, and similarly here the message is only for those who have strength of heart (ἡ δυναμένη καρδία). However, unlike CH I, *The Mixing Bowl* does not operate with a neat dichotomy between those who accept the message and those who do not. Instead, those who are unable to immerse themselves in the mixing bowl are divided into rational people (λογικοί) and those with irrational (ἄλογοι) animal-like senses. As we have seen, a similar tripartition of divine, human and animal-like souls

61 CH IV, 4–6. I have modified the translation of Copenhaver, who like all other translations identify the logikoi with the alogoi: "But those who missed the point of the proclamation are people of reason because they did not receive ⟨the gift of⟩ mind as well and do not know the purpose or the agents of their coming to be. These people have sensations much like those of unreasoning animals …" Cf. FR 3:108. This, however, does not take into account the μὲν … δὲ construction: on the one hand those with reason (οὗτοι μὲν οἱ λογικοί), on the other hand those with animal-like sensations (αἱ δὲ αἰσθήσεις τούτων). Rather than being resumptive with reference to the logikoi, τούτων here uncomfortably introduces the third kind of people with animal-like senses. It makes poor sense to say that the *logikoi* are like the *alogoi*.

is found in *The Key*[62] and in the *Perfect Discourse*,[63] though these texts also distinguish between divine and demonic souls in the upper echelon. An important parallel is also found in one of the Hermetic *Definitions*: "A human has both natures, the mortal and ⟨the⟩ immortal. A human has three essences—the noetic, the psychic and the hylic."[64] The humans in the *Poimandres* follow either the way of life or the way of death, in accordance with the two human natures of immortal and mortal (CH I, 15), while *The Mixing Bowl* introduces a median category corresponding to the rational soul.

The episodes of conversion in CH I, 26–29 and CH IV, 4–6 are both myths of foundation, detailing how the tradition of Hermes was first revealed to humankind, and how only a few worthy souls were able to receive the message. However, the treatises as such are not protreptic, written with the aim of convincing outsiders. There is however another treatise that seems to be aimed at outsiders, to make them convert to the way of Hermes. CH VII, *That the greatest evil among men is ignorance of God*, seems to elaborate upon the admonition of CH I, 27–28.[65] This short treatise is a call for humankind to convert from ignorance of God, while underlining that only a few will be able to do so: "Stop and sober yourselves up! Look up with the eyes of the heart[66]—if not all of you, at least those of you who have the power. The vice of ignorance floods the whole earth and utterly destroys the soul shut up in the body, preventing it from anchoring in the havens of deliverance."[67] The text reflects a view of

62 See above, chap. 3.9.

63 See below, chap. 9.2.

64 DH VI, 1: ἄνθρωπος ἀμφοτέρας ἔχει τὰς φύσεις, καὶ τὴν θνητὴν καὶ ⟨τὴν⟩ ἀθάνατον. ἄνθρωπος τρεῖς οὐσίας ἔχει, τὴν νοητὴν καὶ τὴν ψυχικὴν καὶ τὴν ὑλικήν. My trans. Cf. Mahé, "Nouveaux parallèles," 119; HHE 2:375. Cf. also Gilles Quispel, "Hermes Trismegistus and the Origins of Gnosticism," *VC* 46 (1992): 1–19 at 2–4, who postulates that the Hermetic saying might be the origin of the tripartite anthropologies of *Teach. Silv.* (NHC VII,*4* 92,15ff.) and the Valentinians.

65 The similarities are such that it has even been suggested that the texts might have the same author: Zielinski, "Hermes und die Hermetik," 1:339; NF 1:78; Petersen, "Alt kommer jo på øjet an, der ser," 30 n. 14. Petersen also points out the paradox that Fowden (*The Egyptian Hermes*, 159) sees CH VII as a missionary text, while its dualism should have placed it at the end of the way of Hermes, according to Fowden's reconstruction of the way.

66 Cf. Plato, *Rep*. 7.529b.

67 CH VII, 1: στῆτε νήψαντες· ἀναβλέψατε τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς τῆς καρδίας· καὶ εἰ μὴ πάντες δύνασθε, οἵ γε καὶ δυνάμενοι· ἡ γὰρ τῆς ἀγνωσίας κακία ἐπικλύζει πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν καὶ συμφθείρει τὴν ἐν τῷ σώματι κατακεκλεισμένην ψυχήν, μὴ ἐῶσα ἐνορμίζεσθαι τοῖς τῆς σωτηρίας λιμέσι. Trans. Copenhaver.

material existence that was not uncommon in Hellenistic times:[68] the genuine immaterial self is weighed down by the "sentient corpse," "the dark cage," and pushed along haphazardly by the flood of ignorance—no doubt alluding to the bonds of fate. There is however some hope:

ἀναρροίᾳ δὲ χρησάμενοι, οἱ δυνάμενοι λαβέσθαι τοῦ τῆς σωτηρίας λιμένος, ἐνορμισάμενοι τούτῳ, ζητήσατε χειραγωγὸν τὸν ὁδηγήσοντα ὑμᾶς ἐπὶ τὰς τῆς γνώσεως θύρας, ὅπου ἐστὶ τὸ λαμπρὸν φῶς, τὸ καθαρὸν σκότους, ὅπου οὐδὲ εἷς μεθύει, ἀλλὰ πάντες νήφουσιν, ἀφορῶντες τῇ καρδίᾳ εἰς τὸν ὁραθῆναι θέλοντα· οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἀκουστός, οὐδὲ λεκτός, οὐδὲ ὁρατὸς ὀφθαλμοῖς, ἀλλὰ νῷ καὶ καρδίᾳ.

Those of you who can will take the ebb and gain the haven of deliverance and anchor there. Then, seek a guide to take you by the hand and lead you to the portals of knowledge. There shines the light cleansed of darkness. There no one is drunk. All are sober and gaze with the heart toward one who wishes to be seen, who is neither heard nor spoken of, who is seen not with the eyes but with mind and heart.

πρῶτον δὲ δεῖ σε περιρρήξασθαι ὃν φορεῖς χιτῶνα, τὸ τῆς ἀγνωσίας ὕφασμα, κτλ.

But first you must rip off the tunic that you wear, the garment of ignorance, etc.[69]

A.-J. Festugière suggests, in his introduction to the Budé edition, that the imagery of traversing a flood and getting to a safe port could allude to a journey up the Nile, where a passage from Strabo informs us that priests were eager to lead the visitors up to the temples.[70] J.-P. Mahé further points out a parallel in the inscriptions of Petosiris: "Vous naviguerez avec un vent favorable, sans accident, et vous aborderez au port de la ville des generations."[71] Mahé remarks that the abode of generations is the necropolis,[72] and that the seafaring metaphor is common in mortuary literature: "Ply to the West, the harbor of the righteous … the landing place of your silent one."[73] The Hermetic

68 Eric R. Dodds, *Pagans and Christians in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 35.

69 CH VII, 2. Trans. Copenhaver.

70 NF 1:78; Strab, *Geo.* 17.1.38. Nock is sceptical (*Conversion*, 79–80).

71 HHE 2:299; Lefebvre, *Le tombeau de Pétosiris*, 2:158.

72 HHE 2:299 n. 127; Couroyer, "Le chemin de vie," 417.

73 Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 304.

passage also works very well alone, as a metaphor where life is likened to a dangerous sea-voyage, and salvation is a safe haven. But what then of the safe haven described, are we here dealing with general allusions to the joys of salvation, or should we see it as a description of an idealized Hermetic community?

Certainly, the exhortation to "seek a guide to take you by the hand and lead the way" seems concrete enough. The expression χειραγωγὸν τὸν ὁδηγήσοντα is synonymous to the καθοδηγὸς of *Poimandres*, and there is every reason to recall here the role of Hermes as a guide of the soul in SH XXVI, 3,[74] and in the Hermetic *Leiden Kosmopoiia*, in which Hermes is called the guide of the primal soul.[75] Furthermore, in Isis' Hermetic instructions to Horus, Hermes Trismegistus is said to flank or escort his kindred gods, the stars,[76] and to be a ruler of counsel and a guide (ἡγεμών βουλῆς, καθηγητὴς: SH XXVI, 9). In the Hermetic compendium of astro-botanical lore called the *Cyranides*, Hermes is the guide of all wisdom and a ruler of words,[77] and in Iamblichus' *Response of Abammon* he is said to be the first guide on the way of ascent to God in the tradition of Egyptian theurgy.[78] It is therefore likely that the guide of CH VII

74 SH XXVI, 3: ὁ δὲ ψυχοπομπὸς ἀποστολεύς τε καὶ διατάκτης τῶν ἐνσωματουμένων ψυχῶν. It is clear from elsewhere in the text that this psychopomp is Hermes.

75 PGM XIII.521–525: ἐγένετο Ψυχή, καὶ πάντα ἐκινήθη. ὁ δὲ θεὸς ἔφη· 'πάντα κινήσεις, καὶ πάντα ἱλαρυνθήσεται Ἑρμοῦ σε ὁδηγοῦντος'. ("Soul came into being and all things were moved. So the god said, 'You will move all things, and all shall be made glad so long as Hermes guides you,'" trans. Morton Smith in *PGMT*). Thoth might also be identified with the guide of Isis in PGM XXXVI.9; although it is myrrh which is invoked, Thoth fits the bill as "ally of Horus, and protection of Anubis" (PGM XXXVI.335–339: 'Σμύρνα, Σμύρνα, ἡ παρὰ θεοῖς διακονοῦσα, ἡ ποταμοὺς κ[αὶ] ὄρη ἀναταράξασα, ἡ καταφλέξασα τὸ ἔλος τοῦ Ἀχαλδα, ἡ κατακαύσασα τὸν ἄθεον Τυφῶν⟨α⟩, ἡ σύμμαχος τοῦ Ὥρου, ἡ προστάτις τοῦ Ἀνούβεως, ἡ καθοδηγὸς τῆς Ἴσιδος). Cf. PGM CXXII.1 & 30; Aufrère, *Thoth Hermès*, 291 (myrrh "transpose le regard acéré du rapace dans le domaine de l'invisible."), 306–7 (myrrh in composition of sacred ink, captures attention of gods).

76 SH XXIII, 6: τοὺς συγγενεῖς θεοὺς δορυφορεῖν ἀνέβαινεν εἰς ἄστρα. It is probable that in view of Hermes' escorting (δορυφορεῖν) here, he is to be identified as one of the two escorts (δορυφόροι) in SH XXVI, 3, namely the one called ψυχοπομπός. The other is called ψυχοταμίας. Cf. NF 4:89 n. 7.

77 *Cyr*. 1.4.52: λέγεται δὲ καὶ ὕμνος εἰς τὸν τρισμέγιστον Ἑρμῆν ὅς ἐστιν πάσης σοφίας καθηγητὴς καὶ λόγων ἡγούμενος.

78 Iamb., *Myst*. 8.5: ὑφηγήσατο δὲ καὶ ταύτην τὴν ὁδὸν Ἑρμῆς. Cf. also Max. Tyr., *Diss.* 19.1: μετ' ἀνάπαυλαν βαδίζωμεν ἐπὶ τὸ τέλος, ἡγεμόνας παρακαλέσαντες τῆς ὁδοῦ Ἑρμῆν τὸν Λόγιον καὶ Πειθὼ καὶ Χάριτας καὶ τὸν Ἔρωτα αὐτόν; Heph., *Apotel.* (epit.) 306.19–20: ὅτε δέ τις μέλλει εἰς πλοῖον εἰσιέναι ἢ δι' ὁδοῦ πορεύεσθαι τὸν Ἑρμῆν δεῖ παρατηρεῖσθαι.

refers to Hermes, and that the exhortation to take his hand and be led by him means that the reader or listener should find a Hermetic teacher.

It is of course possible that the passage in CH VII is purely allegorical, that the guide refers only to the reader's own mind or rational soul, and that the community described behind "the gates of knowledge" is simply an allusion to the blessed existence of those who live free from bodily passions.[79] However, taken together with CH I, 27–28, in which Hermes gathers a community of disciples in quite concrete terms, it is plausible that the author of CH VII describes the ideal Hermetic community, which is contrasted with the multitude who are led astray by material darkness. There is a parallel to this division of the audience between men of good faith and unbelievers in an aretalogy of Imouthes, the Egyptian Asclepius:

σύγι[τε δε]ῦρο, [ὦ ἄν]δρες εὐμ[ενεῖς] κα[ὶ ἀγα]θοί, ἄπιτε, βάσκα[νοι] κ[αὶ] ἀσεβεῖς· σύν[ι]τε, ὦ [...] ο[..].[.], ὅσοι θητεύ[σ]αντε[ς] τὸν [θ]εὸν νόσω[ν] ἀπηλλάγητε, [ὅ]σοι τὴν ἰατρικὴν με[ταχ]ειρίζεσθε ἐπι[σ]τήμη[ν, ὅσ]οι πονήσετε ζηλ[ωτα]ὶ ἀρετῆς, ὅσο[ι] πολλῷ πλήθει ἐπηύξή[θ]ητε ἀγαθῶν, ὅσοι κινδύνους θαλάσσης πε[ρ]ιεσώθητε. εἰς πάντα γὰρ τόπον διαπεφοίτηκεν ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ δύναμις σωτήριος.

Come together here, you well-meaning and good men; go away, you slanderous and irreverent men! Come here, you ..., who by serving God have gotten rid of diseases; who practice the medicinal art; who will toil as adherents of virtue; who have been made great by a considerable abundance of good things; who have been saved from the dangers of the sea. For the saving power of God has permeated every place.[80]

One might also recall the cry of the sacred herald (ἱεροκῆρυξ) at the opening of the Eleusinian mysteries, when the impure were separated from the pure.[81] The type of announcement seen in CH I, 27–28 and CH VII, 1–2, in which one calls the worthy together while excluding the unworthy, is thus well attested

79 Mind as gatekeeper in CH I, 22; mind as steersman in CH XII, 4; CH X, 21: εἰς δὲ τὴν εὐσεβῆ ψυχὴν ὁ νοῦς ἐμβὰς ὁδηγεῖ αὐτὴν ἐπὶ τὸ τῆς γνώσεως φῶς. Personal demon as guide to free us from fate: Iamb., *Myst.* 9.3: ὁδηγὸν αὐτὸν λάβοι πρὸς τὴν τῶν εἱμαρμένων ἔκθυσιν.

80 P. Oxy 1381, col. x, ln. 203–218. My trans. Text in Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhyncus Papyri: Part XI* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1915), 229–31. Cf. Nock, *Conversion*, 87–88; Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 50–52.

81 Matthew W. Dickie, "Priestly Proclamations and Sacred Law," *CQ* 54 (2004): 579–91 at 588–89.

in cultic contexts. The aim of the aretalogy of Imouthes is to make known his excellence to all the Greeks, and similarly the cry of the *hierokeryx* goes out to all unpolluted Grecophones, while the Hermetic call goes out only to the worthy few. We should also recall that Hermes was identified with the *hierokeryx* of Eleusis, which might have influenced the Hermetic sacred herald.[82] Like a mystagogue leads the mystes to the gates of the Telesterion in Eleusis, so also the potential initiate in CH VII must be lead by a guide to the "portals of knowledge."[83]

One can envision two plausible uses for a text such as CH VII: One would be as a literary protreptic, in which the readers would be urged to realize the futility of their way of life, and then hopefully go out to find a Hermetic spiritual guide. This use of written dialogues as paraenetic and protreptic tools is a common feature of contemporary philosophical schools, since texts can be disseminated to a wider audience and have a longer reach than oral instruction, increasing the prestige of the school and attracting adherents to it from afar.[84] Another plausible use of the text would be as an aide-memoire for public exhortation by some sort of Hermetic preacher, offering to be a guide for his audience. It is possible that Hermetic preachers of conversion appeared in the public spaces of cities in Egypt and the Roman world, or perhaps in front of smaller educated circles, though we have no historical records of such encounters.

In all the three texts (CH I, 26–29; IV, 4–6; VII), a central element is that a preacher makes clear the choice between a way of reverence and knowledge

82 Eus., *Praep. ev.* 3.12: "In the mysteries at Eleusis the hierophant is dressed up to represent the demiurge, and the torch-bearer the sun, the priest at the altar the moon, and the sacred herald Hermes" (ἐν δὲ τοῖς κατ' Ἐλευσῖνα μυστηρίοις ὁ μὲν ἱεροφάντης εἰς εἰκόνα τοῦ δημιουργοῦ ἐνσκευάζεται, δᾳδοῦχος δὲ εἰς τὴν ἡλίου· καὶ ὁ μὲν ἐπὶ βωμῷ εἰς τὴν σελήνης, ὁ δὲ ἱεροκῆρυξ Ἑρμοῦ). Trans. Edwin H. Gifford, *Eusebii Pamphili evangelicae praeparationis libri xv* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903). Cf. Jan N. Bremmer, "Athenian civic priests from classical times to late antiquity: some considerations," in *Civic Priests: Cult Personnel in Athens from the Hellenistic Period to Late Antiquity* (ed. Marietta Horster and Anja Klöckner; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 219–35 at 230.

83 Cf. FR 3:100–3; Aug., *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 45.2/3: *philosophi … qui etiam dicere auderent hominibus: "Nos sequimini, sectam nostram tenete, si vultis beate vivere." Sed non intrarant per ostium*; *Ev. Jo.* 10.1: εἰσέρχεσθαι διὰ τῆς θύρας.

84 Cf. Hadot in Richard, *L'enseignement oral*, 13–14; Steve N. Mason, "*Philosophiai*: Graeco-Roman, Judean and Christian," in *Voluntary Associations in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson; London: Routledge, 1996), 31–58 at 40.

and a way of irreverence and ignorance.[85] Hans-Dieter Betz points out that this motif of a choice is an important part of Hermetic theodicy, and can be traced back to Orphic-Pythagorean and ultimately Middle Kingdom Egyptian sources: God cannot be blamed for the evil humans do, since he has given them a choice between acting according to their mortal or their immortal nature.[86] Our sources do not permit us to conclude if there were in fact Hermetic preachers of conversion, or if these are merely literary figures.[87] The settings of the admonitions in CH I and IV are mythical, but we can easily imagine a diatribe such as that of CH VII performed before an audience of potential converts. The latter text is thus aimed at outsiders, while the model reader of the former two is someone who has already accepted the message of the primordial revelation, but has not yet advanced far on the way of Hermes. This goes against the majority position, which is that CH I and IV both belong to the initiatory group of texts, together with CH XIII and *Disc.8–9*. However, while the latter two are concerned with rebirth and visionary ascent, which indeed represent the culmination of the way of Hermes, both CH I and IV are fundamentally concerned with self-knowledge. The goal of these treatises is that the reader should realize that their authentic being is not the mortal body, but the immortal and essential inner human. This self-knowledge represents the first stage of the way of Hermes.

4.5 First Stage: Knowing Oneself

Before reaching the gates of knowledge, the reader or listener of CH VII is told that it is necessary to "rip off the tunic that you wear, the garment of ignorance, the foundation of vice, the bonds of corruption, the dark cage, the living death, the sentient corpse, the portable tomb, the resident thief, the one who hates through what he loves and envies through what he hates."[88] Such heavy

85 Cf. FR 3:98ff.

86 Betz, "Hermetism and Gnosticism," 86–89.

87 Thus Festugiére (FR 3:109): "Quant a dire si ce thème, dans le *Poimandrès*, est fiction ou réalité, comment en décider?"

88 CH VII, 2: πρῶτον δὲ δεῖ σε περιρρήξασθαι ὃν φορεῖς χιτῶνα, τὸ τῆς ἀγνωσίας ὕφασμα, τὸ τῆς κακίας στήριγμα, τὸν τῆς φθορᾶς δεσμόν, τὸν σκοτεινὸν περίβολον, τὸν ζῶντα θάνατον, τὸν αἰσθητὸν νεκρόν, τὸν περιφόρητον τάφον, τὸν ἔνοικον λῃστήν, τὸν δι' ὧν φιλεῖ μισοῦντα καὶ δι' ὧν μισεῖ φθονοῦντα. Trans. Copenhaver. Tage Peterson has argued that the passage refers mainly to getting rid of ignorance, not mortification of the body, but it is hard not to read the passage as highly critical of the body.

invectives against the body in this protreptic treatise should indicate that the way of Hermes does not, as Mahé and Fowden suggest, begin with monistic, optimistic or pro-cosmic teachings, and then end up in dualism. Quite the opposite, we must place CH VII at the very beginning of the way of Hermes, as does Tage Petersen.[89] However, Petersen sees the passage quoted above not as a set of invectives against the body, but against ignorance. Although he convincingly demonstrates that the first metaphors (tunic … cage) could refer to ignorance, his argument seems forced when it comes to "the sentient corpse" and "the portable tomb," which must denote the body.[90] I would however argue that the reason for this contempt of the body is not so much the result of dualistic anti-cosmism, but rather what we may call pedagogical dualism. The disciple is supposed to gain knowledge of himself, and the Hermetica are in unison agreement that the authentic human being is not identical with the body but with the immaterial noetic essence of the soul. At the earliest stage of teaching the disciple therefore has to be trained to stop identifying himself with the body, and this is why the body is condemned. At a later stage, however, the body will be seen in a more nuanced light, as a necessary tool to fulfill one's duties as a human in the cosmos.

4.5.1 *CH I: A Foundational Myth of Self-Knowledge*

Self-knowledge is crucial in CH I, as the command of God demonstrates: "Let the one who is mindful recognize himself, that he is immortal."[91] As already argued, the *Poimandres* is likely to have been made known at an early stage of the teaching, since it provides the foundational myth of the tradition, and since Tat is supposed to know it before his rebirth (CH XIII, 15). We find in

89 Petersen, "Alt kommer jo på øjet an, der ser," 19.

90 Ibid., 55–57.

91 CH I, 18: ἀναγνωρισάτω ⟨ὁ⟩ ἔννους ἑαυτὸν ὄντα ἀθάνατον. My trans. Cf. Betz, "The Delphic Maxim," 465–84. Betz points out the similarities between the *Poimandres* and Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, and suggests that Poseidonius is the common source. Cf. also DH IX, 4: "Everything is visible to one who has Nous; who(ever) thinks of himself in Nous knows himself and who(ever) knows himself knows everything" (Ամենայն ինչ տեսանելի է, որ միտս ունի. որ ընդ միտ ածէ զինքն՝ գիտէ զինքն. և որ գիտէ զինքն՝ զամենայն ինչ գիտէ. Arm. in HHE 2:390–92; trans. Mahé, "Definitions of Hermes"). Quispel compared this saying with the *Gos. Thom.* (NHC II,*5*) logion 67 and *Thom. Cont.* (NHC II,*7*) and concluded that the Hermetic saying must have been known in Edessa at an early date. He later ascribed to the sentence a critical role in the origins of Gnosticism: Quispel, "Hermes Trismegistus and Tertullian," 188–90; id., "Hermes Trismegistus and the Origins of Gnosticism," 1–19. He never once refers to the article of Betz.

this treatise a succinct account of human fate, beginning with the primordial incarnation of the first human and ending with the eventual reascent through the heavenly spheres. I have already argued that the incarnation of the primordial human in the *Poimandres*, and the subsequent sexual reproduction of his/her descendants, need not be interpreted as a fall from grace in the biblical sense.[92] However, the fact that most commentators have indeed seen it as a fall indicates that this may have been a viable interpretation also in antiquity. If we see the treatise as a foundational myth, as a *Hieros Logos* of the tradition,[93] such highly allusive myths may have been given differing interpretations at different stages of initiation.[94] That this occurred in Hermetism is indicated by the statement that Hermes is said to speak enigmatically (CH XIII, 1–2) and that he gives the same topics deeper interpretations at more advanced levels of initiation (CH XIV, 1: μυστικώτερον). I would therefore suggest that when a neophyte first came to know the myth, he would be encouraged to interpret the embodiment of the primal Human as a great disaster, and yearn to be released from the body. Only later would it be pointed out that the embodiment serves a more complex purpose. As Tage Petersen has shown, it is in fact ignorance that is the main evil, not the body.[95] The body is only a problem as long as ignorance reigns,[96] and once the initiate has gained self-knowledge the body will progressively cease being an obstacle.

4.5.2 *CH IV: Hating the Body but Loving the Self*

Another text that is concerned with self-knowledge is *The Mixing Bowl, or, the Monad* (CH IV). Here, the disciple Tat is presented as having already accepted the message of Hermes, but he is still at a stage where he must affirm his choice. When presented with the story of the mixing bowl full of nous, quoted above, Tat exclaims that he too wants to be immersed. He is however put off by Hermes, who says that "unless you first hate your body, my son, you cannot love yourself, but when you have loved yourself, you will possess mind, and

92 Cf. above, chap. 3.8.

93 CH III carries the title *Hieros Logos*, and is a cosmogony related to the *Poimandres*. Cf. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, 210–34; Podemann Sørensen, "The Egyptian Background of the ἱερὸς λόγος (CH III)," 215–25.

94 Cf. Albert Henrichs, "'Hieroi Logoi' and 'Hierai Bibloi': The (Un)Written Margins of the Sacred in Ancient Greece," *HSCP* 101 (2003): 207–66 at 222 n. 45.

95 Petersen, "Alt kommer jo på øjet an, der ser," 28 et passim.

96 CH X, 8: κακία δὲ ψυχῆς ἀγνωσία… ἡ κακοδαίμων, ἀγνοήσασα ἑαυτήν, δουλεύει σώμασιν ἀλλοκότοις καὶ μοχθηροῖς, ὥσπερ φορτίον βαστάζουσα τὸ σῶμα, καὶ οὐκ ἄρχουσα ἀλλ' ἀρχομένη. αὕτη κακία ψυχῆς.

if you have mind, you will also have a share in the way to learn."[97] Tat is thus still at a stage where he believes that his true self is identical to his body, a notion he must unlearn before proceeding to gain mind. Unlike Mahé and van den Kerchove, who would place the treatise at a more advanced stage, we will therefore consider it to reflect an introductory stage, as also Petersen does.[98] Tat has yet to make the final choice between false bodily pleasures and true divine contemplation (CH IV, 6–7), and is therefore in need of exhortation.[99] To help him make the right choice, Hermes explains that those who choose correctly will eventually attain mind and immortality, whereas those who choose wrongly are chained to mortality (CH IV, 5). This is not a simple choice, but requires knowledge: those who are rational (λογικοί) but do not know (ἀγνοοῦντες) the purpose of their coming into being, and who created them, will not receive mind (CH IV, 4).[100] Knowing oneself, namely why one is born and by whom, is thus a necessary prerequisite for eventually gaining mind, a point which is consonant with God's exhortation to self-knowledge in CH I, 18.[101]

Gaining self-knowledge comes only after a series of rebirths, where the soul has traversed several forms of being and progressively gained insight,[102] and this knowledge is itself only the first step towards the experience of the good itself:

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97 CH IV, 5: ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτον τὸ σῶμά σου μισήσῃς, ὦ τέκνον, σεαυτὸν φιλῆσαι οὐ δύνασαι· φιλήσας δὲ σεαυτόν, νοῦν ἕξεις, καὶ τὸν νοῦν ἔχων καὶ τῆς ἐπιστήμης μεταλήψῃ. Trans. Copenhaver. Loving the body is also the obstacle for knowledge in CH XI, 21: οὐδὲν γὰρ δύνασαι τῶν καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν, φιλοσώματος καὶ κακὸς ὤν, νοῆσαι; Cf. DH IX, 5: ὁ τῷ σώματι καλῶς χρησάμενος ἑαυτῷ κακῶς ἐχρήσατο ("Whoever manages the body well, manages himself well." My trans.). Petersen tends to downplay the severity of the command to hate the body ("Alt kommer jo på øjet an, der ser," 121–22).

98 Mahé, "Mental faculties," 81; Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 287–90; Petersen, "Alt kommer jo på øjet an, der ser," 117.

99 Cf. Plato, *Theaet.* 176e (FR 2:120).

100 CH IV, 4: ὅσοι δὲ ἥμαρτον τοῦ κηρύγματος, οὗτοι μὲν οἱ λογικοί, τὸν νοῦν μὴ προσειληφότες, ἀγνοοῦντες ἐπὶ τί γεγόνασιν καὶ ὑπὸ τίνων. Festugière, "Hermetica," 7 n. 38–39 points out the parallels with Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 5.4 and *Exc.* 78. Cf. also CH XIII, 14: ἀγνοεῖς ὅτι θεὸς πέφυκας καὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς παῖς.

101 Here is seems that the one who knows himself is already *ennous*. Cf. CH IX, 10: ταῦτά σοι, Ἀσκληπιέ, ἐννοοῦντι, ἀληθῆ δόξειεν, ἀγνοοῦντι δὲ ἄπιστα; CH I, 22: παραγίνομαι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ὁ νοῦς τοῖς ὁσίοις … καὶ εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι. Cf. FR 3:112: "on peut dire que l'homme, avant la révélation, a et n'a pas le νοῦς." See also the discussion of CH X, below, chap. 4.6.6.

102 This alludes to metempsychosis, cf. above, chap. 3.9.

ὁρᾷς, ὦ τέκνον, πόσα ἡμᾶς δεῖ σώματα διεξελθεῖν, καὶ πόσους χοροὺς δαιμόνων καὶ συνέχειαν καὶ δρόμους ἀστέρων ἵνα πρὸς τὸν ἕνα καὶ μόνον σπεύσωμεν;

ἀδιάβατον γὰρ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἀπέραντον καὶ ἀτελές, αὐτῷ δὲ καὶ ἄναρχον, ἡμῖν δὲ δοκοῦν ἀρχὴν ἔχειν τὴν γνῶσιν. οὐκ αὐτοῦ οὖν ἀρχὴ γίνεται ἡ γνῶσις, ἀλλ' ἡμῖν τὴν ἀρχὴν παρέχεται τοῦ γνωσθησομένου. λαβώμεθα οὖν τῆς ἀρχῆς, καὶ ὁδεύσωμεν τάχει ἅπαντα· πάνυ γάρ ἐστι σκολιόν, τὸ τὰ συνήθη καὶ παρόντα καταλιπόντα ἐπὶ τὰ παλαιὰ καὶ ἀρχαῖα ἀνακάμπτειν.

Do you see how many bodies we must pass through, my son, how many troops of demons, ⟨cosmic⟩ connections and stellar circuits in order to hasten toward the one and only? For the good is untraversable, infinite and unending; it is also without beginning, but to us it seems to have a beginning—our knowledge of it. Thus, knowledge is not a beginning of the good, but it furnishes us with the beginning of the good that will be known. So let us seize this beginning and travel with all speed, for the path is very crooked that leaves familiar things of the present to return to primordial things of old.[103]

The passage is very important, both in that it clearly locates gnosis at the beginning of the Hermetic *paideia*,[104] and because it designates the path as leading away from the present world of phenomena towards the primordial wisdom, presumably to be identified with the mixing bowl filled with mind sent down by God in primeval times. We also see that Tat at this point does not possess knowledge, but rather is encouraged to seize it, which would mark him at this point as merely *logikos*: He has accepted the message of the herald, the *kêrygma*, but has not yet immersed himself in the mixing bowl. According to the *kêrygma*, only the heart[105] which has faith in its own eventual reascent, and which recognizes why it is born, has the power to immerse itself.[106] Now, Tat clearly has faith, but does not yet know why he is born, in other words he lacks self-knowledge. The combination of knowledge with faith or reverence[107]

103 CH IV, 8–9. Trans. Copenhaver.

104 As pointed out by Mahé, "La voie d'immortalité," 351; id., "Mental Faculties," 77.

105 Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 296–97, places some emphasis on the mention of hearts as the listeners of the message, pointing out parallels in Egyptian and Biblical passages.

106 CH IV, 4: βάπτισον σεαυτὴν ἡ δυναμένη εἰς τοῦτον τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ πιστεύουσα ὅτι ἀνελεύσῃ πρὸς τὸν καταπέμψαντα τὸν κρατῆρα, ἡ γνωρίζουσα ἐπὶ τί γέγονας.

107 Mahé, "La voie d'immortalité," 351, citing CH I, 27; VI, 5; IX, 4; *Pr. Thanks.* (NHC VI 64,31–65,2).

is common throughout the Hermetica, and here we must interpret faith as confidence and trust in the message of the herald, which will lead to knowledge. Those who do not heed the message will remain ignorant of themselves, while those who obey and immerse themselves will receive knowledge and mind, and become perfect humans.[108] The salvific sequence is to first heed the message, then immerse oneself in the mixing bowl, and thus having received mind one becomes a perfect human.

Tat does not receive mind in the course of the dialogue, but is given the expectation that he will attain it if he sticks to the way. Hermes explains that he has adjusted his description of God so that Tat can understand it at his present level of understanding, and that if Tat were to consider it with the "eyes of the heart," the image would draw him towards itself:

αὕτη οὖν, ὦ Τάτ, κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν σοι ὑπογέγραπται τοῦ θεοῦ εἰκών· ἣν ἀκριβῶς εἰ θεάσῃ καὶ νοήσεις τοῖς τῆς καρδίας ὀφθαλμοῖς, πίστευσόν μοι, τέκνον, εὑρήσεις τὴν πρὸς τὰ ἄνω ὁδόν. μᾶλλον δὲ αὐτή σε ἡ εἰκὼν ὁδηγήσει.

ἔχει γάρ τι ἴδιον ἡ θέα· τοὺς φθάσαντας θεάσασθαι κατέχει καὶ ἀνέλκει, καθάπερ φασὶν ἡ μαγνῆτις λίθος τὸν σίδηρον.

Such then, Tat, is God's image, which has been sketched according to your capability.[109] If your vision of it is sharp and you understand it with the eyes of your heart, believe me, child, you shall discover the road that leads above, or, rather, the image itself will show you the way. For the vision of it has a special property. It takes hold of those who have had the vision and draws them up, just as the magnet stone draws iron, so they say.[110]

Tat has yet to gain the capacity to see with the eyes of the heart, an expression synonymous to the eyes of the mind that we find elsewhere.[111] In *The Key* we also find the image that draws the soul upwards (CH X, 6). This power to see God (θεοπτικὴ δύναμις: SH II A, 6; VII, 3), it will be argued, is gained in the rebirth.

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108 CH IV, 4: ὅσοι μὲν οὖν συνῆκαν τοῦ κηρύγματος καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός, οὗτοι μετέσχον τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τέλειοι ἐγένοντο ἄνθρωποι, τὸν νοῦν δεξάμενοι. I diverge slightly from the translation of Copenhaver in taking δεξάμενοι as a temporal rather than final participle.

109 Festugière (NF 1: 53) translates "que j'ai dessinée pour toi au mieux de mes forces," followed by Copenhaver. The presence of σοι, although it may pertain to ὑπογέγραπται, makes me think the limited capability lies with Tat, not Hermes.

110 CH IV, 11. Trans. Copenhaver, slightly modified.

111 CH V, 2; VII, 1–2; X, 4–5; XIII, 14, 17; DH VII, 3; *Ascl.* 29.

Earlier in the treatise, Hermes described the people who after being immersed in the mixing bowl were able to comprehend all in their mind—everything on earth, in heaven, and above heaven: "Having raised themselves so far, they have seen the good and, having seen it, they have come to regard the wasting of time here below as a calamity. They have scorned every corporeal and incorporeal thing, and they hasten toward the one and only."[112] Hermes thus encourages Tat not only to hate his body, but also to consider all material existence as a calamity. This, I would argue, constitutes the next stage of the way of Hermes. After the disciple has realized that his authentic self has nothing to do with the body, he must also gain knowledge of the material world, in order to train himself to see it as phantasmal and unreal. The command of God in the *Poimandres* demonstrates that the progression of teaching goes from knowledge of the self to knowledge of the world: "Let him ⟨who⟩ is mindful recognize himself, that he is immortal, that desire is the cause of death, and let him recognize all that exists" (CH 1, 18). In CH IV, Tat has learned that he is potentially immortal, if he stops loving the body. The next step will be to recognize the nature of all that exists.

4.6 Second Stage: Becoming a Stranger to the World

Before undergoing the rebirth, Tat was told by Hermes that he had to become a stranger to the world (CH XIII, 1: κοσμοῦ ἀπαλλοτριοῦσθαι). How would this come about? Comparing the theme of becoming a stranger to the world with other Hermetica, it seems likely that we are here dealing with a kind of spiritual exercise, similar to how the Stoics considered physics to be beneficial to spiritual well-being, since knowledge of natural causes confers insight into what is beneficial and what is not.[113] In the Stoic-Platonic physics of the Hermetica, the initiate is supposed to attain an outlook in which he perceives all earthly phenomena as ephemeral, fleeting and corruptible, and thus conceives a

112 CH IV, 5: τοσοῦτον ἑαυτοὺς ὑψώσαντες, εἶδον τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἰδόντες συμφορὰν ἡγήσαντο τὴν ἐνθάδε διατριβήν· καταφρονήσαντες πάντων τῶν σωματικῶν καὶ ἀσωμάτων ἐπὶ τὸ ἓν καὶ μόνον σπεύδουσιν. Trans. Copenhaver. Once again, Petersen ("Alt kommer jo på øjet an, der ser," 128–29) argues that the misfortune is not earthly existence as such, but the "pasttimes" (διατριβή) of non-hermetists.

113 Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1981), 145ff.

longing for the unchanging and eternal reality above. There are several treatises that can with some certainty be placed on this stage of the way of Hermes.

4.6.1 *CH II: An Introduction to the Nature of Things*

The untitled tractate known as CH II quite obviously belongs to this early stage of the way of Hermes, as can be seen from its final words: "Let what I have told you about these things suffice, Asclepius, as a kind of foreknowledge of the nature of all things."[114] This statement signals that we are at the beginning of the didactic stage that deals with the nature of all things, following the previous stage which had knowledge of the self as a goal.

CH II starts off as a didactic dialogue on astronomical space and movement (§§ 1–8), which seems to have two main purposes: to deny the Stoic tenet that everything that exists is corporeal (§§ 4, 8–9),[115] and to refute the Epicurean notion of the void (§§ 10–12).[116] When this has been demonstrated to Asclepius' satisfaction, the rest of the treatise attempts to answer what God is, ending up in a homily (§§ 12–17). The treatise could be seen merely as a vulgarizing Platonic pseudepigraphon, written to enlist the aid of the Egyptian god against impious Stoics and Epicureans. Indeed, that seems to be the impression of Gebhard Löhr, who tentatively suggests that it was written by a more "philosophically minded" group of Hermetists than those behind such initiatory treatises as CH I, XIII and *Disc.8–9*.[117] I find Löhr's insistence on a divide between religion and philosophy to be a modern notion that is

114 CH II, 17: τοσαῦτα καὶ τοιαῦτα λελέχθω, ὦ Ἀσκληπιέ, προγνωσία τις τῆς πάντων φύσεως. My trans. Löhr, *Verherrlichung Gottes*, 301, suggests tentatively that *prognôsia* could here signal a transition to a more prophetic mode of speech. Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 128, follows Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 100 n. 21, in translating *prognôsia* as "introduction" or "preliminary knowledge," but as Festugière indicates (NF 1:41 n. 30) the word is commonly used as prophetic knowledge or knowledge of God, and could refer to the discussion of the name of God in §§ 13–17.

115 The Stoic extra-mundane void has no real "existence" per se, cf. Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 86–87.

116 Ferguson (Scott 4:36off.) sees the dialogue reflecting a Stoic-Aristotelian discussion of the void, citing Phil. Alex., *Plant.* 7–10 and Cleom., *Mot. circ.* 1.1.

117 Löhr, *Verherrlichung*, 303–4. Löhr hedges his bets however, and keeps the option open that the treatise could have been a "Vorbereitungstext in den Zusammenhang eines Mysteriums."

anachronistic in the Hermetic context,[118] and will endeavor to show that the text fits well on the preparatory stage of the way of Hermes.

The main tenet of the treatise, which we will find recurs in other treatises belonging to this stage of the way, is that the good only exists in God, and nowhere else:

οὔτε γὰρ τῶν ἄλλων λεγομένων θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων οὔτε δαιμόνων τις δύναται κἂν κατὰ ποσονοῦν ἀγαθὸς εἶναι ἢ μόνος ὁ θεός. καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι μόνον καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο. τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πάντα ἀχώρητά ἐστι τῆς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσεως· σῶμα γάρ εἰσι καὶ ψυχή, τόπον οὐκ ἔχοντα χωρῆσαι δυνάμενον τὸ ἀγαθόν.

Except God alone, none of the other beings called gods nor any human nor any demon can be good, in any degree. That good is he alone, and none other. All others are incapable of containing the nature of the good because they are body and soul and have no place that can contain the good.[119]

It would seem that, as Festugière stated, "nous nous trouvons en plein dualisme."[120] Those who call anything else good do so out of ignorance of the true state of things, and indeed to do so is considered impious (§§ 15–16). Consequently, we must infer that the candidate is expected to change his focus from everything he used to view as good—worldly possessions, bodily pleasure, even gods and demons[121]—towards the only thing that is good by nature, namely God. This foreknowledge of the true nature of things can thus be considered a spiritual exercise, similar to the Stoic use of physics: by realizing the true nature of corporeal phenomena, one will avoid the mistake of judging them to be good in themselves.[122]

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118 Cf. for example Löhr, *Verherrlichung*, 215, where the author states that the combination of a Platonic view of God as good and an injunction to worship this god, is an example "wie der Verfasser philosophische und religiöse Traditionen miteinander verbindet."

119 CH II, 14. Trans. Copenhaver.

120 FR 4:63–64: this motif is developed in CH II and VI "en termes quasi semblables," as we shall shortly confirm. It also reappears in several of the other treatises we have placed at this stage of the way.

121 Löhr, *Verherrlichung*, 217, overinterprets when he finds euhemeristic tendencies behind this statement. Surely what is meant is earthly gods, who have statues as corporeal bodies, cf. *Ascl.* 37–38.

122 Hadot, *Exercises spirituels*, 145ff.

God is above essence (ἀνουσίαστον), while the divine is unborn and essential (τὸ δὲ θεῖον … τὸ ἀγέννητον … οὐσιῶδές, § 4–5). This corresponds more or less with Iamblichus' Hermetic system, although there the essential god would have been called self-begotten and the god above essence would be the unbegotten one. Moreover, the derivation of the divine from God resembles CH IX, where divinity (θειότης) relates to God as understanding (νοήσις) relates to mind.[123] Hermes goes on to say that God is not mind, nor spirit or light, but the reason for the existence of mind, spirit and light.[124] This God corresponds to the sovereign power above mind in the *Poimandres*, the henadic prenoetic principle found in the Hermetic system of Iamblichus, whose mind becomes hypostatized as the monad.[125] The total mind, we learn, has as emanations (ἀκτῖνές) the good, truth and the archetypes of spirit and soul.[126] The good, for its part, is co-extensive with the existence (ὕπαρξις) of all things, both the noetic incorporeal beings and the sensible corporeal things.[127] We thus have an emanatory scheme:

God
Divinity = Total Nous
The good = Existence

Incorporeal noetic beings
Corporeal sensible things

Oddly enough, however, Hermes then goes on to say that God has two appellations (προσηγορίαι), the father and the good,[128] and that God is the good and

123 CH IX, 1: ἡ μὲν γὰρ θειότης ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ γίνεται, ἡ δὲ νόησις ὑπὸ τοῦ νοῦ, ἀδελφὴ οὖσα τοῦ λόγου· ἢ ὄργανα ἀλλήλων.

124 CH II, 14: ὁ οὖν θεὸς οὐ νοῦς ἐστιν, αἴτιος δὲ τοῦ ⟨νοῦν⟩ εἶναι, οὐδὲ πνεῦμα, αἴτιος δὲ τοῦ εἶναι πνεῦμα, οὐδὲ φῶς, αἴτιος δὲ τοῦ φῶς εἶναι.

125 Cf. above, chap. 3.6. Löhr, *Verherrlichung*, 210, misses this parallel, though he cites the passage of Iamblichus elsewhere.

126 CH II, 12:—τὸ οὖν ἀσώματον τί ἐστι;—νοῦς ὅλος ἐξ ὅλου ἑαυτὸν ἐμπεριέχων, ἐλεύθερος σώματος παντός, ἀπλανής, ἀπαθής, ἀναφής, αὐτὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἑστώς, χωρητικὸς τῶν πάντων καὶ σωτήριος τῶν ὄντων, οὗ ὥσπερ ἀκτῖνές εἰσι τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἡ ἀλήθεια, τὸ ἀρχέτυπον πνεύματος, τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ψυχῆς.

127 CH II, 15: τοσοῦτον γάρ ἐστι τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τὸ μέγεθος ὅσον ἐστὶν ὕπαρξις πάντων τῶν ὄντων, καὶ σωμάτων καὶ ἀσωμάτων, καὶ αἰσθητῶν καὶ νοητῶν.

128 Ibid.: ὅθεν τὸν θεὸν δυσὶ ταύταις ταῖς προσηγορίαις σέβεσθαι δεῖ. Scott (2:106–7) thought the two appellations were the good and God, not father (which is only supplied in § 17), but cf. Löhr, *Verherrlichung*, 216 n. 1193.

nothing else.[129] The only way to make sense of this, it seems to me, would be to say that all the top three levels of the scheme are in fact hypostases of God, just as in the Hermetic system of Iamblichus we find a threefold pre-essential one, who generates himself as mind, from whom the demiurgic mind is an emanation. Since the appellation father is said to derive from his creation of everything (§ 17), it also makes good sense to identify the god called good and father with the demiurgic nous. However, the aim of the treatise is not to present a systematic exposition of the divine hypostases, but to emphasize that the good can only be found in the realm above even the incorporeal noetic beings. Everything else than God consists of body and soul, which does not have room to contain the magnitude of the good.[130]

Where does this leave humans? For one thing, when one recognizes that God is the only truly good, it is necessary to worship him by praising his two appellations of the good and the father. God is father because he creates everything, and therefore it is necessary to imitate him in this regard and beget children. This should warn us against automatically expect anti-cosmic behavior from people who see the world as devoid of the good.[131] Indeed, those who die without progeny will suffer punishments from demons after death, and in the next incarnation the soul will receive a body that is neither male nor female and is accursed by the sun.[132]

Festugière brilliantly explains this passage, which he sees as substantially derived from Egyptian traditions.[133] In CH X, 2–3, the sun is the conduit through which fathers on earth get the urge to procreate from the example of God, who there too is called the good and father. The sun therefore takes an active interest in seeing that humans beget children, and this explains why it will curse those who are childless by their own volition.[134] The soul of the childless one

129 CH II, 16: ὁ οὖν θεὸς ⟨τὸ⟩ ἀγαθόν, καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὁ θεός.

130 CH II, 14: τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πάντα ἀχώρητά ἐστι τῆς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσεως· σῶμα γάρ εἰσι καὶ ψυχή, τόπον οὐκ ἔχοντα χωρῆσαι δυνάμενον τὸ ἀγαθόν.

131 Cf. Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, passim.

132 CH II, 17: δίκην οὗτος δίδωσι μετὰ θάνατον τοῖς δαίμοσιν. ἡ δὲ τιμωρία ἐστὶν ἥδε, τὴν τοῦ ἀτέκνου ψυχὴν εἰς σῶμα καταδικασθῆναι μήτε ἀνδρὸς μήτε γυναικὸς φύσιν ἔχοντος, ὅπερ ἐστὶ κατηραμένον ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἡλίου.

133 Festugière, "Hermetica," 13ff.

134 Löhr, *Verherrlichung*, 240–41, protests that CH X, 2–3 cannot be used here, since it "sagt nicht dasselbe" as CH II, 17. Granted that CH X mentions no curse, but the same epithets used for God, and the notion of a sun that takes an active interest in human procreation certainly make the parallel valid. On the contrary, the parallel adduced by Löhr (*Verherrlichung*, n. 1304), the *Mishnah Yevamot* 8.4–6, does not say that the childless one is cursed by God, merely that some people are *saris* (eunuchs) by the sun, meaning that

is after death handed over to demons, who take their revenge on it by placing it in a new body. The revenge (τιμωρία) might thus allude to the avenging demons (τιμωροί δαίμονες), who can mete out their vengeance either in the aerial Hades or in the body of those who are deprived of nous.[135] Festugière points out that demons are arrayed under the sun in CH XVI, and that demons are put in charge of humans at their birth, according to their horoscope. The body with neither female nor male genitalia is the eunuch, and Vettius Valens mentions certain horoscopes that produce eunuchs.[136] Festugière tentatively suggests that we are dealing here with rebirth into the body of a lizard, since the lizard is said to be cursed by the gods and the sun in an Egyptian magical papyrus, designed to prevent a husband from having sex with his wife and to cause men to loose their virility.[137] Löhr wishes to see the passage as Jewish, derived from the Mishnah where some are born eunuchs "from the sun," but does not explain how the metemsomatosis would fit in here, and fails to explain that there is no mention of any curse.[138]

We have seen in Hermetic sources that rebirth in animal bodies is unbecoming of human souls, happening only to those deprived of their human rationality. Furthermore, we know from the testimony of Olympiodorus, the 5th–6th century alchemist, that there was an *Ancient Book* (ἀρχαϊκή βίβλος) of Hermes in which he said that the cock and the mole were once humans who had been

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they were born eunuchs. There is no mention of any curse, nor of demons or metemsomatosis, as in CH II and X. Löhr thinks it "methodisch fragwürdig" to combine several different Hermetic texts, here II, X and XVI, but seems to have no problem combining several non-hermetic texts to elucidate the same passage.

135 Post-mortem revenge: CH I, 24; X, 16; *Ascl.* 28 [NHC VI 76,22–23]; SH VII, 1–3; XXIII, 62. Avengers in the body: CH I, 23; XIII, 7–12; XVI; 14–15; *Ascl.* 25 = NHC VI 73,5–12. Löhr, *Verherrlichung,* 245–46, does not mention any of these parallels, pointing instead to parallels such as the late *Pistis Sophia* 144, Plut., *Vita Caes.* 69.2 (where the vengeful demon of Caesar persecutes his murderers; obviously a reference to Mars Ultor!), and PGM VII.302–303, where the avengers are summoned. The latter spell probably derives from a Hermetic milieu, and follows directly after a drawing of an ibis. Cf. Christian H. Bull, "The Great Demon of the Air and the Punishment of Souls: The *Perfect Discourse* (NHC VI,*8*) and Hermetic and Monastic Demonologies," in *Nag Hammadi à 70 ans. Qu'avons-nous appris? Nag Hammadi at 70: What Have We Learned?* (ed. Eric Crégheur, Louis Painchaud and Tuomas Rasimus; BCNH.É 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 105–20.

136 Festugière, "Hermetica," 15.

137 Festugière, "Hermetica," 18, referring to P. Brit Mus. 10588 (= PGM LXI.44–45: καλαβ[ῶτα, κα]λαβῶτα, ὡς ἐμ[ίση]σέν σε Ἥλιος καὶ πάντ[ες θεοί], ln. 50–51: [καλαβῶτα, κ]αλαβῶτα, μισείτ[ω σε ὁ Ἥλιος κ]αὶ ἄνθρω[ποι πάντες]; Pliny, *Nat.* 30.41. Hundreds of jars filled with lizards where found "at a Roman Period settlement near Lisht," cf. Geraldine Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1994), 80.

138 Löhr does not even mention the lizard-theory of Festugière.

cursed by the sun. The human who became a mole had revealed the mysteries of the sun, and was therefore transformed to an animal and made blind.[139] Furthermore, Aelian informs us that the Egyptians considered the sow to be most hateful to the sun and the moon.[140] A reasonable conjecture would be that the *Ancient Book* of Hermes contained a passage on a human who died without progeny, and was therefore turned into a sexless lizard or some other animal. The mention of a rebirth into a body neither male nor female as a curse thus seems to correspond best with the lizard, although it may also refer to a eunuch.[141]

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139 Olymp., *Art. sac.*: "Again Hermes spoke enigmatically about the egg in *The Pyramid*, when he said that the egg is truly the essence of malachite (?) and the moon. For the egg also calls forth the golden-haired cosmos. For Hermes says that the cock is a human who has been cursed by the sun. He states this in the *Ancient Book*. In it, he also makes a note on the mole, that it too was a human. And it was cursed by God because it divulged the mysteries of the sun. And he made it blind. It (the mole) is careless, and if it is first seen by the sun, the earth does not receive it until evening. He (Hermes) says that this is 'because it knows what kind of shape the sun has.' And he (God) banished it (the mole) in (read: from) the Black Land (i.e. Egypt), since it was a law-breaker who had revealed the mystery to the humans." (My trans. *CAAG* 2:101–2: πάλιν ἐν τῇ πυραμίδι ὁ Ἑρμῆς τὸ ὠὸν αἰνιττόμενος, κυρίως οὐσίαν καὶ χρυσοκόλλης καὶ σελήνης ἔλεγεν τὸ ὠόν. καὶ γὰρ τὸ ὠὸν προκαλεῖται τὸν χρυσόκομον κόσμον· ἄνθρωπον γὰρ εἶναί φησιν τὸν ἀλεκτρυόνα ὁ Ἑρμῆς καταραθέντα ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου. ταῦτα λέγει ἐν τῇ ἀρχαϊκῇ βίβλῳ. ἐν αὐτῷ δὲ μέμνηται καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἀσπάλακος, ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ἄνθρωπος ἦν· καὶ ἐγένετο θεοκατάρατος, ὡς ἐξειπὼν τὰ τοῦ ἡλίου μυστήρια. καὶ ἐποίησεν αὐτὸν τυφλόν. ἀμέλει καὶ ἐὰν φθάσῃ θεωρηθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου, οὐ δέχεται αὐτὸν ἡ γῆ ἕως ἑσπέρας. λέγει ὅτι «ὡς καὶ γιγνώσκων τὴν μορφὴν τοῦ ἡλίου ὁποία ἦν.» καὶ ἐξώρισεν αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ μελαίνῃ γῇ, ὡς παρανομήσαντα, καὶ ἐξειπόντα τὸ μυστήριον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις). On the mole and the cock, cf. *Cyr.* 1.10, 2.3, 3.3; Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 121–22; Maryse Waegemann, *Amulet and Alphabet: Magical Amulets in the First Book of Cyranides* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1987), 195–222. On the egg as calling forth the golden-haired cosmos, i.e. the sun, cf. PGM III.145, 379f.; VII.522; XII.100f. The cock is used regularly as sacrifice in the magical papyri: PGM IV.237; XII.312; XIII.377, 437–438. On the *Ancient Book*, cf. *Cyr.* 3.11, 5.14–16, 6.1; Max Wellmann, *Marcellus von Side als Arzt und die Koiraniden des Hermes Trismegistos* (Philologus Sup. 27.2; Leipzig: Dieterich, 1934), 13–19; André-Jean Festugière, "Un opuscule hermétique sur la pivoine," *VP* 2 (1942): 246–262 at 248, 254–55.

140 Ael., *Nat. an.* 10.16: πεπιστεύκασι δὲ Αἰγύπτιοι τὴν ὗν καὶ ἡλίῳ καὶ σελήνῃ ἐχθίστην εἶναι. It seems that the source of Aelian is Eudoxus, whom he quotes concerning the sow in the same passage.

141 Cf. Arthur D. Nock, "The Lizard in Magic and Religion," in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (ed. Zeph Stewart; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 1:271–76; id., "Eunuchs in Ancient Religion," in ibid., 1:7–15.

4.6.2 *CH VI: That the Good is in God Alone, and Nowhere Else*[142]

I follow Tage Petersen in placing this treatise at one of the early stages of the way of Hermes.[143] As the title implies, all of CH VI is an elaboration of the statement we find in CH II, that the good can only be found in God. Since passions abound in the world the good is excluded, for "where there is passion there is nothing good, and where there is good there is no passion; for where there is day there is no night, and where there is night there is no day."[144] This is clearly not merely an analytical observation, but entails an exhortation for the disciple to minimize the passions and to look beyond the world for the sole good, namely God. The anti-cosmic tendency is however tempered by the doctrine of participation in the good: there is in matter a participation with everything else, including the good, and the cosmos can be seen to participate in the good only in its activity of creating all things.[145] This likely builds on CH II, where we learned that God has two proper designations: the good and the father. The cosmos in CH VI is not good in itself, but in its capacity of creating it can be seen to participate in the second divine hypostasis, the father.

Likewise, the good exists in humans only to the relative degree that evil is lacking. In other words, by minimizing the grip of the passions on the body one can reach an approximation of the good. However, most people confuse the passions with the good, a standard Platonic elitist assertion: most people are in the grip of their passions, while the enlightened few have realized that passions are the main obstacle to the good. The ignorant are lead astray (πλάνη) because of the lack of goodness on earth.[146] They do not follow the way of reverence, and even dare to say that the human is good.[147] On the other hand, the knowledge of the good, namely that it is not to be found in the cosmos, is given by God to some people.[148] These people will realize that God is the same as

142 CH VI, t.: ὅτι ἐν μόνῳ θεῷ τὸ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν, ἀλλαχόθι δὲ οὐδαμοῦ.

143 Petersen, "Hermetic Dualism?," 98.

144 CH VI, 2: ὅπου δὲ πάθος, οὐδαμοῦ τὸ ἀγαθόν· ὅπου δὲ τὸ ἀγαθόν, οὐδαμοῦ οὐδὲ ἓν πάθος, ὅπου γὰρ ἡμέρα, οὐδαμοῦ νύξ, ὅπου δὲ νύξ, οὐδαμοῦ ἡμέρα. My trans. This passage is quoted in *On the Trinity*, attributed to Didymus the Blind, and in Cyril of Alexandria's *Against Julian*. Cf. Bull, "Hermes between Pagans and Christians," 235.

145 CH VI, 2: ὥσπερ δὲ μετουσία πάντων ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ δεδομένη, οὕτω καὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ἀγαθὸς ὁ κόσμος, καθὰ καὶ αὐτὸς πάντα ποιεῖ, ⟨ὡς⟩ ἐν τῷ μέρει τοῦ ποιεῖν ἀγαθὸς εἶναι. ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις πᾶσιν οὐκ ἀγαθός· καὶ γὰρ παθητός ἐστι, καὶ κινητός, καὶ παθητῶν ποιητής.

146 CH VI, 4: ἡ πλάνη ἡ ἀπουσία ἐνθάδε τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐστι.

147 CH VI, 6: ὅθεν οἱ ἀγνοοῦντες καὶ μὴ ὀδεύσαντες τὴν περὶ τῆς εὐσεβείας ὁδόν, καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν τολμῶσι λέγειν ἄνθρωπον.

148 CH VI, 4: κἀγὼ δὲ χάριν ἔχω τῷ θεῷ, τῷ εἰς νοῦν μοι βαλόντι κἂν περὶ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ὅτι ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν αὐτὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἶναι. In CH V, 2, God appears to those he wishes to appear to, and they can see him in the world through the eyes of the heart/nous. Petersen

the good and the beautiful, which cannot be seen with the eye, "for there is one way that leads back to it: reverence together with knowledge."[149] The remedy proposed for the human's situation in the cosmos is thus the same as in CH II, reverence for God combined with knowledge of the good, a knowledge which must necessarily imply, in the optic of the Hermetist, that one seeks to minimize the grip of the passions by constantly recalling that the true good is above the material world. The present treatise thus demonstrates that for the Hermetist, knowledge of the world and the lack of true good therein is part of a program of defeating one's passions, or a therapy of desire to borrow the title of Martha Nussbaum's well-known monograph.[150]

4.6.3 *SH II A–B: On Truth and Reverence*

In CH II, the good and truth were emanations of the total mind, and just as CH VI is concerned with the good and its absence from the cosmos, SH II A claims that truth can only exist in the unchangeable realm above the cosmos. The purpose of this meditation on truth is for Tat to see everything on earth for what it truly is, namely mere impressions and appearances (φαντασίαι εἰσὶ καὶ δόξαι), dim reflections of the realm above.[151] This is very close to the Stoic disciplining of sense impressions, in which one should endeavor to see them as they really are and not be deceived by outer appearances.[152] Since everything on earth changes, including humans, there is no truth here below.[153] The sun is however an exception, and likewise the eternal bodies of the wandering planets possess something of the true:

("Hermetic Dualism," 100) rightly argues that this is a more advanced stage of the way. Cf. Iamb., *Myst*. 8.6.

149 CH VI, 5: ἐὰν περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ζητῇς, καὶ περὶ τοῦ καλοῦ ζητεῖς. μία γάρ ἐστιν εἰς αὐτὸ ἀποφέρουσα ὁδός, ἡ μετὰ γνώσεως εὐσέβεια. My trans. It is unclear if one should interpret ἀποφέρουσα as bringing one *back*, i.e. to whence humans came originally, as in the *Poimandres*. This is often implied in the verb, but it could also simply mean "lead to." (LSJ)

150 Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

151 SH II A, 5: ἐὰν οὖν ἕκαστον τούτων οὕτω νοῶμεν ἢ ὁρῶμεν ὡς ἔστιν, ἀληθῆ καὶ νοοῦμεν καὶ ὁρῶμεν· ἐὰν δὲ παρὰ τὸ ὄν, οὐδὲν ἀληθὲς οὔτε νοήσομεν οὔτ' εἰσόμεθα.; 6: περὶ δὲ ἀληθείας νοῆσαι ἐνίους τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οἷς ἐὰν ὁ θεὸς τὴν θεοπτικὴν δωρήσηται δύναμιν γενέσθαι.; 7: φαντασίαι εἰσὶ καὶ δόξαι πάντα. On the *theoptikê dynamis*, cf. NF 3:10 n. 10: SH VI, 18; VII, 3; *Ascl*. 29; Lact., *Inst.* 7.9.11 (= FH 14); Iamb., *Myst.* 8.6 (= FH 16).

152 Cf. Hadot, *Exercices spirituels*, 168–69, 174.

153 Cf. *Ascl*. 32: *At intellectus qualitatis qualitasque sensus summi dei sola ueritas est, cuius ueritatis in mundo nequidem extrema linea umbra dinoscitur. Ubi enim quid temporum dimensione dinoscitur, ibi sunt mendacia; ubi geniturae, ibi errores uidentur*.

πᾶν μὲν οὖν τὸ γεννητὸν καὶ μεταβλητὸν οὐκ ἀληθές· ὑπὸ δὲ τοῦ προπάτορος γενόμενα τὴν ὕλην δύναται ἀληθῆ[154] ἐσχηκέναι. ἔχει δέ τι καὶ ταῦτα ψεῦδος ἐν τῇ μεταβολῇ· οὐδὲν γὰρ μὴ μένον ἐφ' αὑτῷ ἀληθές ἐστιν.

– ἀληθές, ὦ πάτερ, τί οὖν ἂν εἴποι τις;

– μόνον τὸν ἥλιον παρὰ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα μὴ μεταβαλλόμενον, μένοντα δὲ ἐφ' αὑτῷ, ἀλήθειαν, διὸ καὶ τὴν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ πάντων δημιουργίαν αὐτὸς μόνος πεπίστευται, ἄρχων πάντων καὶ ποιῶν πάντα· ὃν καὶ σέβομαι καὶ προσκυνῶ αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀλήθειαν·

Everything that is born and changeable is not true, yet since they are born of the forefather it is possible that they have received the matter that is true. However, even these have some kind of falsehood, on account of their change, for nothing that does not remain itself is true.

– Then what could one say is true, father?

– Only the sun is truth, since in contrast to all the others it does not change but remains itself, which is also why it alone has been entrusted with the creation of all the things in the world, ruling and making everything, whom I honor and whose truth I worship. After the one and first I recognize it as the creator.

SH II A, 13–14

There is thus some room for encosmic truth in the celestial realms, and religious reverence for the sun and stars is implied. The notion that the stars have an especially fine matter is known in other Hermetica.[155] The only truth below the stars is found in representations receiving emanations from above: "when the impression receives the outpouring from above, it becomes an imitation of truth, and without the force from above it remains false."[156] It is possible that these representations are images of the gods, which indeed receive demonic emanations from above, according to the *Perfect Discourse* (*Ascl.* 37), and reflect the noetic world in CH XVII.[157] The passage thus opposes images that contain emanations from above to those without it, and goes on to describe the latter as having eyes without seeing, and ears without hearing, classical tropes

154 A variant reading (ms L) is ἀληθῶς.

155 *Ascl.* 22–23 = NHC VI 67,12–14 & 69,9–19; CH VIII, 3; Iamb., *Myst.* 8.3. Cf. above, chap. 3.6.

156 SH II A, 4: ὅταν δ' ἄνωθεν τὴν ἐπίρροιαν ἔχῃ ἡ φαντασία, τῆς ἀληθείας γίγνεται μίμησις· χωρὶς δὲ τῆς ἄνωθεν ἐνεργείας, ψεῦδος καταλείπεται· Cf. *Disc.8–9* [NHC VI,6] 57,3–4 where God is asked for "the truth in the image": ⲡⲓϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲛⲁϯ [ⲛⲁ]ⲛ ⲛ̀ⲧⲉ̀ⲗⲏⲑⲉⲓⲁ ⲉ̄ⲛ ⲑⲓⲕⲱⲛ.

157 On the cult of statues, cf. van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 185–222. In my view, *Ascl.* and CH XVII are not incommensurate, *pace* van den Kerchove.

in the polemics against idolatry.[158] The passage is however highly unclear, and it might be that the impressions that contain an outpouring from above are simply sense impressions which participate in truth.

There is not much focus on human potential in SH II A. They are born as changing, composite creatures, and are therefore not true (§ 11). The only rebirth mentioned is the chain of births and destructions: "decay follows every generation so that it can be regenerated."[159] The only sliver of hope for humans, who live in a world of representations, is to receive aid from above, which is only given to a small number of people:

ἀλήθεια μὲν οὐδαμῶς ἔστιν ἐν τῇ γῇ, ὦ Τάτ, οὔτε γενέσθαι δύναται, περὶ δὲ ἀληθείας νοῆσαι ἐνίους τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οἷς ἐὰν ὁ θεὸς τὴν θεοπτικὴν δωρήσηται δύναμιν γενέσθαι.

Truth is nowhere on earth, Tat, nor can it come to be there, but concerning truth, it is possible for some of the humans to have understanding, if God were to grant that the power to see God comes to them.

SH II A, 6

Now, it is just such powers from above, ten in number, which constitute the rebirth in CH XIII, after which Tat becomes divine and thus able to see God, as we shall see. The way to attain this power of divine vision becomes clearer in the second part of the text, SH II B, which probably was detached from SH II A by Stobaeus and put in another section of his anthology.[160] Tat asks: "If there is nothing true down here, then what should one do, father, in order to lead a good life?"[161] The answer is reverence (εὐσέβεια), the highest part of which is philosophy (φιλοσοφία).[162] A reverent person who practices

158 Scott (3:313) refers to *Ps.* 113.13. The Hermetic passage is about a portrait, not an idol, but it is possible that the portrait which has eyes and ears but does not see or hear are implicitly contrasted to statues of the gods, who do. Cf. also Plato, *Resp.* 2.382a; *Theaet.* 189c.

159 SH II A, 16: πάσῃ δὲ γενέσει φθορὰ ἕπεται, ἵνα πάλιν γένηται.

160 This was first seen by Scott, and accepted by Nock-Festugière, the latter positing that the original text ran SH II B, 1—SH II A—SH II B, 2ff., because SH II B, 1 is an introduction, whereas SH II B, 2 follows upon the end of SH II A. Another possibility is that these texts were in sequence in a collection of *Hermes to Tat*, perhaps the *Genikoi* or *Diexodikoi*, which were meant to be read sequentially.

161 SH II B, 2: τί οὖν ἄν τις πράττων, ὦ πάτερ, εἰ μηδέν ἐστιν ἀληθὲς ἐνθάδε, καλῶς διαγάγοι τὸν βίον.

162 Cf. CH VI, 5, where reverence is coupled with knowledge. Furthermore, corresponding to the twin virtues of reverence and philosophy are the vices godlessness and false belief or illusion in CH XII, 3: νόσος δὲ μεγάλη ψυχῆς ἀθεότης, ἔπειτα δόξα.

philosophy will make his soul light, so that it may perceive the good and true while still in the body, and he will therefore live well and die happily, since the soul knows where to fly when leaving the body (§§ 3–4). The spiritual exercise is seen as a battle against oneself (§ 6: αὐτὴν ἑαυτῇ πολεμῆσαι), since one part tends upwards and the other downwards, just like in the chariot allegory of Plato's *Phaedrus* (246a–254e). One must therefore practice leaving the body even before death, so that when the final quittance occurs one knows the way upward:

οὗτός ἐστιν, ὦ τέκνον, ὁ τῆς ἐκεῖσε ὁδοῦ ἀγωγός· δεῖ γάρ σε, ὦ τέκνον, πρῶτον τὸ σῶμα πρὸ τοῦ τέλους ἐγκαταλεῖψαι καὶ νικῆσαι τὸν ἐναγώνιον βίον καὶ νικήσαντα οὕτως ἀνελθεῖν.

This, my son, is the guide to the way there. Indeed, you must first leave the body behind before the end, my son, and be victorious in the struggle of life, and when you have been victorious you ascend in this way.

SH II B, 8

The notion of philosophy as a practice for death is well known, but here it is explicitly said that the soul must leave the body in an ecstatic ascent, so that it will also be able to ascend after death.[163] This neglect of the body as the one way leading to truth, in a visionary ascent, is a strong parallel to CH IV, as we have seen, although in SH II B the tone is not so exhortative. The choice has already been made, and Tat only needs to be strengthened in his determination to stay on the way, which "is both sacred and level, but difficult to travel for the soul which is still in the body."[164] The practice of elevating one's soul from the falsehood of the phenomenal world up to truth itself could certainly be construed as "making oneself a stranger to the world" (CH XIII, 1). However, the visionary ascent itself does not seem to have been practiced at this stage of the way of Hermes, but only after the disciple has been reborn and rendered divine is he able to see God.

4.6.4 *SH XI: Preparatory Sentences*

Another Stobaeic treatise, SH XI, is also likely to belong to this stage of teaching. This is a collection of short Hermetic sayings (κεφαλαία) which are meant as summaries (περιοχαί) of preceding Hermetica.[165] One should note

163 Cf. CH XII, 12.

164 SH II B, 5: σεμνὴ αὕτη ὁδὸς καὶ λεία, χαλεπὴ δὲ ψυχῇ ὀδεῦσαι ἐν σώματι οὔσῃ.

165 Cf. now Pleše "Dualism in the Hermetic Writings," 264–66; Radek Chlup, "The Ritualization of Language in the Hermetica," *Aries* 7 (2007): 133–59 at 137–41.

that in the *Anthology* of Stobaeus, SH XI follows directly upon SH II B with no sign of division, so it may very well be part of the same text, or at least the same collection of treatises of Hermes to Tat. Scott, who first divided the fragments, claims that SH II A–B and XI have nothing to do with each other, based on internal evidence that he does not proceed to offer in his subsequent commentary.[166] On the contrary, he often refers to agreements between SH XI and II A–B. Festugière originally took the fragments to be part of the same text,[167] but later rescinded this view because Hermes says he has written "several treatises" (πλειόνων λόγων) in SH XI, 3, while in SH II B, 1, he says that he writes the treatise first (πρῶτον τόδε συγγράφω).[168] Strangely, this argument of Festugière is due to two different translations of πρῶτον in SH II B, 1: In the introduction to the Budé edition he translates temporally: "I write for the first time,"[169] whereas in the translation proper he translates it as denoting priority: "I write in the first place …"[170] The whole argument thus hinges on whether one takes πρῶτον as meaning that SH II B claims to be the first treatise written by Hermes, or that it is written "first and foremost for the sake of love for humankind and reverence towards God."[171] The second option seems the more likely one, and SH XI could consequently be the sequel to SH II A–B. Furthermore, the opening words of SH XI, νῦν δέ, ὦ τέκνον, certainly seem to mark a transition rather than the start of a treatise, and the only way for the reader to know the identity of the son addressed by Hermes would be if a text such as SH II A–B preceded it, where the son is identified as Tat.

If we are right to assign SH XI to the same treatise as SH II A–B, this would indeed make for a good ending to the exhortation to despise the falsehood of the world of representations and do battle against one's lower urges. The text provides a series of sayings which the disciple is supposed to memorise, for they are meant as aides-memoires to the other teachings of Hermes. This was

166 Scott 3:403. He thinks it most likely that Stobaeus read II B and XI as distinct discourses, and divided them with a *lemma*, reading τοῦ αὐτοῦ, which was subsequently lost.

167 André-Jean Festugière, "Le 'Logos' Hermétique d'enseignement," *REG* 55 (1942): 77–108 at 97. This assertion was removed from the reprint in FR 2:28–50.

168 NF 3:xxiii.

169 NF 3:xvii: "C'est par amour des hommes, mon enfant, et par piété envers Dieu que, pour la première fois, je compose le traité que voici."

170 NF 3:13: "Pour moi, mon enfant, c'est par amour pour les hommes et par piété envers Dieu que je compose en premier lieu ce traité."

171 SH II B, 1: ἐγώ, ὦ τέκνον, καὶ τῆς φιλανθρωπίας ἕνεκα καὶ τῆς πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείας πρῶτον τόδε συγγράφω.

standard practice for ancient philosophical schools.[172] As J.-P. Mahé has amply demonstrated, collections of sayings played a crucial role in the development of Hermetic treatises, and were probably derived from Egyptian wisdom texts as well as Hellenistic gnomologies.[173] The discovery of the *Definitions of Hermes*, preserved partially in Greek and fully only in an Armenian translation, prompted this theory, since it contains sentences also found in the *Poimandres* and other Hermetica. The *Definitions* and the sentences of SH XI may both have been utilized as propaedeutics to the rites of rebirth and ascent.

The sentences of SH XI are not to be seen as mere schooltexts, however. Hermes underlines the esoteric nature of the sayings by forbidding his son to share them with those who do not possess the right knowledge. The reason for this esotericism is interesting: Hermes states that it is not because of any *phthonos*, "jealousy" or "begrudging," that the teaching is guarded from the crowd, but rather because divulging it would make one appear as an object of ridicule to the unenlightened masses.[174] Furthermore, far from being of any help to the ignorant multitude, the doctrine of fate would impel them to wicked deeds, since they could then attribute all the blame for their wrongdoings to fate.[175] A little knowledge is thus a dangerous thing. The crowd should rather be kept ignorant (ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ), so that "fear of the unseen" will keep them in check.[176] This fear must relate to the punishments meted out by demons mentioned in the *Perfect Discourse*, which it "is necessary to believe in, and that you fear them, so that we shall not fall into them."[177] SH XI deals with fate

172 Festugière is certainly correct in identifying this as a *Schulbetrieb*.

173 HHE 2:275–320, 407–57.

174 On hoarding jealously, cf. Mason, "Philosophiai," 41, 44, referring to Jos., *Ant.* 1.11; Luc., *Nigr.* 6: ἐγὼ δὲ βουλοίμην ἄν, εἰ οἷόν τε, αὐτῶν ἀκοῦσαι τῶν λόγων· οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ φθονεῖν αὐτῶν οἶμαι θέμις.

175 SH XI, 3–4: τὰς μέντοι πρὸς τοὺς πολλοὺς ὁμιλίας παραιτοῦ· φθονεῖν μὲν γάρ σε οὐ βούλομαι, μᾶλλον δὲ ὅτι τοῖς πολλοῖς δόξεις καταγέλαστος εἶναι … ἔχουσι δέ τι καὶ ἴδιον ἐν ἑαυτοῖς· τοὺς κακοὺς μᾶλλον παροξύνουσι πρὸς τὴν κακίαν· διὸ χρὴ τοὺς πολλοὺς φυλάττεσθαι μὴ νοοῦντας τῶν λεγομένων τὴν ἀρετήν … καταφρονῆσαν μὲν ⟨γὰρ⟩ τοῦ παντὸς ὡς γενητοῦ, τὰς δὲ αἰτίας τοῦ κακοῦ τῇ εἱμαρμένῃ ἀναφέρον, οὐκ ἀφέξεταί ποτε παντὸς ἔργου κακοῦ.

176 SH XI, 4: διὸ φυλακτέον αὐτούς, ὅπως ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ ὄντες ἔλαττον ὦσι κακοὶ φόβῳ τοῦ ἀδήλου.

177 NHC VI 77,28–30: ⲱ ⲁⲥⲕⲗⲏⲡⲓⲉ ⲉⲱⲱⲉ ⲁⲡⲓⲥⲧⲉⲩⲉ ⲉⲛⲁⲓ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲕ̄ⲣⲣⲟⲧⲉ ⲣⲏⲧⲟⲩ. The concern that astral fatality will absolve mankind from their crimes is echoed in the question of Tat in CH XII, 5: "If it is absolutely fated for some individual to commit adultery or sacrilege or to do some other evil, is such a person still to be punished when he has committed the act under the necessity of fate?" (εἰ γὰρ πάντως εἵμαρται τῷδέ τινι μοιχεῦσαι ἢ ἱεροσυλῆσαι ἢ ἄλλο τι κακὸν δρᾶσαι, καὶ κολάζεται [ἢ] ὁ ἐξ ἀνάγκης τῆς εἱμαρμένης δράσας τὸ ἔργον;).

in the sayings numbered 46 and 47 by convention: "(46) Providence is divine order; necessity is a servant of providence. (47) Fortune is an irregular motion, an apparition of a force, deceitful illusion."[178] These sayings, it seems, are summaries of SH VII and VIII, which should thus perhaps be considered earlier parts of the same Hermetic collection as that in which Stobaeus found SH II A–B and XI. The short fragment VII regards providence and necessity as part of divine order, as does saying 46, while justice is set over those who do not possess the power to see God (VII, 3: θεοπτικὴ δύναμις), since "they are subject to fate because of the forces of birth, but to justice because of their errors in life."[179]

Justice must thus be associated with the "exceedingly great demon revolving[180] in the middle of the universe, overlooking everything which is done on earth by the humans."[181] This great judging demon, placed in the middle between heaven and earth, is known both from the *Perfect Discourse* and the *Korê kosmou*.[182] SH VIII is likely to be from the same treatise as SH VII,[183] since it is in effect the answer to a follow-up question of Tat: "remind me also: what happens according to providence, what according to necessity, and similarly according to fate?"[184] The answer is that "reason is according to providence, while the irrational is according to necessity and the attributes qualifying the body is according to fate."[185] Thus, the human who identifies himself with his body, as CH IV warns against, will be subject to necessity and fate, but the one who acts according to reason will be in harmony with providence. That this is a choice can be deduced from sayings 18–21 of SH XI: "(18) There is nothing good on earth; there is nothing bad in heaven. (19) God

178 SH XI, 2: πρόνοια θεία τάξις, ἀνάγκη προνοίᾳ ὑπηρέτις. τύχη φορὰ ἄτακτος, ἐνεργείας εἴδωλον, δόξα ψευδής.

179 SH VII, 3: τῇ εἱμαρμένῃ ὑπόκεινται διὰ τὰς τῆς γενέσεως ἐνεργείας, τῇ δὲ δίκῃ διὰ τὰς ἐν τῷ βίῳ ἁμαρτίας.

180 Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 40b.

181 SH VII, 1: δαίμων γάρ τις μεγίστη τέτακται, ὦ τέκνον, ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ παντὸς εἱλουμένη, πάντα περιορῶσα τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς γινόμενα ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

182 Cf. above, chap. 3.1.

183 NF 3:lxi.

184 SH VIII, 1: ἔτι με ἀνάμνησον τίνα ἐστὶ τὰ κατὰ πρόνοιαν καὶ τίνα ⟨τὰ⟩ κατ' ἀνάγκην, ὁμοίως καὶ καθ' εἱμαρμένην.

185 SH VIII, 7: καὶ ὁ μὲν λόγος κατὰ πρόνοιαν, τὸ δὲ ἄλογον κατ' ἀνάγκην, τὰ δὲ περὶ τὸ σῶμα συμβεβηκότα καθ' εἱμαρμένην. Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 47e4, where the order of necessity is subordinated to mind (FR 2:119).

is good; the human is bad.[186] (20) The good is voluntary; the bad is involuntary. (21) The gods choose the good since it is good."[187] As in CH VI, it is obvious that the disciple needs to turn his gaze up from earth towards God and the good. The subsequent sentences (22–24) are unfortunately quite corrupt, but they deal with law and it is thus not unlikely that, as in SH VII, law and justice are thought to keep mankind away from the worst excesses of evil, in the absence of the good.[188]

Memorizing the sentences would thus constitute spiritual exercises designed to contrast imperishability/immovability and perishability/movability (1, 5, 9–11, 17), immortality and mortality (2–4, 8, 16, 30–39), heaven and earth (1, 25–29, 40–45), and God and humans (6, 7, 15, 19, 48). As in CH VI and SH II A–B, the earth is devoid of the good, and as in CH IV, humans, insofar as they are mortal, are evil: "(16) Nothing in the body is true; everything without a body is without falsehood (…) (48) What is God? Immutably good. What is a human? Mutably evil."[189] However, there are also sentences indicative of a more positive attitude to humans, although these are more ambiguous:

πρῶτον ὁ θεός, δεύτερον ὁ κόσμος, τρίτον ὁ ἄνθρωπος.
ὁ κόσμος διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ὁ δὲ ἄνθρωπος διὰ τὸν θεόν.
ψυχῆς τὸ μὲν αἰσθητικὸν θνητόν, τὸ δὲ λογικὸν ἀθάνατον.

(6) God is first, the world is second, the human is third.
(7) The world is for the sake of the human; the human is for the sake of god.
(8) The sensible part of the soul is mortal; the rational part is immortal.

186 Cf. the *Instruction of Amenemope* 18 (XIX, 14–15): "God is ever in his perfection, man is ever in his failure" (Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 2:157).

187 SH XI, 2: οὐδὲν ἀγαθὸν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, οὐδὲν κακὸν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. ὁ θεὸς ἀγαθός, ὁ ἄνθρωπος κακός. τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἑκούσιον, τὸ κακὸν ἀκούσιον. οἱ θεοὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ αἱροῦνται ὡς ἀγαθά ⟨…⟩. Festugière postulates a lacuna in saying 21: "les hommes choisissent les choses mauvaises comme bonnes." Cf. Plato, *Theaet*. 176a4–b1 (FR 2:120).

188 SH XI, 2: ἡ εὐνομία μεγάλου εὐνομία ἡ εὐνομία ὁ νόμος. θεῖος χρόνος νόμος ἀνθρώπινος. κακία κόσμου τρυφὴ χρόνος ἀνθρώπου φθορά. All of these sentences are obelized in the edition of Nock and Festugière.

189 SH XI, 2: οὐδὲν ἐν σώματι ἀληθές, ἐν ἀσωμάτῳ τὸ πᾶν ἀψευδές.… τί θεός; ἄτρεπτον ἀγαθόν. τί ἄνθρωπος; τρεπτὸν κακόν.

ὁ νοῦς ἐν τῷ θεῷ, ὁ λογισμὸς ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ· ὁ λογισμὸς ἐν τῷ νοί· ὁ νοῦς ἀπαθής.

τὸ ἀθάνατον οὐ μετέχει τοῦ θνητοῦ, τὸ δὲ θνητὸν τοῦ ἀθανάτου μετέχει.

(15) Mind is in God; reason is in the human; reason is in mind; mind is impassive.

(38) The immortal has no part in the mortal; but the mortal has some part in the immortal.

In light of the more direct sentences on the incommensurability between the human, the world, and God, the disciple would not necessarily have known what to do with these statements until they were expounded on later by the teacher, who could then give the sentences a "more mystical interpretation" (CH XIV, 1). Certainly, sentence 6 is a succinct statement of the Hermetic chain of being, which is often interpreted to mean that the world is the second god and the human is the third god.[190] The present treatise does not go so far, but holds out the soteriological potential of the rational part of the soul, which is said to be in mind, while mind is in God. The rational soul is thus the intermediary between the dichotomies set up in most of the sentences, tempering the absolute lack of the good in humans by their potential participation in God by means of mind.

4.6.5 *SH VI: Astrological Lore as Spiritual Progress*

The sixth Hermetic excerpt of Stobaeus gives us important evidence that astrological lore was an integral part of the Way of Hermes, and it gives us some clues about which stage it should be placed at:

ἐπεί μοι ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν Γενικοῖς λόγοις ὑπέσχου δηλῶσαι περὶ τῶν τριάκοντα ἓξ δεκανῶν, νῦν μοι δήλωσον περὶ αὐτῶν καὶ τῆς τούτων ἐνεργείας.

– οὐδεὶς φθόνος, ὦ Τάτ, καὶ ὁ κυριώτατος πάντων λόγος καὶ κορυφαιότατος οὗτος ἂν εἴη·

Since you promised me to explain the thirty-six decans in the earlier *General Discourses*, you must now explain them to me, and their influence as well.

– I will not begrudge you this, Tat, and it might indeed be the most important treatise of them all, and their crowning fruit.

SH VI, 1

We are thus approaching the completion of the genre of *Genikoi* treatises, and this introduction is quite similar to the one of CH XIII, where Tat also refers to

190 DH I, 1; CH VIII; X, 14; *Ascl.* 10.

a promise made by Hermes in the *Genikoi* and asks to learn the next step.[191] The statement that Hermes does not begrudge Tat means that he is now considered sufficiently advanced to receive this crowning teaching, as is made clear by the parallel in the *Perfect Discourse*, where Asclepius asks Hermes to allow Ammon to listen to the teaching as well, and is answered "No jealousy keeps Ammon from us … Call no one but Ammon lest the presence and interference of the many profane this most reverent discourse of so great a subject, for the mind is irreverent that would make public, by the awareness of the many, a treatise so very full of the majesty of divinity."[192] No jealousy (*inuidia* = φθόνος) against Ammon then, but some measure of jealousy is apparently required to guard divinity from the curiosity of the impure crowd. This inherent contradiction between secrecy and writing, which implies publication, is encountered often in the Hermetica.[193]

The teaching which follows is a basic theory of the thirty-six decans, Egypt's main contribution to Hellenistic astrology,[194] and this completes an earlier teaching of Hermes on the circle of the zodiac and the planets, which Tat is told to keep in mind.[195] Unlike many astrological manuals, which list the different properties of individual stars, constellations and decans, the present teaching is fairly general, dedicated mainly to explaining the cosmological placement of the decans. The earlier teaching dealing with astrological knowledge is perhaps identical to the *Genikoi* mentioned by Syncellus, which dealt with the Sothic cycle.[196] The importance of the present text lies rather in its insistence on astrological knowledge as propaedeutic for knowledge of God, as can be seen from the pious closing statement:

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191 CH XIII, 1: ἐν τοῖς Γενικοῖς, ὦ πάτερ, αἰνιγματωδῶς καὶ οὐ τηλαυγῶς ἔφρασας… (ἐμοῦ) πυθομένου τὸν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας λόγον μαθεῖν, ὅτι τοῦτον παρὰ πάντα μόνον ἀγνοῶ καὶ ἔφης, ὅταν μέλλῃς κόσμου ἀπαλλοτριοῦσθαι, παραδιδόναι μοι.

192 *Ascl.* 1: *Nulla inuidia Hammona prohibit a nobis … praeter Hammona nullum uocassis alium, ne tantae rei religiosissimus sermo multorum interuentu praesentiaque uioletur. tractatum enim tota numinis maiestate plenissimum inreligiosae mentis est multorum conscientia publicare*. Trans. Copenhaver. Cf. FR 2:28. On divine *aphthonos*, cf. CH IV, 3; V, 2; XVI, 5. In CH IV, 3 *phthonos* is said to be found in souls deprived of mind, and in XIII, 7 & 9 it is the eighth vice of the soul.

193 Cf., e.g., CH XIII, 13; XVI, 1–2; SH XI, 5.

194 On the decans see below, chap. 7.3.

195 SH VI, 2: ἔφαμέν σοι περὶ τοῦ ζῳδιακοῦ κύκλου, τοῦ καὶ ζῳοφόρου, καὶ τῶν πέντε πλανητῶν καὶ ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης καὶ τοῦ ἑκάστου τούτων κύκλου … οὕτως βούλομαί σε νοεῖν καὶ περὶ τῶν τριάκοντα ἓξ δεκανῶν μεμνημένον ἐκείνων, ἵν' εὔγνωστός σοι καὶ ὁ περὶ τούτων λόγος γένοιτο.

196 Cf. above, pp. 81–83.

ὁ ταῦτα μὴ ἀγνοήσας ἀκριβῶς δύναται νοῆσαι τὸν θεόν, εἰ δὲ καὶ τολμήσαντα δεῖ εἰπεῖν, καὶ αὐτόπτης γενόμενος θεάσασθαι καὶ θεασάμενος μακάριος γενέσθαι.

The one who is not ignorant of these things has the power to understand God accurately, and, if we must say it even more daringly, having come into his presence he is able to see him with his own eyes, and having seen him he is able to become blessed.

– μακάριος ὡς ἀληθῶς, ὦ πάτερ, ὁ τοῦτον θεασάμενος.
– ἀλλ' ἀδύνατον, ὦ τέκνον, τὸν ἐν σώματι τούτου εὐτυχῆσαι. δεῖ δὲ προγυμνάζειν αὑτοῦ τινα τὴν ψυχὴν ἐνθάδε, ἵνα ἐκεῖ γενομένη, ὅπου αὐτὴν ἔξεστι θεάσασθαι, ὁδοῦ μὴ σφαλῇ.

– Truthfully, the one who has seen God is blessed, father!
– However, it is impossible, my son, for this fortune to befall the one still in the body. But it is necessary for a person down here to exercise his own soul, so that when it arrives up there, where it is possible for it to see, it does not stray from the path.

(19.) ὅσοι δὲ ἄνθρωποι φιλοσώματοί εἰσιν, οὗτοι οὐκ ἄν ποτε θεάσαιντο τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ ὄψιν. οἷον γάρ ἐστι κάλλος, ὦ τέκνον, τὸ μήτε σχῆμα μήτε χρῶμα μήτε σῶμα ἔχον.

But as for all those who love their bodies, they will never see the vision of the beautiful and good. For such is the beautiful, my son, which possesses neither shape, nor color, nor body.

– εἴη δ' ἄν τι, ὦ πάτερ, χωρὶς τούτων καλόν;
– μόνος ὁ θεός, ὦ τέκνον, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ μεῖζόν τι ὂν τοῦ θεοῦ τὸ ὄνομα.

– But what might be beautiful without these things, father?
– Only God, my son, or rather that which is greater than the name of God.[197]

SH VI, 18–19

Again, it is the state of ignorance which must be defeated, in this case ignorance of astral phenomena. Overcoming ignorance gives one "the power to understand God accurately," which is synonymous with becoming a beholder (αὐτόπτης) of God. Festugière has pointed out that the term *autoptês* and its cognates are common in the magical papyri where the goal is to secure a personal vision of God, as well as in the account of Thessalos of Tralles, who

197 Accepting Nock's emendation of τοῦ ὀνόματος.

procured a vision of Asclepius from a Theban pagan priest.[198] As in CH I, 19; IV, 6; and XI, 21, love for the body is the main hindrance for this beatific vision in SH VI, and the remedy is to exercise one's soul. This passage is quite close to SH II B, 3–4, where the goal of the reverent soul is to make itself light while still in the body, so as to know where to fly when it leaves it.[199] The latter text also emphasises that the soul must leave the body temporarily while still alive, before the final separation at death, a point which is left vague in SH VI. The exercise of the soul must then consist of separating it from the body by means of contemplation of the incorporeal: the beauty which has neither shape, nor color, nor body. This same negative characterization can be found in other Stobaeic excerpts to Tat,[200] and Festugière locates its ultimate source in the *Phaedrus*.[201] Importantly, truth is described as unpredicated in much the same terms in CH XIII, where Tat undergoes purification in order to be able to leave the body.[202] Thus, knowledge of the astrological phenomena of SH VI is an important preparation for the soul to be able to leave the body, a stage which will only be realized later. A gnomic parallel is found in the *Definitions of Hermes to Asclepius*:

ὡς ἐν τῇ γαστρὶ τὸ σῶμα τελειωθὲν ἐξέρχεται, οὕτω καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ τελειωθεῖσα ἀπὸ σώματος ἐξέρχεται.

Just as the body, once it has gained perfection in the womb, goes out, likewise the soul, once it has gained perfection, goes out of the body.

198 NF 3:43 n. 33. Some manuscript traditions (BH; cf. Hans–Veit Friedrich, *Thessalos von Tralles: Griechisch und lateinisch* [Meisenh. a. Glan: Hain, 1968], 43) ascribe the account of Thessalos to Hermes Trismegistus instead. See below, chap. 8.4, for more on Thessalos.

199 SH II B, 3–4: ψυχὴ ἐν σώματι οὖσα καὶ κουφίσασα ἑαυτὴν ἐπὶ τὴν κατάληψιν τοῦ ὄντως ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ἀληθοῦς… μὴ ἀγνοούσης ποῦ αὐτὴν δεῖ ἀναπτῆναι.

200 Cf. SH I, 2: τὸ δὲ **ἀσώματον** καὶ ἀφανὲς καὶ **ἀσχημάτιστον** καὶ μηδὲ ἐξ ὕλης ὑποκείμενον; II A, 15: τὸν μὴ ἐξ ὕλης, τὸν **μὴ ἐν σώματι**, τὸν **ἀχρώματον**, τὸν **ἀσχημάτιστον**, τὸν ἄτρεπτον, τὸν μὴ ἀλλοιούμενον, τὸν ἀεὶ ὄντα; VIII, 2: τοῦτο μὲν οὖν **ἀχρώματον**, **ἀσχημάτιστον**, **ἀσώματον**, ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς πρώτης καὶ νοητῆς οὐσίας. Cf. also HO I, 1: ἡ ψυχὴ, **ἀσώματος** οὖσα καὶ **ἀσχημάτιστος** καὶ ἀμερὴς καὶ ἐναντία τοῖς τοῦ σώματος συμβεβηκόσι, σχήματι καὶ **χρόᾳ**.

201 NF 3:3 n. 8. Plato, *Phaedr*. 247c: ἡ γὰρ **ἀχρώματός** τε καὶ **ἀσχημάτιστος** καὶ ἀναφὴς οὐσία ὄντως οὖσα, ψυχῆς κυβερνήτῃ μόνῳ θεατὴ νῷ, περὶ ἣν τὸ τῆς ἀληθοῦς ἐπιστήμης γένος. Compare also *Gorg*. 474d: τὰ καλὰ πάντα, οἷον καὶ **σώματα** καὶ **χρώματα** καὶ **σχήματα** καὶ φωνὰς καὶ ἐπιτηδεύματα, which thus seems to be gainsaid by SH VI, 19.

202 CH XIII, 6: τὸ μὴ θολούμενον … τὸ μὴ διοριζόμενον, τὸ **ἀχρώματον**, τὸ **ἀσχημάτιστον**, τὸ ἄτρεπτον, τὸ γυμνόν, τὸ φαῖνον, τὸ αὐτῷ καταληπτόν, τὸ ἀναλλοίωτον ἀγαθόν, τὸ **ἀσώματον**; 15: καλῶς σπεύδεις λῦσαι τὸ σκῆνος· κεκαθαρμένος γάρ.

ὥσπερ γὰρ ἀτελὲς σῶμα τῆς γαστρὸς ἐξελθὸν, ἄτροφον ⟨καὶ ἀναυξές⟩ ἐστιν, οὕτω καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ, μὴ τελειωθεῖσα ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ἐξελθοῦσα, ἀτελὴς καὶ ἀσώματός ἐστι, τελείωσις δὲ ψυχῆς γνῶσις τῶν ὄντων. ὡς ἂν τῇ ψυχῇ ἐν τῷ σώματι χρήσῃ, οὕτω καὶ αὐτὴ ἐξελθοῦσα τοῦ σώματος χρήσεταί σοι.

For just as a body, if it goes out of the womb (while it is still) imperfect can neither be fed nor grow up, likewise if soul goes out of the body without having gained perfection it is imperfect and lacks a body; but the perfection of soul is the knowledge of the beings. Just as you will behave towards your soul when (it is) in this body, likewise it will behave towards you when it has gone out of the body.[203]

The perfection of the soul is achieved by getting knowledge of the beings that exist (τὰ ὄντα), which is also what the visionary in the *Poimandres* wants to learn about.[204] The teaching of SH VI is an apt example of such knowledge, since like SH II A, 13 it considers the heavenly bodies, or at least the decans who separate the circle of the All from the zodiac, to be true and eternal beings. When the soul has attained perfect knowledge of the beings, according to DH VI, 3, it leaves the body just as a fetus leaves the womb. A rebirth could thus be implied. It is however unclear here, as in SH VI, if leaving the body refers to death or an ecstatic experience. In the preceding saying it was said that the soul does not re-enter the body after leaving it, which implies death (DH VI, 2). But this does not necessarily carry over to the present saying, and it is hard to imagine a doctrine where the body is believed to automatically die once the soul has achieved perfect knowledge of the different beings. At any rate, we have seen that there is an explicit reference to ecstatic ascent as preparation for death in SH II B, so that could very well be the case here too.

4.6.6 *CH X: The Key to Unlock the Rebirth*

While SH VI is the crowning treatise of the *Genikoi logoi*, CH X, *The Key*, presents itself as their epitome.[205] I will argue that this text represents the final stage of

203 DH VI, 3. Trans. Mahé, "Definitions of Hermes."

204 CH I, 3: μαθεῖν θέλω τὰ ὄντα καὶ νοῆσαι τὴν τούτων φύσιν καὶ γνῶναι τὸν θεόν.

205 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 68, doubts the claim of CH X to represent the *Genikoi* since it does not disuss the decans, as does the "crown" of the *Genikoi*, SH VI, nor does it discuss the movements of forces and bodies, as SH III, 1, nor does it contain astrological information, as George Syncellus says (Grese refers to "the Γενικα τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ" on Dindorf p. 52 B; but there is nothing on Hermes or the *Genika* on this page. Rather, the *Genikoi* of Hermes are discussed in Syncellus 36.14 and 57.16 Mosshammer, corresponding to Dindorf 64 D and 97 B: ἐν τοῖς Γενικοῖς τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ).

the spiritual formation which leads to the rebirth, represented in CH XIII. *The Key* is, like the *Perfect Discourse*, a comprehensive overview of Hermetic topics, and it reprises several of the key topics of CH II, IV, VI, VII, SH II A–B, and XI. Walter Scott has demonstrated verbal dependencies of CH X on CH II and VI, which supports the hypothesis that these treatises indeed represent an earlier stage in the teaching process.

Hermes introduces the treatise by referring to a speech he gave to Asclepius the day before, while the present speech will be dedicated to Tat, since it is the epitome of the *Genikoi* given to him. Treatises addressed to Asclepius as well as to Tat can thus be counted among those propaedeutic to the rebirth. CH II and VI are both directed to Asclepius, and either treatise could thus potentially be the point of reference for "yesterday's treatise."

Tat is from the outset instructed that: "Elsewhere we have taught about divine as well as human activities, which one must now understand in the same sense as on those other occasions."[206] This may very well refer to sentences to be learned by heart, such as those of SH XI. Indeed, the first fifteen chapters of the treatise are basically ordered according to sentence 6 of SH XI, 2: "God is first, the world is second, the human is third," and this sentence is clearly expounded upon in CH X, 12, 14, 22 and 25.[207] Similar to the teachings of other propaedeutic treatises, we are also told that the good exists only in God, whose activity is to will everything into existence (CH X, 3), the world is not good but beautiful (CH X, 10), and the human being is not only not good, but insofar as it is mortal it is actually bad (CH X, 12). However, *The Key* seems to give the earlier teachings a "more mystical interpretation," in the words of CH XIV, and as Tiedemann reportedly stated: "*The Key* is itself in need of a key."[208] Scholars tend to see CH X as especially enigmatic due to apparent internal contradictions in the text, but these can however be resolved, as we shall see.

The Key is a preparation for receiving the power to see God, which we have mentioned in our treatment of the preceding treatises, but this power is not realized during the present dialogue. Rather, Tat states that: "You have filled us with the good and most beautiful vision, father, and my mind's eye was almost

206 CH X, 1: καθὼς καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐδιδάξαμεν θείων τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων· ἃ δεῖ νοεῖν ἐπὶ τούτου. Trans. Copenhaver.

207 Cf. also DH I, 1; CH VIII; *Ascl.* 10.

208 Dieterich Tiedemann, *Hermes Trismegists Poemander, oder, von der göttlichen Macht und Weisheit* (Berlin: Stettin, 1781), 71, quoted by NF 1:112.

hallowed by such a vision."[209] I follow Nock's suggestion for the verb ἐσεβάσθη, "was hallowed,"[210] rather than the various emendations suggesting that Tat's mind was almost blinded.[211] The latter emendation is due to the subsequent passage that contrasts the physical vision of the sun, which blinds the eye, and the vision of the good, which "probes more sharply, but does no harm."[212] Usually, the verb σεβάζομαι/σέβομαι is transitive also in the passive form, with the object of worship in accusative or dative,[213] whereas here we must read it

209 CH X, 4: ἐπλήρωσας ἡμᾶς, ὦ πάτερ, τῆς ἀγαθῆς καὶ καλλίστης θέας καὶ ὀλίγου δεῖν ἐσεβάσθη μου ὁ τοῦ νοῦ ὀφθαλμὸς ὑπὸ τῆς τοιαύτης θέας. Nock obelizes ἐσεβάσθη. My trans.

210 André-Jean Festugière, *Personal Religion among the Greeks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 176 n. 23, reports this suggestion of Nock's.

211 Nock obelized ἐσεβάσθη, while Festugiere first translated "rendu hommage (?)" (NF 1:114), but later "blinded" (Festugière, *Personal Religion*, 138), following the emendations of Ferguson: ἐσβέσθη (Scott 4:376). Scott himself suggests ἐπεσκιάσθη (Scott 1:189), deciding against the possibility of ἐσεβάσθη as "stricken with awe" (Scott 2:238); "blinded" followed by Copenhaver. Reitzenstein has ἐπετάσθη, "spread out."

212 CH X, 4: ὀξυτέρα μὲν γάρ ἐστιν εἰς τὸ καθικνεῖσθαι, ἀβλαβὴς δὲ. Trans. Copenhaver. It is misleading when Jan Helderman, "Zur Gnostischen Gottesschau: 'Antopos' im Eugnostosbrief und in der Sophia Jesu Christi," in *Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique: Actes du colloque de Louvain-la-Neuve (11–14 mars 1980* (ed. Julien Ries; Louvain: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1982), 245–62 at 245, states that CH X, 4 "steht fest, dass das Sonnenlicht die Augen des Menschen so blendet, dass es ihm unmöglich ist, in dieses Licht zu schauen," without mentioning that this is in contrast to the vision of God.

213 NF 1:120 n. 16 refers to Paul, *Rom.* 1.25: ἐσεβάσθησαν (*coluerunt* Vulg.) καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα; to which can be added Jul., *C. Gal.* 230.8: γένους ἱεροῦ καὶ θεουργικοῦ, τὴν μὲν περιτομὴν ἔμαθον Αἰγυπτίοις ἐπιξενωθέντες, ἐσεβάσθησαν δὲ θεὸν, ὃς ἐμοὶ καὶ τοῖς αὐτὸν, ὥσπερ Ἀβραὰμ ἔσεβε, σεβομένοις εὐμενὴς ἦν; Eus., *Praep. ev.* 1.6.1–2: οἳ διανοίας καθαρωτάτοις ὄμμασι πᾶν τὸ ὁρώμενον ὑπερκύψαντες τὸν κοσμοποιὸν καὶ τῶν ὅλων δημιουργὸν ἐσεβάσθησαν, ὑπερθαυμάσαντες τῆς τοσαύτης αὐτὸν σοφίας τε καὶ δυνάμεως; ibid. 1.10.11 (= Philo of Byblos): διὸ καὶ ὡς θεὸν αὐτὸν μετὰ θάνατον ἐσεβάσθησαν·; ibid. 3.5.4: ἐπὶ τούτοις ἀκήκοας καὶ τῆς θεοσοφίας τῆς μυστικῆς, δι' ἣν οἱ θαυμάσιοι τῶν Αἰγυπτίων λύκους καὶ κύνας καὶ λέοντας ἐσεβάσθησαν; ibid. 7.3.3: οἱ τῆς Ἑβραίων εὐσεβείας πατέρες, ἐκ μεγέθους καὶ καλλονῆς κτισμάτων νῷ κεκαθαρμένῳ καὶ ψυχῇ διαυγέσιν ὄμμασι τὸν πάντων γενεσιουργὸν θεὸν ἐσεβάσθησαν; Aët., *Plac. phil.* 324 (= Theod., *Cur.* 6.15): τὴν τύχην δὲ ὡσαύτως οἱ μὲν θεὸν ὑπέλαβον καὶ ὡς θεὸν ἐσεβάσθησαν; Arist., *Apol.* fr. 12.2: ἀρχῆθεν γὰρ ἐσέβοντο τὴν Ἶσιν; 12.7: τινὲς γὰρ αὐτῶν [= Αἰγυπτίων] ἐσεβάσθησαν πρόβατον, τινὲς δὲ τράγον κτλ.; Diog. Laert., *Vit.* 45.7: αἰαῖ, Πυθαγόρης τί τόσον κυάμους ἐσεβάσθη; Epiph., *Ancor.* 103.4: καὶ τί μοι τὰ πλήθη λέγειν μυρίων παθῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ὑπαρχόντων; πλέον δὲ πάντων Αἰγύπτιοι πλανηθέντες οὐ μόνον τὰ ἴδια πάθη ἐσεβάσθησαν, ἀλλὰ πτηνὰ καὶ τετράποδα κτλ.; Hes., *Lex.* 6183: ἐσεβάσθησαν· σεβάσμασι προσεκύνησαν.

as intransitive, which is rarer but attested.[214] The eye of Tat's mind was thus almost "made into an object of worship," deified in other words, but not quite: a little something is still missing (ὀλίγου δεῖν). This is *not* the *visio beatifica* then, but something approaching it, a reading which seems to be confirmed by the following passage:

ἧς οἱ δυνάμενοι πλέον τι ἀρύσασθαι τῆς θέας κατακοιμίζονται πολλάκις [δὲ] ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος εἰς τὴν καλλίστην ὄψιν ᾗπερ Οὐρανὸς καὶ Κρόνος, οἱ ἡμέτεροι πρόγονοι, ἐντετυχήκασιν.
– εἴθε καὶ ἡμεῖς, ὦ πάτερ.

– εἴθε γάρ, ὦ τέκνον· νῦν δὲ ἔτι ἀτονοῦμεν πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν καὶ οὔπω ἰσχύομεν ἀναπετάσαι ἡμῶν τοὺς τοῦ νοῦ ὀφθαλμούς, καὶ θεάσασθαι τὸ κάλλος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐκείνου τὸ ἄφθαρτον, τὸ ἄληπτον. τότε γὰρ αὐτὸ ὄψει, ὅταν μηδὲν περὶ αὐτοῦ ἔχῃς εἰπεῖν. ἡ γὰρ γνῶσις αὐτοῦ καὶ θεία σιωπή ἐστι καὶ καταργία πασῶν τῶν αἰσθήσεων.

Those able to drink somewhat more deeply of the vision often fall asleep, moving out of the body toward a sight most fair, just as it happened to Ouranus and Cronus, our ancestors.
– Would that we, too, could see it, father.
– Indeed, my son, would that we could. But we are still too weak now for this sight; we are not yet strong enough to open our mind's eyes and look on the incorruptible, incomprehensible beauty of that good. In the moment when you have nothing to say about it, you will see it, for the knowledge of it is divine silence and suppression of all the senses.[215]

The power to see God (θεοπτικὴ δύναμις) is in other words still lacking.[216] It is described as another kind of knowledge, not a knowledge of the self, nor

214 Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 1.15.68.1: καί μοι δοκοῦσιν αἰσθόμενοι τῆς μεγάλης εὐποιίας τῆς διὰ τῶν σοφῶν σεβασθῆναί τε τοὺς ἄνδρας καὶ δημοσίᾳ φιλοσοφῆσαι Βραχμᾶνές τε σύμπαντες καὶ Ὀδρύσαι καὶ Γέται καὶ τὸ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων γένος ⟨καὶ⟩ ἐθεολόγησαν ἀκριβῶς τὰ ἐκείνων, κτλ.; *Orac. Sib.* 8.476: καινοφανὴς δὲ μάγοισι σεβάσθη θέσφατος ἀστήρ; Ps.-Nonn., *Schol. myth.* 39.2.1: ἐν τῇ Φρυγίᾳ ἐσεβάσθη Ῥέα ἡ μήτηρ τῶν θεῶν; Bas. Sel., *Vit. Thec.* 1.7.27–29: διὰ τούτων τῶν βελτίστων μύθων μοιχείαι καὶ πορνεῖαι καὶ παιδεραστίαι καὶ ἀδελφομιξίαι καὶ παιδοφθορίαι ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλατρεύθησαν; later examples in the 10th *c. Diss. c. Jud.* 7.136: ἢ κάν γε δεῖξον τοὺς παρ' ὑμῖν ἤτοι παρὰ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὡς θεοὺς νομισθέντας καὶ σεβασθέντας ἔτι καὶ νῦν ὡσαύτως προσκυνουμένους καὶ τιμωμένους; Joh. Zon. (11th–12th c.), *Epit. hist.* 2.28: ὁ δ' αὐτοκράτωρ δεινὸν ἡγούμενος ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων μὴ ὡς θεὸς σεβασθῆναι. Cf. also the use of Sebastos and σεβαστευόμενα in Manetho, above, chap. 2.2.3.

215 CH X, 5. Trans. Copenhaver.

216 Helderman, "Zur Gnostischen Gottesschau," 245; FR 4:60, 113–14, 129–31, 228–30.

of the world, but a knowledge of God, which consists of divine silence and the suppression of all the senses, achieved by falling asleep. In the opinion of Walter Scott, this can only happen once one dies, because of the subsequent sentence, that "one who has understood it can understand nothing else, nor can one who has looked on it look on anything else or hear of anything else, nor can he move his body in any way. He stays still, all bodily senses and motions forgotten."[217] The fact that the participles are aorist precludes any notion of a temporary ecstasy or trance, according to Scott, who concludes that the vision would end the life of the sage who experiences it.[218] One looks in vain for parallels to such a lethal beatific vision. Although antiquity is full of individuals who were deified upon their death, their bodily death is usually due to physical causes, like jumping into a volcano, as in the case of Empedocles, or being struck by the lightning bolt of Zeus, as Asclepius, and I cannot find anyone who died from contemplating the divine. A more likely explanation is that the physical senses of the one who has attained the vision are transformed and no longer function as before, just as Hermes states in CH XIII, that after having contemplated a vision, "the initial form even of my own constitution is of no concern. Color, touch or size I no longer have; I am a stranger to them."[219] Hermes is of course not physically dead at this point, but he is no longer attached to his body and his bodily senses in the way that he was before the vision.

Hermes continues to speak of the beauty of the vision:

περιλάμψαν δὲ πάντα τὸν νοῦν καὶ τὴν ὅλην ψυχὴν ἀναλάμπει καὶ ἀνέλκει διὰ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ὅλον αὐτὸν εἰς οὐσίαν μεταβάλλει. ἀδύνατον γάρ, ὦ τέκνον, ψυχὴν ἀποθεωθῆναι ἐν σώματι ἀνθρώπου θεασαμένην ⟨τὸ⟩ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ κάλλος.

Once (the vision) has illuminated all his mind, it makes his whole soul shine[220] and draws it upward through the body, and changes him entirely into essence. For it is impossible for soul to be deified while still in a human body,[221] my son, even if it

217 CH X, 6: οὔτε γὰρ ἄλλο τι δύναται νοῆσαι ὁ τοῦτο νοήσας οὔτε ἄλλο τι θεάσασθαι ὁ τοῦτο θεασάμενος οὔτε περὶ ἄλλου τινὸς ἀκοῦσαι οὔτε τὸ σύνολον τὸ σῶμα κινῆσαι· πασῶν γὰρ τῶν σωματικῶν αἰσθήσεών τε καὶ κινήσεων ἐπιλαθόμενος ἀτρεμεῖ. Trans. Copenhaver.

218 Scott 2:241.

219 CH XIII, 3: διὸ καὶ ἠμέληταί μοι τὸ πρῶτον σύνθετον εἶδος· οὐκέτι κέχρῳσμαι καὶ ἁφὴν ἔχω καὶ μέτρον, ἀλλότριος δὲ τούτων εἰμί. Trans. Copenhaver.

220 Cf. CH XVI, 16: ἐν τῷ λογικῷ ἀκτὶς ἐπιλάμπει.

221 Cf. SH VI, 18: ἀδύνατον … τὸν ἐν σώματι τούτου [sc. θεάσασθαι] εὐτυχῆσαι.

has beheld ⟨the⟩ beauty of the good.[222]

– τὸ ἀποθεωθῆναι πῶς λέγεις, ὦ πάτερ;
– What do you mean that it has been deified, father?

– πάσης ψυχῆς, ὦ τέκνον, διαιρετῆς μεταβολαί.
– The changes that belong to any separated soul, my son.[223]

By "separated souls" Hermes means the souls derived from the world soul, and he then goes on to speak of reincarnation. As mentioned, CH IV likewise speaks of a divinization (CH IV, 7: ἀποθεῶσαι) after a series of rebirths (CH IV, 8), and states that the vision of God gradually draws upwards (ἀνέλκει) the one who catches a glimpse of him (CH IV, 11).[224] Deification is thus explicitly linked to rebirth in CH IV and X, but rebirth in the sense of transmigration. The *Korê Kosmou* has the same idea: "The different kinds of rebirth will accordingly be a difference in bodies, as I said, and the separation from them will be a benefaction (restoring your) former happiness … and the more righteous amongst you can expect the transition towards the divine."[225] Deification thus occurs when the soul has advanced high enough on the scale of being, and is ready to leave the body and be "transformed into essence," becoming demonic and divine. Since mind can be said to stem uninterrupted from the essence of God (CH XII, 1), the notion of being changed into essence most likely corresponds to the soul becoming "wholly mind":

ψυχὴ δὲ ἀνθρωπίνη, οὐ πᾶσα μέν, ἡ δὲ εὐσεβής, δαιμονία τίς ἐστι καὶ θεία· καὶ ἡ τοιαύτη καὶ μετὰ τὸ ἀπαλλαγῆναι τοῦ σώματος τὸν τῆς εὐσεβείας ἀγῶνα ἠγωνισμένη (ἀγὼν δὲ εὐσεβείας, τὸ γνῶναι τὸ θεῖον καὶ

The human soul—not every soul, that is, but only the reverent—is in a sense demonic and divine. Such a soul becomes wholly mind after getting free of the body and fighting the fight of reverence. (Knowing

222 Copenhaver translates διὰ τοῦ σώματος with "by means of body," which makes no sense in the present context, and renders the last sentence incomprehensible: "For when soul has looked on ⟨the⟩ beauty of the good, my child, it cannot be deified while in a human body."

223 CH X, 6–7. My trans.

224 CH IV, 8; cf. above, chap. 3.9 and 4.5.2.

225 SH XXIII, 41: ἡ τοίνυν διαφορὰ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας ὑμῖν ἔσται σωμάτων, ὡς ἔφην, διαφορά, εὐεργεσία δὲ καὶ ⟨ὡς⟩ πρόσθεν εὐδαιμονία ἡ διάλυσις… αἱ δικαιότεραι δ' ὑμῶν καὶ τὴν εἰς τὸ θεῖον μεταβολὴν ἐκδεχόμεναι κτλ.

μηδένα ἀνθρώπων ἀδικῆσαι), ὅλη νοῦς γίνεται.

the divine and doing wrong to no person is the fight of reverence.)[226]

The idea that freeing oneself from the body is like a battle, we recall, also occurs in SH II B, 6. That the soul is transformed into divine mind once it is out of the body brings to mind the *Poimandres*, where the divine mind mixes with the narrator as his thinking soared high and the bodily senses were restrained (CH I, 1, 27). This probably corresponds to the Hermetic system of Iamblichus, discussed above, where the hypercosmic soul, which is able to see God, enters into the lower encosmic soul. And the rebirth happens, as we shall see, when the essential self is filled by divine power and thus transformed.

Tat likely stands on the threshold of the rebirth at the time of the treatise. He has been filled with the good and most beautiful vision, but only in the form of a fleeting glimpse, for he does not yet have the power to draw more of the vision into himself. The intimate knowledge of divine beauty demands divine silence and the inhibition of corporeal senses, at which point Tat is told that the vision will fully illuminate his soul and his mind and draw it up through the body, for it is only outside the body that one can be deified. In fact, this scenario corresponds well to what takes place in the narrative of *On the Rebirth* (CH XIII), which must then be considered the next step of the way.

4.6.7 *Conclusion to the Initial Stages of the Way*

The disciple, Tat, has gained knowledge of himself, realizing that he is essentially divine, and knowledge of the world, realizing that it is neither good nor true. Both these kinds of knowledge are alluded to in *The Key*, when Hermes explains that the soul of the ignorant person "discerns none of the things that are nor their nature nor the good," since it is "in ignorance of itself."[227] By contrast, the knowledgeable person is described as follows:

ὁ μὴ πολλὰ λαλῶν, μηδὲ πολλὰ ἀκούων· ὃ γὰρ διαλόγοις[228] σχολάζων καὶ ἀκοαῖς, ὦ τέκνον, σκιαμαχεῖ. ὁ γὰρ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν οὔτε λέγεται

The one who does not speak much, nor listens to much. For the one who spends his time on discussions and listening to speeches fights with shadows, my son. No, God and the father and the

226 CH X, 19. Trans. Copenhaver.

227 CH X, 8: μηδὲν ἐπιγνοῦσα τῶν ὄντων μηδὲ τὴν τούτων φύσιν, μηδὲ τὸ ἀγαθόν … ἀγνοήσασα ἑαυτήν. Trans. Copenhaver.

228 Following the emendation of Scott from δύο λόγοις.

οὔτε ἀκούεται· τούτου δὲ οὕτως ἔχοντος, ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσιν αἱ αἰσθήσεις εἰσί, διὰ τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι εἶναι χωρὶς αὐτοῦ· γνῶσις δὲ αἰσθήσεως πολὺ διαφέρει· αἴσθησις μὲν γὰρ γίνεται τοῦ ἐπικρατοῦντος, γνῶσις δέ ἐστιν ἐπιστήμης τὸ τέλος, ἐπιστήμη δὲ δῶρον τοῦ θεοῦ. πᾶσα γὰρ ἐπιστήμη ἀσώματος, ὀργάνῳ χρωμένη αὐτῷ τῷ νοΐ, ὁ δὲ νοῦς τῷ σώματι.

good is neither uttered nor heard. Although this is the case, there are sensations in all the things which exist, since it is not possible to exist without it. Yet knowledge is very different from sensation, for sensation comes from what rules over it,[229] while knowledge is the end of learning, and learning is a gift from God. For all learning is incorporeal, using as instrument the mind itself, as mind uses the body.[230]

The knowledge of God cannot be taught through discursive means, since discourse relies on the senses, namely speaking and listening. This is a common topos.[231] As Festugière has pointed out, knowledge is different from sensation in that the latter is basically a *pathos*, an impression of the material object of sensation.[232] Learning (ἐπιστήμη), on the other hand, is immaterial and given by God, and its goal is knowledge (γνῶσις), that is, knowledge of God.[233]

Garth Fowden identified ἐπιστήμη, which he translated as science, as the product of logos, while γνῶσις comes from faith and understanding.[234] He identifies the world as the object of the former, representing an "immanentist or monist position," which would gradually yield to a gnostic dualistic position in which learning of the world would be seen as idle chatter. As stated

229 The translation of Copenhaver here yields little sense: "This being so—that there are senses in all things that are because they cannot exist withouth them—yet knowledge differs greatly from sensation; for sensation comes when the object prevails" (Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 32).

230 CH X, 9–10. My trans.

231 Cf. *Ascl.* 19.

232 NF 1:127 n. 39. Copenhaver, *Hermetica,* 159–60, points out Plato's division, in *Resp.* 5.476–480, between ἐπιστήμη regarding the forms (εἰδή) and δόξα regarding objects of sense (αἰσθητά).

233 Interestingly, learning is here said to use mind as an instrument; this must again be the lower, attendant nous, since it itself is said to use the body as an instrument, which cannot be said of the divine nous. Because of these difficulties, Scott (2:247) proposed to make *nous* the instrument of *gnôsis*, not *epistêmê* (which he thought came from a marginal note), and emended ⟨ἐναντίος⟩ σώματι: *nous* as the opposite of body instead of its instrument.

234 Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 101. This is refuted by Mahé, "La voie d'immortalité," 367 n. 11a.

earlier, this progression from monism to dualism can in my view not be supported by the sources. However, one can subscribe to Fowden's statement that "knowledge of God's creation is an essential preliminary to knowledge of God himself."[235] Learning in this passage (CH X, 9–10) does indeed refer to knowledge of God's creation, but the emphasis at this stage of the way lies in discerning the lack of truth and the good in this creation, not in admiring it.

Mahé instead speaks of a progression where different mental faculties are gained, starting with gnosis, proceeding with logos and culminating with nous.[236] However, these three terms are incommensurate. Gnosis is a form of knowledge, logos is the rational and discursive capacity, while nous is an insight that is co-essential with God. Although I would agree with Mahé that nous is at the summit of the way, when the disciple attains divine nous in a mystic union with God, logos is in fact possessed by most people, and cannot be a separate stage of the teaching. Gnosis could in fact be used to describe all three stages, with the respective objects of the knowledge being oneself (the human), the world, and finally God—γνῶσις ἑαυτοῦ, κόσμου and θεοῦ. The knowledge of the world can also be referred to as ἐπιστήμη, while the knowledge of God requires the acquisition of divine nous.

235 Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 101, with reference to SH II B, 2–3.

236 Mahé, "La voie d'immortalité," 350–51; id., "Mental Faculties," 77–78.

CHAPTER 5

The Ritual of Rebirth

The Hermetic rebirth, as represented in CH XIII, is besides the *Poimandres* what most scholars have been interested in, and the bibliography on the topic has grown to be vast. Much of the interest, of course, has to do with the similarity to Christian ideas of rebirth. Some initial remarks are in order before undertaking a deeper analysis of this remarkable text. First of all, we should be clear on the fact that we do not possess a ritual of rebirth as such: the text is neither a ritual manual, like the so-called *Mithras-liturgy*, nor does it pretend to be a realistic description of a ritual performed, as book eleven of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. Rather, it is an idealized representation of a ritual. Unlike the abovementioned rituals, however, there is a marked lack of ritual actions, *dromena*, in the treatise on the rebirth, and we are left with the task of discerning the ritual elements, and prove it likely that such a ritual actually was practiced, and the treatise was not a mere "literary mystery" (*Lesemysterium*).[1]

The rebirth clearly marks a drastic transformation of the person reborn, and should thus be analyzed as a rite of passage. As Hermes, who has already undergone the rebirth, says: "I am no longer the person I was before."[2] It is thus with good reason that the treatise is commonly labelled initiatory, though it should be noticed that the terms *mysterion, mystês*, or *teletê* are never invoked in the text.[3] As we have noted already, Tat has looked forward to the rebirth for

1 My approach to ritual here is basically informed by Bell, *Ritual Theory*; Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual," *History of Religions* 20 (1980): 112–27; Stanley J. Tambiah, *A Performative Approach to Ritual* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); id., "The Magical Power of Words," *Man* 3 (1968): 175–208; John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); id., *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Lawrence Sullivan, "Sound and Senses: Toward a Hermeneutic of Performance," *Histroy of Religions* 26 (1986): 1–33. On Lesemysterien cf. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*, 51–64, and critique in Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 149–50.

2 CH XIII, 3: εἰμι νῦν οὐχ ὁ πρίν.

3 Cf. Karl-Wolfgang Tröger, *Mysterienglaube und Gnosis in Corpus Hermeticum XIII* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1971), 9–81; Christian H. Bull, "The Notion of Mysteries in the Formation of Hermetic Tradition," *in Mystery and Secrecy in the Nag Hammadi Collection and Other Ancient Literature: Ideas and Practices* (ed. Christian H. Bull, Liv I. Lied, and John D. Turner; NHMS 76; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 399–426.

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quite a while, and has prepared himself by becoming a stranger to the world and studying the *Genikoi*, referring to a promise made by Hermes to teach him the tradition of the rebirth. We do not find a promise of rebirth made anywhere else in the Hermetica, although as I have shown there are several treatises which reflect the process of alienation from the world and fortification against its deception.

An initiatory ritual may be analyzed with the help of the tripartite structure suggested by the classic studies of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, and we should thus expect to find elements reflecting *separation, liminality* and *incorporation*.[4] As has been pointed out by Mahé, an initiatory structure is much more evident in the *Disc.8–9*, whereas CH XIII intersperses the initiation proper with didactic passages.[5] However, unlike Mahé we shall not consider both the *Disc.8–9* and CH XIII to be reflective of the Hermetic rebirth, but rather as two distinct ritual stages of initiation.[6] I will return to this point when treating *Disc.8–9*. The first seven chapters of CH XIII are didactic, in effect summing up the procedure and doctrine of the rebirth.[7] Then, in § 8, Tat is instructed to keep a reverent silence, after which he is declared to be purified, and is filled with the powers of God (§§ 8–10). Tat then declares his vision of himself in the All and in mind (§§ 11, 13) interspersed with explanatory passages of Hermes (§§ 12, 14). The rest of the treatise is concerned with the secret hymn of the rebirth (§§ 15–16), which Hermes performs by means of his powers (§§ 17–20), after which Tat also performs a short eulogy (§ 21), and finally there is the oath of silence (§ 22). The general scheme of the treatise is thus:

1–7: Preparatory explanation of the procedure and doctrine of rebirth
8: Call for reverent silence
8–11: Tat receives the powers of God, invoked by Hermes
11–12: Numerical explanation of punishers and powers
13: Tat receives the vision of rebirth
14: Hermes explains the imperishability of the new body of rebirth
15–16: Tat requests the secret hymn of the rebirth
16: Call for silence
17–20: Secret Hymn

4 Arnold van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (Paris: Emile Nourry, 1909); Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Rituals* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

5 HHE 1:44–47.

6 Cf. Christian H. Bull, "Gjenfødelse som innvielse i Hermes' vei," *Dīn: Tidsskrift for Religion og Kultur* 1–2 (2011): 7–21.

7 CH XIII, 7: οὕτω συνίσταται ὁ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας τρόπος καὶ λόγος.

21: Eulogy of Tat
22: Oath of silence[8]

I will show that the liminal phase as such, where the rebirth is effectuated, takes place roughly in §§ 8–10.[9] In order to demonstrate this, we must go through the treatise at some length. Although a commentary has already been provided by William Grese, this commentary is more concerned with comparing CH XIII with Early Christian Literature than with placing it within the Hermetic tradition.[10] A fresh look is therefore warranted. We shall mostly limit ourselves to the points pertinent to the ritual nature of the rebirth.

5.1 CH XIII: General Remarks

As in SH IV, VI and VIII, it is the disciple, Tat, who takes the initiative and asks for the teaching of rebirth. SH IV and VIII are both excerpts, however, while SH VI, 1 resembles CH XIII, 1 quite a bit: Both treatises refer to a promise made earlier by Hermes to expand on his teaching, in the *Genikoi*. Tat claims that he became a suppliant during his descent with Hermes from the mountain, where they had talked together.[11] This reference to a discourse on the mountain can be found nowhere else, except in the title of the piece: "Of Hermes Trismegistus to his son Tat: The secret discourse on the mountain, on the rebirth and the promise of silence."[12] It is possible that the title was added by the compiler, because of the reference to the descent from a mountain,[13] but it is equally possible that the title *The Secret Discourse on the Mountain* is all that is left of a treatise removed by a copyist, such as is the case with CH II A. We shall

8 See the alternative scheme of van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 325.

9 Grese locates the rebirth in §§ 7–13.

10 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*. The tendency of this work can be seen from the index, where there are many more references to Early Christian literature than to the Hermetica. Cf. also the analysis of Festugière, FR 4:200–10, and Tröger, *Mysterienglaube*.

11 CH XIII, 1: ἐμοῦ τε σοῦ ἱκέτου γενομένου, ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ ὄρους καταβάσεως. Hanegraaff, "Altered States of Knowledge," 144–45, assumes that only Hermes was on the mountain, receiving a revelation, and that the promise of rebirth was made in the *Genikoi*. He also claims that commentators have overlooked the significance of the treatise, without once referring to Grese's commentary or Tröger's lengthy analysis.

12 CH XIII, t.: Ἑρμοῦ Τρισμεγίστου πρὸς τὸν υἱόν Τάτ ἐν ὄρει λόγος ἀπόκρυφος περί παλιγγενεσίας καὶ σιγῆς ἐπαγγελίας. My trans.

13 So Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 63; Scott 2:374–75; FR 2:5 n. 3.

probably never know.[14] All we can ascertain is that Tat claims that Hermes spoke enigmatically regarding divinity in the former treatise, and that he did not at that time reveal his meaning when he said that no one can be saved before the rebirth.[15] If the discourse on the mountain was *apokryphos*, with the meaning of "obscure, recondite, hard to understand," rather than "secret,"[16] this would fit well with Hermes' enigmatic speech and his refusal to reveal his meaning. That "no one can be saved before the rebirth" would then be a direct quotation from this treatise and is probably an elaboration of the end of the *Poimandres*, where the narrator says that "I became a guide for my kind, teaching them the words—how to be saved and in what manner—and I sowed the words of wisdom among them, and they were nourished with ambrosial water."[17] The logic of the metaphor of rebirth is already present here. If words of wisdom are sown, or inseminated in the disciples, it is only natural that they should at some point bring forth produce. In CH XIII, however, the seed is the true good, not words of wisdom, while "noetic wisdom in silence" is the womb.[18] Tat has already been told, albeit obscurely, *how* to be saved: he was told earlier that the rebirth was necessary. The more precise manner or method (τρόπος) of salvation now follows in CH XIII, where Hermes explains the teaching and method of rebirth (§ 7: ὁ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας τρόπος καὶ λόγος).

The use of the verb παραδίδωμι and the noun παράδοσις in the treatise is significant, since this vocabulary points to a clear idea of a fixed ritual

14 The Coptic fragment of Codex Tchacos may indicate that the reference to the discourse on the mountain was present at this stage of the transmission, though all we can read here is ϩ̅ϩ̅ⲢⲎ̣[ι ...], perhaps "upon [the mountain]." Cf. Jean-Pierre Mahé in Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, Gregor Wurst, and François Gaudard, eds., *The Gospel of Judas: Together with the* Letter of Peter to Philip, James, *and a* Book of Allogenes *from Codex Tchacos. Critical Edition* (Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2008), 29–30. More fragments have been identified by Gregor Wurst, "Weitere neue Fragmente aus Codex Tchacos: Zum 'Buch des Allogenes' und zu *Corpus Hermeticum* XIII," in *Judasevangelium und Codex Tchacos: Studien zur religionsgeschichtlichen Verortung* (ed. Enno E. Popkes and Gregor Wurst; WUNT 297; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 1–12.

15 CH XIII, 1: οὐκ ἀπεκάλυψας, φάμενος μηδένα δύνασθαι σωθῆναι πρὸ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας. Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 68–73, claims that this is a "sacred law," in parallel with NT sentences, but offers no explanation of what this would mean in a Hermetic context. What makes this a law, rather than a declarative statement?

16 LSJ, s.v. ἀπόκρυφος.

17 CH I, 29: καθοδηγὸς ἐγενόμην τοῦ γένους, τοὺς λόγους διδάσκων, πῶς καὶ τίνι τρόπῳ σωθήσονται, καὶ ἔσπειρα αὐτοῖς τοὺς τῆς σοφίας λόγους καὶ ἐτράφησαν ἐκ τοῦ ἀμβροσίου ὕδατος. Trans. Copenhaver.

18 CH XIII, 2: σοφία νοερὰ ἐν σιγῇ (sc. ἡ μήτρα) καὶ ἡ σπορὰ τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἀγαθόν.

transmission, reminiscent of the mysteries as well as Christianity.[19] Such a transmission is also intimated in CH I, 26, where Poimandres states that the narrator of the treatise has received (παραλαβών) everything he has to teach, and can now himself become a guide.[20] In CH XIII, 15 the narrator of CH I is revealed to be Hermes, when he states that Poimandres transmitted (παρέδωκεν) to him no more than what is written down, no doubt an allusion to CH I.[21] The rebirth is thus established as a *traditum*, which Hermes has received from his own divine mind, Poimandres, and now passes on to his son Tat. This *traditio mystica* is referred to several times in the Hermetica, most elaborately in SH XXIII, 6, where Tat is referred to as Hermes' son, successor, and inheritor of his teachings.[22] The *traditum* should not simply be seen as doctrinal, for Hermes says that it is something that cannot be taught,[23] but rather it is something that is revealed (ἐκφαίνω), in the manner of mysteries, and which like the mysteries should be guarded from profane people with reverent silence.[24]

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19 Cf. FR 1:347–54; Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 75; van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 34. Cf. Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 69, 153 n. 14: "The terms *paradosis*, *paradidonai* can be used in a narrower sense, referring to instruction, and in a larger one, referring to instruction plus ritual."

20 CH I, 26: οὐχ ὡς πάντα παραλαβὼν καθοδηγὸς γίνῃ τοῖς ἀξίοις. Cf. van den Kerchove, "Pratiques rituelles," 117–21 = *La voie d'Hermès*, 32.

21 CH XIII, 15: ὁ Ποιμάνδρης, ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς, πλέον μοι τῶν ἐγγεγραμμένων οὐ παρέδωκεν. There is thus little reason for both Grese's (*Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 97–98) and Tröger's (*Mysterienglaube und Gnosis*, 160–61) skepticism that the author of CH XIII might have known the myth of Anthrôpos in CH I.

22 SH XXIII, 6: ἦν αὐτῷ διάδοχος ὁ Τάτ, υἱὸς ὁμοῦ καὶ παραλήπτωρ τῶν μαθημάτων τούτων. Tat was not given the whole *theôria* of heaven because of his young age, and to remedy this Hermes leaves him the "sacred symbols of the cosmic elements" near the "secrets of Osiris," before he ascends to heaven. This is a parallel to Hermes' statement that Poimandres did not transmit to him "more than what is written." On the Hermetic chain of transmission, cf. van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 45–79; above, 102–3.

23 CH XIII, 3: τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦτο οὐ διδάσκεται.

24 CH XIII, 22: τοῦτο μαθὼν παρ' ἐμοῦ τῆς ἀρετῆς σιγὴν ἐπάγγειλαι, μηδενί, τέκνον, ἐκφαίνων τῆς παλιγγενεσίας τὴν παράδοσιν, ἵνα μὴ ὡς διάβολοι λογισθῶμεν. Cf. *Ascl.* 19: *Magna tibi pando et diuina nudo mysteria*. Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 195, considers the oath of silence to reserve esoteric teachings for initiates, but this misses the point: There is nothing very secret as such in what Hermes teaches, but rather it is the experience Tat goes through which is shrouded in silence. Grese makes nothing of the word ἐκφαίνω.

5.2 The Phase of Separation

5.2.1 *CH XIII, 1–7: Preparatory Explanation of the Procedure and Doctrine of Rebirth*

§ 1: Tat reminds Hermes of the promise he was given in the *Genikoi*, that when he had alienated himself from the world he would receive the tradition. Now, he declares, he has fortified himself against the deception of the world and is ready to have his deficiencies filled by the transmission of the rebirth.[25] It is unclear precisely how Tat went about making himself a stranger to the world, but as has been suggested above, it is likely that the treatises which consider the phenomenal world as ephemeral would have been involved. In a sense then, the separation is a rather protracted affair, comprising several stages after the conversion. As we have seen, those who follow the way of immortality see themselves as set apart from the multitude, who follow the way of death. We can compare this to the Christian baptism, where Einar Thomassen points out that there is a double tripartite structure: In the extensive programme of initiation, separation begins with entrance into the catechumenate, baptism is the liminal phase, and the first eucharist is the integration. However, in the initiation rite proper, the baptism, these three phases recur in intensified form: undressing and exorcism are acts of separation, the immersion is the liminal phase, and the anointing and redressing are the aggregation phase.[26] Likewise, in the extensive program of Hermetic spiritual transformation, the preparatory stages are structurally parallel to the Christian catechumenate, meant to gradually strip away the old person and inculcate a new way of life, a new habitus. The rebirth itself is the liminal phase, while the singing of the hymn of rebirth, at the end of the treatise, may be interpreted as the reintegration. But as we shall see, the rebirth itself also has a tripartite structure.

A period of purificatory preparations was very common before rituals in the ancient world, especially before initiatory rituals, regularly involving sexual abstention, social withdrawal, fasting, immersions, lustrations, and

25 CH XIII, 1: ἔφης, ὅταν μέλλῃς κόσμου ἀπαλλοτριοῦσθαι, παραδιδόναι μοι. ἕτοιμος ἐγενόμην καὶ ἀπηνδρείωσα τὸ ἐν ἐμοὶ φρόνημα ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ἀπάτης· σὺ δέ μου καὶ τὰ ὑστερήματα ἀναπλήρωσον οἷς ἔφης μοι παλιγγενεσίας ⟨παράδοσιν⟩ παραδοῦναι προθέμενος ἐκ φωνῆς ἢ κρυβήν· Nock gives the emendation ⟨γένεσιν⟩, which is a distinct possibility, but the phrase τῆς παλιγγενεσίας τὴν παράδοσιν recurs in § 22, and it is likely that the omission of παράδοσιν can be explained as a haplography because of παραδοῦναι.

26 Einar Thomassen, "Becoming a Different Person: Baptism as an Initiation Ritual," in *Theoretical Frameworks for the Study of Graeco-Roman Religions* (ed. Luther H. Martin and Panayotis Pachis; Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2003), 209–22 at 216–17.

purificatory sacrifices.[27] Before Lucius' initiation in the cult of Isis and Osiris, in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, he goes through immersion, lustration and fasting for ten days.[28] Chaeremon relates that Egyptian priests prepared with fasting, abstinence, and lustrations for between seven to fourty-two days before important rituals.[29] In the immortalization ritual, commonly known as the *Mithras-Liturgy*, the performer must keep himself pure for three days, which may imply sexual abstinence.[30] Such abstinence is explicitly ordered in an invocation of Apollo from the Greek magical papyri.[31] In the so-called *Leiden Kosmopoiia*, in which the self-begotten creator god is made to appear and the ritualist undergoes an initiation, it is required to stay pure and sleep on a mat on the ground for several days before the rite.[32] An anonymous writer seeking a vision of Mandulis in Talmis, writes that he made himself a stranger (ἀλότριον ἐμαυτὸν ἐποιησάμην) to all vice and godlessness, was chaste and offered incense as a preparation for the vision.[33]

The goal of alienation and fortification in CH XIII is clearly purification. In CH XVI we are told that the rational part of the soul can become a suitable container for God if it becomes independent from the demons,[34] and indeed, in CH XIII, Tat is told to cleanse himself from the irrational avengers of matter before the divine powers can enter into him.[35] Fasting is probably a part of the purificatory regimen, as we find indications of food-taboos elsewhere in the Hermetic writings: in the *Perfect Discourse*, Hermes tells his disciples that desire (ἐπιθυμία) necessarily persists in humans, since human beings consist of matter and must partake of material nourishment.[36] Although necessary, these bodily vices are to be detested, since they are alien to the immaterial human.[37] After the discourse and the final prayer of thanksgiving are finished,

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27 Cf. Rebecca M. Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations, and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), 115–60.

28 Apul., *Metam.* 11.23.

29 Chaer. fr. 10 (Porph., *Abst.* 4.7). Cf. below, chap. 9.2.

30 PGM IV.783–784. Cf. below, chap. 8.6.

31 PGM I.291.

32 PGM XIII.4–7, 347–350, 671–676.

33 Arthur D. Nock, "A Vision of Mandulis Aion," *HTR* 27 (1934): 53–104 at 63–64.

34 CH XVI, 15: τὸ δὲ λογικὸν μέρος τῆς ψυχῆς ἀδέσποτον τῶν δαιμόνων ἔστηκεν, ἐπιτήδειον εἰς ὑποδοχὴν τοῦ θεοῦ.

35 CH XIII, 7: κάθαραι σεαυτὸν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλόγων τῆς ὕλης τιμωριῶν.

36 *Ascl.* 22 = NHC VI 67,6–12.

37 *Ascl.* 11: *ea demum tunc uidetur esse perfecta, si contra cupiditatem alienarum omnium rerum sit despectus uirtute munita. sunt ab omnibus cognationis diuinae partibus aliena*

the protagonists go to eat their food which is pure and contains no blood or living being.[38] It would thus appear that this treatise recommends dietary regulations meant to minimize material desire, which is considered alien to the inner human.

Tat then states the specific points he is unclear on: "I am ignorant, Trismegistus, as to which womb a human is born from, and what kind of seed."[39] The question shows that Tat is already familiar with a Hermetic teaching on the true human being, as opposed to the ephemeral material one, for the question is certainly not aimed at obtaining obstetric lore.

§ 2: This passage presents us with some hermeneutical problems, and we quote it in full:

– ὦ τέκνον, σοφία νοερὰ ἐν σιγῇ καὶ ἡ σπορὰ τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἀγαθόν.

– (The womb,) my son, is noetic wisdom in silence, and the seed is the true good.

– τίνος σπείραντος, ὦ πάτερ; τὸ γὰρ σύνολον ἀπορῶ.

– From what sower, father? For I am uncertain of it all.

– τοῦ θελήματος τοῦ θεοῦ, ὦ τέκνον.

– From the will of God, my son.

– καὶ ποταπὸς ὁ γεννώμενος, ὦ πάτερ; ἄμοιρος γὰρ τῆς ἐν ἐμοὶ οὐσίας καὶ τῆς νοητῆς.

– And of what kind is the one who is born, father? For he has no share in the essence in me, even the noetic.[40]

– ἄλλος ἔσται ὁ γεννώμενος θεοῦ θεὸς παῖς, τὸ πᾶν ἐν παντί, ἐκ πασῶν δυνάμεων συνεστώς.

– The one born will be different, a god who is son of God, the all in all, put together from all powers.

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omnia, quaecumque terrena corporali cupiditate possidentur; quae merito possessionum nomine nuncupantur, quoniam non nata nobiscum, sed postea a nobis possideri coeperunt: idcirco etiam possessionum nomine nuncupantur. omnia ergo huiusmodi ab homine aliena sunt, etiam corpus, ut et ea, quae adpetimus, et illud, ex quo adpetentiae nobis est uitium, despiciamus.

38 *Ascl.* 41 (living being: *animalibus*) = NHC VI 65,5–7 (blood: ⲥⲛⲟⲩ).

39 CH XIII, 1: ἀγνοῶ, ὦ Τρισμέγιστε, ἐξ οἵας μήτρας ἄνθρωπος ἐγεννήθη, σπορᾶς δὲ ποίας. My trans.

40 The καὶ is problematic; I take it as "even," meaning the noetic essence as opposed to the hylic (cf. CH I, 15; Ascl. 7), but another possibility could be "although it is noetic," presupposing an unsaid participle οὔσας.

– αἴνιγμά μοι λέγεις, ὦ πάτερ, καὶ οὐχ ὡς πατὴρ υἱῷ διαλέγῃ.

– τοῦτο τὸ γένος, ὦ τέκνον, οὐ διδάσκεται, ἀλλ' ὅταν θέλῃ, ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναμιμνήσκεται.

– You speak to me in riddles, father, and not in the manner a father should converse with his son.

– This offspring cannot be taught, my son, but it will be recalled to memory by God when he wants it.[41]

Nock, following Reitzenstein, brackets καὶ τῆς νοητῆς, and Festugière skips it in his translation without any comment. Grese accepts the excision with reference to a supposed crucial difference between this text and CH I: In the latter there is already a divine spark in man which needs only be realized, while in CH XIII the divine enters only after the rebirth. In CH XIII, nous only applies to those who have been reborn, according to Grese.[42] This dogmatic reading also leads Grese into an aporia concerning the reference to divine anamnesis in the same passage: Plato's concept of anamnesis works only because of the preexistence of the immortal soul, but according to Grese the soul in CH XIII is not divine nor immortal before rebirth, so there is nothing for it to be reminded about.[43] Here, Grese's refusal to consider Hermetic instead of early Christian intertexts seriously hampers his interpretation, and he suggests, not very convincingly in my view: "It may be that our author has picked up from some other context this saying on remembrance because it makes the point he wants to make, but if so, he has not tried to integrate the concepts accompanying the saying into his own view of man and of regeneration." In fact, there is nothing that precludes the assumption that the author of CH XIII presupposes a teaching of a binary nous, one divine and one human, as we have seen is the case in many other Hermetica.[44] Although there is no doctrinal development on this point in CH XIII, it is clear that the text presents itself as part of a larger corpus, which should therefore be used as an intertext.[45] But even elsewhere within the text we find clues that a human noetic faculty is presupposed.

41 My trans.

42 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 97–98. Van den Kerchove does not touch upon this issue.

43 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 82–83, 89. Cf. van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 335 n. 30–31, for the readings of this passage.

44 Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 335 n. 32, also indicates this solution, but without drawing any conclusions from it. Cf. above, chap. 3.7, for the teaching of two types of soul or nous.

45 Reference to *Genikoi*, Poimandres, and secret hymn no. 4, suggesting several other hymns.

In § 6 Tat states that "just when it seemed that I had become wise by means of you, my senses were barred from this thought (νοήμα) of mine."[46] Once again, Grese here wishes to suppress μου, since he does not allow for man to possess any noetic faculty before he is reborn, and further claims *a priori* that νοήμα can have nothing to do with the physical senses.[47] However, the function of the νοήμα in SH XVII–XVIII is exactly this: to harmonize the lower senses and passions with the higher noetic faculty.[48] In my view, since the anamnesis refers to "a god, son of God," later referred to as "the son of God, one human" (§ 4), and Poimandres is later referred to (§ 15), it is highly likely that what is to be recalled is one's prior existence as the undescended divine human, as related in the *Poimandres*, one who also possesses a kernel of noetic essence in his embodied state.

Tat's remark, that the one reborn from the seed of the true good has no part of his noetic essence, thus makes good sense on the background of what we know of the *Genikoi*. The earlier teachings have instructed him that the true good is neither to be found in the cosmos nor in a human—it is wholly other. Tat would have expected rebirth to relate to what he already knows about his noetic essence, trapped in matter ruled by fate, but instead he is told about wisdom, true good and the will of God—agencies well outside his purview. He is thus naturally frustrated when Hermes blithely tells him that the one who is born again is wholly different from Tat's present state, and finds this answer to be not very paternal.

§ 3: Frustrated, Tat endeavours to make Hermes give him a straight answer, and seemingly supplies a password: ἀλλότριος υἱὸς πέφυκα τοῦ πατρικοῦ γένους. There are two possible interpretations of this sentence: "I am a foreign son, born of the paternal lineage,"[49] or "I am born a son foreign to the paternal

46 CH XIII, 6: δοκοῦντος γάρ μου ὑπὸ σοῦ σοφοῦ γεγονέναι, ἐνεφράχθησαν αἱ αἰσθήσεις τούτου μου τοῦ νοήματος. My trans.

47 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 101 n. 234.

48 SH XVII, 2: "And temper is a kind of matter; it becomes courage if it were to create a condition corresponding to the thought of the soul" (καὶ ὁ μὲν θυμὸς ὑπάρχει ὕλη· οὗτος, ἐὰν ἕξιν ποιήσῃ πρὸς τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς νόημα, γίνεται ἀνδρεία); SH XVIII, 1–2: "But opinion and sensation tend towards the thinking of the soul … they become worse when they have been detached from the thinking, but when they follow and obey it they commune with the noematic logos because of the teachings" (φέρεται δ' ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτῆς διάνοιαν δόξα καὶ αἴσθησις… χεῖρον μὲν γίνεται, ὅταν ἀποσπασθῇ τῆς διανοίας· ὅταν δὲ ἀκολουθῇ καὶ πείθηται, κοινωνεῖ τῷ νοηματικῷ λόγῳ διὰ τῶν μαθημάτων).

49 So Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 9: "I am a foreign son of the father's race." I avoid the loaded term race in my translation. Grese in his commentary (86) offers a parallel to

lineage."[50] Tat straightaway adds: "Do not refuse me, father, I am a legitimate son. Show me plainly the method of rebirth."[51] We must thus try to reconcile the seeming paradox of Tat being both a foreign and a legitimate son. In the former passage, Hermes said that the offspring (γένος) of the seed of the true good would be something foreign (ἄλλος), and it is clear that Hermes considers himself to be such an offspring. If we take ἀλλότριος to be the referent of the genitive construction, then Tat is foreign to his father Hermes, since he is only his legitimate son according to the body, while, as Hermes goes on to explain, his true self is no longer of the body. On the other hand, if we consider the genitive to refer to πέφυκα, "born from," then we must consider ἀλλότριος to have an absolute sense. In that case, we should see the foreignness as a reference to Tat's estrangement (ἀπαλλοτριοῦσθαι) from the world, an affirmation that he is indeed ready to receive the rebirth. On balance, the latter explanation seems to be the best one. By giving this correct answer (ὀρθῶς ἀντειπεῖν), Tat demonstrates his knowledge of his own ontological status as being foreign to the world, and Hermes should therefore not refuse him admittance (μὴ φθόνει μοι), but rather show him plainly (διάφρασόν) the method of rebirth. These elements reinforce the impression that we are dealing with a *traditum* restricted to those who show themselves worthy. As has been pointed out, passwords containing

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1 Apoc. Jas. (NHC V 33,11–18), where James is told to answer the hostile powers: "I am a son, and I am from the Father." The parallel does not work if Tat presents himself as foreign to the father's race, however, and one would be hard pressed to see why a password meant to be given to hostile powers is here given to his own father. Grese takes the easy way out: "What the author has apparently done is to take up this phrase from elsewhere and have Tat use it as a password in order to try and get Hermes to give him a clearer explanation." No need to look for any meaning to the password, in other words. On the password in *1 Apoc. Jas.*, which is also found in Iren., *Haer.* 1.21.5, cf. Einar Thomassen, "Dialogues with the Archons: The Post-mortem Encounters of the Ascending Soul in Gnostic Texts," in *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature. Yearbook 2009: The Human Body in Death and Resurrection* (ed. Tobias Nicklas, Friedrich V. Reiterer, and Jozef Verheyden; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 351–69; id., "The Valentinian Materials in James (NHC V,*3* and CT,*2*)," in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels*, (ed. Eduard Iricinschi et al.; STAC 89; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 79–90.

50 So NF 2:201: "Je suis né comme un fils étranger à la race de mon père." It could also be meant as a question, as Scott (1:241) suggests: "Am I an alien to my father's race?" By removing υἱὸς he also detects a iambic *senarius* and proposes it to stem from a play (2:380). In order for the sentence to be a question, I would expect it to be introduced by an interrogative particle. For something meant to be an answer (ἀντειπεῖν) one would also expect an affirmative, not interrogative statement.

51 CH XIII, 3: μὴ φθόνει μοι, πάτερ· γνήσιος υἱός εἰμι. διάφρασόν μοι τῆς παλιγγενεσίας τὸν τρόπον. My trans. For γνήσιος, see also the *Letter of Isis to Horus* (FR 1:253–60) and PGM I.192–193.

self-predications can be found in mortuary literature, such as the Bacchic gold tablets, the Valentinian *apolytrosis* ritual, and the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.[52] If our password stems from such a background, it is likely to affirm the utterer's status as legitimate son of the paternal lineage, and his foreigness must therefore refer to the world. A filial relationship was often claimed in the transmission of religious secrets,[53] whether the kinship was biological or spiritual, and thus serves as a weighty argument to dispel the reticence (φθόνος) of Hermes. This φθόνος is of course no petty jealousy, but rather the reticence demonstrated towards those who are uninitiated and therefore unfit to receive the religious secrets, the *sacra*.[54] Tat thus declares his readiness to be initiated,

52 Fritz Graf and Sarah Iles Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets* (London: Routledge, 2007), 140; Alberto Bernabé, *Instructions for the Netherworld: The Orphic Gold Tablets* (RGRW 162; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 39ff., 207–8; Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 406ff. Similar self-predications are used as passwords in Egyptian mortuary literature, cf. *Book of the Dead*, Theban recension, spell 99: "—Who are you who comes?—I am the beloved of my father, one who greatly loves his father, and I am he who awakens his sleeping father"; 138: "I am the son of Osiris, my father is in his own place"; Ani papyrus, spell 43: "I am a Great One, the son of a Great One"; 44: "The God Re speaks: I am Re who himself protects himself; I do not know you … The Deceased replies: I am your eldest son who sees your secrets"; *Pyramid Texts*, passim: "I am your son, I am your heir." On foreigness: *Pyr.* 135: "How content is your situation, as you become akh, oh Unis, among your brothers the gods. How different it is, how different it is, you whom your child tended." Also 141; Metternich 103: "Salut à toi héritier, fils d'héritier, taureau, fils de taureau"; Edfu VI 138,3: "Je suis un taureau, fils de taureau. Je suis un héritier, fils d'héritier." Cf. Joachim F. Quack, "La magie au temple," in *La magie en Égypte* (ed. Yvan Koenig; Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2002), 41–68 at 56. Knowledge of the passwords for admittance in the underworld was also used in initiatory contexts, cf. Jan Assmann, *Ägyptische Geheimnisse* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2004), 135; Merkelbach, "Ein ägyptischer Priestereid." Another possible parrallel for the son estranged from the fatherly lineage could be the son of the widow, i.e. Horus, in PGM III.541–544: "Do the NN deed for me, the fatherless child of an honored widow BÔIATHYRITH, lest they take away from me the lord's fatherland" (ποίησον [τ]ὸ δεῖνα πρᾶγμα ἐμοί, τῷ τῆς χήρας ὀρφανῷ κατατετιμημένη⟨ς⟩, βωϊαθυριθ, ἵνα μὴ ἀφέλωσ⟨ί⟩ με τὴν κυριακὴν πατρίδα).

53 Cf. Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 13: "I also claim to be of your happy race"; 17: "I am child of Earth and starry Sky … My race is heavenly." Emile Chassinat, *Le mystère d'Osiris au mois de Khoiak* (2 fasc. Cairo: IFAO, 1966–1968), 779: "Connaître le mystère que l'on ne voit ni n'entend et qu'un père transmet à son fils." *Letter of Isis to Horus* 30: μηδενὶ μεταδιδόναι εἰ μὴ μόνον τέκνῳ καὶ φίλῳ γνησίῳ. PGM IV.476. More references can be found in Hans D. Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy": Text, Translation and Commentary* (STAC 18; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 93, and n. 27.

54 Cf. above, chap. 4.6.5.

and uses the relatively uncommon word διαφράζω[55] in his request that Hermes should now show him plainly the method of rebirth.

Hermes accepts Tat's request, but is uncertain of how to go about his explanation in words. He attempts to describe the change he himself has gone through: "By perceiving a certain unformed vision that had come to be in me from the mercy of God, I also withdrew from myself into an immortal body, and I am no longer the one I was before, but I have been born in mind."[56] I take the participle ὁρῶν in an instrumental sense: it is by perceiving the vision within him that Hermes has drawn out of himself, just as it is said in CH IV, 11 that "the vision has the particular property that it grabs hold of those who have come to see and draws them up, just as they say that the magnetic rock draws iron."[57] Once out of the body, Hermes had a need for a new body, and we are told in CH X, 16 that when the human mind leaves the corporeal body it gains a fiery body, like the stars.[58] To be sure, this is said to happen when death occurs, but, as we have seen, the practice of leaving the body is a preparation for death.[59] Once clothed in this immortal body, Hermes was born in mind, but it is unclear here whether he refers to his own mind, that of the demiurge, or the self-begotten mind. We must return to this point when dealing with the rebirth of Tat, who sees himself in mind in § 13. Hermes has not left his body for good, as Tat affirms in § 5. Rather, his mutable and destructible body is no longer seen to constitute his true self. Anna van den Kerchove points out that this autobiography of Hermes alludes to several passages of the *Poimandres*,

55 A TLG search indicates that the imperative form διάφρασον of CH XIII, 3 is a hapax.

56 CH XIII, 3: ὁρῶν † τι † ἐν ἐμοὶ ἄπλαστον θέαν γεγενημένην ἐξ ἐλέου θεοῦ, καὶ ἐμαυτὸν ἐξελήλυθα εἰς ἀθάνατον σῶμα, καί εἰμι νῦν οὐχ ὁ πρίν, ἀλλ' ἐγεννήθην ἐν νῷ. My trans. I tentatively follow Flussas suggestion of τιν' for τι in my translation. Reitzenstein's emendation ποτε is also tempting, cf. CH I, 1 (ἐννοίας μοί ποτε γενομένης περὶ τῶν ὄντων).

57 CH IV, 11: ἔχει γάρ τι ἴδιον ἡ θέα· τοὺς φθάσαντας θεάσασθαι κατέχει καὶ ἀνέλκει, καθάπερ φασὶν ἡ μαγνῆτις λίθος τὸν σίδηρον. My trans. Cf. Manetho, fr. 79: "Further, as Manetho records, they call the loadstone 'the bone of Horus,' but iron 'the bone of Typhon.' Just as iron is often like to be attracted and led after the stone, but often again turns away and is repelled in the opposite direction, so the salutary, good and rational movement of the world at one time attracts, conciliates, and by persuasion mollifies that harsh Typhonian power."

58 CH X, 16: ὁ δὲ νοῦς καθαρὸς γενόμενος τῶν ἐνδυμάτων, θεῖος ὢν φύσει, σώματος πυρίνου λαβόμενος περιπολεῖ πάντα τόπον. Grese claims that CH XIII denies the unregenerate both *nous* and *psychê*. The question is then what it is that is reborn in *nous*?

59 Cf. above, chap. 4.6.3.

which the author of CH XIII obviously regarded as an account of the rebirth of Hermes.[60]

§ 4: Hermes' statement, that he can no longer be seen with the physical eyes, confounds Tat, who claims that he has now been driven into divine madness, *mania*, and can no longer see even himself. Grese considers this an attempt at humor, since Tat does not take leave of his body until later.[61] But this is missing the point: in the same way as with Zen *koans*, it is precisely to put Tat out of his countenance that is Hermes' intention. Tat is shaken by the statement that the physical appearance of Hermes is not his true self, and starts to doubt if he can even perceive himself. Far from reassuring him, Hermes wants him to take leave of his senses: "Would that you had taken leave of yourself, my son, just like those who dream while asleep, only without sleeping."[62] The Hermetic form of *mania*, then, is not like the raving of the bacchants, but rather an introverted, sleep-like state. This notion of an ecstatic sleep can be found elsewhere in the Hermetica, as well as in other ancient literature.[63] Iamblichus, in the guise of Abammon, claims that the state between sleep and wakefulness is most fit for reception of the gods, and that divine *mania* is illumination descending from the gods.[64] So, in the *Poimandres*, the narrator's bodily senses were suppressed as if asleep while his thoughts soared high, and at the end of the discourse he states that "the sleep of the body became the sobriety of the soul."[65] In *The Key*, it will be remembered, Hermes told Tat about the sleep-like (κατακοιμίζονται) visionary state of their ancestors Ouranus and Cronus, but regretted that they were at that time too weak to enter this state and open their

60 Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 336.

61 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 95, disagreeing with Gerard van Moorsel, *The Mysteries of Hermes Trismegistus: A Phenomenologic Study in the Process of Spiritualisation in the Corpus Hermeticum and Latin Asclepius* (Utrecht: Drukkerij Kemink en Zoon, 1955), 107, and Tröger, *Mysterienglaube*, 20–21, that the passage describes Tat's ecstacy. Hanegraaff, "Altered States," 145–46, also sees the passage as ecstatic, though with no reference to Tröger.

62 CH XIII, 4: εἴθε, ὦ τέκνον, καὶ σὺ σεαυτὸν διεξελήλυθας, ὡς οἱ ἐν ὕπνῳ ὀνειροπολούμενοι χωρὶς ὕπνου. My trans.

63 Cf. below, chap. 6.3.2.3.

64 Iamb., *Myst*. 3.2 and 3.8. Cf. also on sleep: FR 4:219; Scott 2:239; Kroll, *Lehren*, 355–58; Phil. Alex., *Somn.* 1.26.165; Porph., *Vit. Plot*. 22; Max. Tyr., *Diss.* 17.10; Orig., *Cels*. 7.35; Plut., fr. 178; Plut., *Gen. Socr.* 590B; on *mania*, the locus classicus is Plato, *Phaedr*. 244c–245b.

65 CH I, 1: κατασχεθεισῶν μου τῶν σωματικῶν αἰσθήσεων, καθάπερ οἱ ὕπνῳ βεβαρημένοι ἐκ κόρου τροφῆς ἢ ἐκ κόπου σώματος; CH I, 30: ἐγένετο γὰρ ὁ τοῦ σώματος ὕπνος τῆς ψυχῆς νῆψις.

mind's eyes.[66] Now, in CH XIII, Tat will receive the power to open his mind's eyes, and Hermes uses the same hortatory εἴθε formula as in CH X.

Surprisingly, at this point Tat interjects a question concerning the identity of the one who is effectuating the rebirth, the *genesiourgos* of rebirth.[67] There is no apparent connection between this question and the foregoing conversation, and several commentators have supposed that the entire chapter 4 is a later insertion or just out of place, since § 5 picks up where § 3 leaves off. The only way to make Tat's question fit comfortably where it stands, is if one assumes that Tat recognizes the sleepless dream out of the body as the rebirth, and therefore asks who will effectuate this state. The term *genesiourgos* first appears in the *Wisdom of Solomon* as a term for the creator of the world, visible through his creation. It is later picked up by Clement and Origen, while Numenius uses the term as a designation for lower souls concerned with generation.[68] In CH XIII, 21, Tat hails the creator as γενάρχα τῆς γενεσιουργίας, but in our passage the word does not designate cosmic generation, but noetic regeneration. The closest parallel seems to be SH XXIII, 44, where the spirit of reproach, Momus, calls Hermes *genesiourgos* when chiding him for allowing the humans to see "the beautiful mysteries of nature."[69] In this treatise Hermes is also involved in the physical creation of mankind, so that could also be meant by the appellation. At any rate, the *genesiourgos* must be Hermes rather than the demiurge in CH XIII, since Hermes answers that the *genesiourgos* is called "the son of God, one human, by the will of God."[70] This expression likely refers back to the primal human of the *Poimandres*, an interpretation that is strengthened by the Hermetic *Pinax* of Bitys, recounted by Zosimus of Panopolis: "In the first hieratic language 'Thôuthos' means the first human, the interpreter of all that exists and the one who has given names to everything corporeal."[71] He is

66 CH X, 5. Cf. above, chap. 4.6.6.

67 CH XIII, 4: τίς ἐστι γενεσιουργὸς τῆς παλιγγενεσίας.

68 *Sap.* 13.5; Clem. Alex., *Paed.* 1.6.39, 2.10.85, 3.10.68; Orig., *Philoc.* 2.5.24; *Sel. Ps.* 12.1081 & 1229; Num., fr. 37.6. *Sap.* probably stems from Alexandria in the early Roman period. Cf. Antonio Orbe, *Estudios Valentinianos* (5 vols.; Rome: Apud Aedes Universitatis Gregorianae, 1955–1966), 1:483 n. 10.

69 SH XXIII, 44: τοῦτον ἀμέριμνον καταλεῖψαι κέκρικας, ὦ γενεσιουργέ, τὸν ὁρᾶν μέλλοντα τολμηρῶς τῆς φύσεως τὰ καλὰ μυστήρια. Orbe, ibid., points out that the meaning is closer to the τελεσιουργός of Proclus than to Numenius or Origen.

70 CH XIII, 4: ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ παῖς, ἄνθρωπος εἷς, θελήματι θεοῦ.

71 FH 21: Θώυθος ἑρμηνεύεται τῇ ἱερατικῇ πρώτῃ φωνῇ ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος, ἑρμηνεὺς πάντων τῶν ὄντων, καὶ ὀνοματοποιὸς πάντων τῶν σωματικῶν. Grese admits the reference in CH XIII, 4 to *Poimandres*, but maintains that the connection to the teaching of the primal human is superficial, since this myth is not contained in full in CH XIII.

further identified as the son of God, the one who draws souls out (ἐκσπάσῃ) from the realm of fatality by illuminating their mind, which corresponds well to the activity of the *genesiourgos* of rebirth.[72] The meaning of our passage as a whole, then, is that Hermes, who has already been born again as a son of God (cf. § 14), and thus has become one with the heavenly human—the archetypal human, in other words—is the one who is capable of effectuating the noetic rebirth according to the will of God.

§ 5: Hermes' identification of himself as the *genesiourgos* stupefies Tat and makes him speechless.[73] It has already been noted that Tat's objection at this point, that his master Hermes' size and stature is still the same, at face value fits better with the end of § 3. However, it can easily refer to § 4 as well: if Hermes identifies himself as the son of God, the one human, it makes good sense that Tat should be surprised to be able to see such a being physically in front of him. Tat is already familiar with the *Poimandres*, as § 15 shows, where the primal human in its unitary state is said to be incorporeal, and is only given multiple parts when embodied (CH I, 12–17). Hermes corrects his son by denying that his body is the same as before, since it is a material object that is constantly changing and therefore inherently false.

§ 6: "What, then, is truth?" asks Tat, no doubt wondering what Hermes' true self consists of. The answer is an apophatic string of alpha privatives, also found elsewhere in the Hermetica,[74] where the truth is described solely in terms of what it is not. The teaching that truth cannot be described by means of material terms, such as shape, colour and size, should have been well known to Tat, since he claims to have mastered the *Genikoi* where this teaching

72 Zosimus draws on two Hermetic sources in FH 21; the *Pinax* of Bitys and a text of Hermes called *On immateriality* (περὶ ἀϋλίας). The latter might have been christianized, since it mentions a spiritual human (πνευματικὸν ἄνθρωπον) and a triad (τριάδα), elements which are not found elsewhere in the Hermetica. However, cf. Howard M. Jackson, *Zosimos of Panopolis: On the Letter Omega* (Missoula: Society of Biblical literature, 1978), 44–45 n. 26, who points out several possible Hermetic triads in CH and *Ascl.*, and points to (ps.-) Zosimus' remark: "That is why he (Hermes) is called Thrice-greatest, because he envisioned the Created and the Creator triadically" (Berthelot, *Alchimistes grecs*, 2:132: ἔνθεν καὶ Τρισμέγιστος καλεῖται, ὡς τριαδικῶς ἐπιθεωρήσας τὸ πεποιημένον καὶ τὸ ποιοῦν). However, this text has been shown to be an anonymous commentary on Zosimus' *On virtue* in Joseph Bidez and Franz Cumont, *Les mages héllenisés: Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspe d'après la tradition grecque* (2 vols.; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1938), 2:332 n. 1; cf. Mertens, *Zosime*, xlv nº 14.

73 CH XIII, 5: νῦν τὸ λοιπόν, ὦ πάτερ, εἰς ἀφασίαν με ἤνεγκας· τῶν πρὶν ἀπολειφθεὶς φρενῶν, τὸ γὰρ μέγεθος βλέπω τὸ σὸν τὸ αὐτό, ὦ πάτερ, σὺν τῷ χαρακτῆρι.

74 Cf. above, p. 234.

is basic. But Tat is perplexed: "I have truly become mad, father, for just when it seemed that I had become wise by means of you, my senses were barred from this thought of mine."[75] Apparently, Tat still relies on his physical senses and is therefore frustrated in his attempt to follow his father's lofty discourse. Hermes attempts to set him straight: "How can you understand sensibly that which is not dry, not moist, not tightly bound, not slipping away, that which is known only by power and force and requires someone who is able to understand the generation in God?"[76] Apparently there is a sensible understanding (αἰσθητῶς νοεῖν) as well as a suprasensible one. If we presuppose the teaching of a double nous, the sensible understanding must be the human noetic faculty which Tat possesses even before the rebirth, while the divine nous is only gained in the rite of rebirth.[77] In order to understand the generation in God one must first obtain divine powers, in keeping with the saying of CH XI, 20: "If you have not made yourself like God, you are not able to understand God; for like is (only) understandable to like."[78] The rebirth, then, will make Tat divine, and thus able to understand God.

§ 7: His self-confidence shaken, Tat asks if he is powerless, since he does not understand the rebirth in God. This is denied by Hermes, who gives a fourfold recipe to achieve power: "Draw into yourself, and it will come; will it, and it happens. Suspend the perceptions of the body, and there will be generation of divinity. Cleanse youself from the irrational avengers of matter."[79] It is

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75 CH XIII, 6: μέμηνα ὄντως, ὦ πάτερ· δοκοῦντος γάρ μου ὑπὸ σοῦ σοφοῦ γεγονέναι, ἐνεφράχθησαν αἱ αἰσθήσεις τούτου μου τοῦ νοήματος. My trans.

76 CH XIII, 6: πῶς αἰσθητῶς αὐτὸ νοήσεις τὸ μὴ σκληρόν, τὸ μὴ ὑγρόν, τὸ ἀσφίγγωτον, τὸ μὴ διαδυόμενον, τὸ μόνον δυνάμει καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ νοούμενον, δεόμενον δὲ τοῦ δυναμένου νοεῖν τὴν ἐν θεῷ γένεσιν. My trans.

77 Grese does not comment upon the use of νοεῖν in connection with the senses here, as it fits poorly into his theory that nous only enters the picture after the rebirth.

78 CH XI, 20: ἐὰν οὖν μὴ σεαυτὸν ἐξισάσῃς τῷ θεῷ, τὸν θεὸν νοῆσαι οὐ δύνασαι· τὸ γὰρ ὅμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ νοητόν. My trans.

79 CH XIII, 7: ἐπίσπασαι εἰς ἑαυτόν, καὶ ἐλεύσεται· θέλησον, καὶ γίνεται· κατάργησον τοῦ σώματος τὰς αἰσθήσεις, καὶ ἔσται ἡ γένεσις τῆς θεότητος· κάθαραι σεαυτὸν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλόγων τῆς ὕλης τιμωριῶν. My trans. Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 105–9, claims that the exhortations to Tat are surprising, since "God does it all" elsewhere in the treatise (his references in n. 261 do not support this claim. Proclaiming absolute dependency on divine providence is a common feature in pious praises which does not preclude a belief in human agency). Grese also repeats his claim, that "withdraw into yourself" is an exhortation which does not fit CH XIII, where there is no divine essence before rebirth. He also states that the exhortation to still the bodily senses does not fit CH XIII, since this is the function of the rebirth. Grese does not refer to any evidence to support this claim. As we have seen, stilling the bodily senses is a prerequisite of the rebirth, not its effect. Grese suggests that

uncertain if ἐπίσπασαι should be taken in an absolute sense, i.e. "withdraw into yourself," or if we should suppose power or the generation of divinity to be the implicit object.[80] Since θέλησον also lacks an immediate object, and stands uncomfortably alone, the latter option would seem to be the most attractive one. On the other hand, to withdraw into oneself is attested elsewhere in the Hermetica (CH I, 21). Certainly, to withdraw into oneself would be an apt description of the "noetic wisdom in silence," which constitutes the womb of rebirth. A so far unnoticed parallel can be found in CH IV, 4, discussed above. Here, the herald sent down with the mixing bowl proclaimed to the hearts of men that, in order to become divine, the heart which is capable should immerse itself into the mixing bowl filled with nous. In order to ascend to the one who sent down the mixing bowl, one first needs to descend into it. It should be noted that the Egyptian hieroglyph for heart, representing a canopic jar (*ib*), strongly resembles a mixing bowl.[81] It is possible, then, that the hearts are in effect told to withdraw into themselves, and mind is indeed elsewhere associated with the heart.[82] By immersing oneself, one will become a perfect human (τέλειοι ἄνθρωποι), a clear indication of an initiatory context such as we have here in CH XIII. But as we have seen, Tat did not at the time of CH IV have the power to immerse himself. Rather, the image of God was painted according to his ability (κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν), until the time that he would be able to see with the

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the exhortations are simply taken from tradition and inserted here haphazardly, and proceeds to offer parallels to exhortations in Early Christian Literature. Van den Kerchove "Pratiques rituelles," 339, thinks that the exhortations are for Tat to react during the expulsion of the avengers and summoning of powers to follow. The avengers or avengers of matter are probably taken from Pythagorean sources, cf. Philo. fr. B14: μαρτυρέονται δὲ καὶ οἱ παλαιοὶ θεολόγοι τε καὶ μάντιες, ὡς διά τινας τιμωρίας ἁ ψυχὰ τῶι σώματι συνέζευκται καὶ καθάπερ ἐν σάματι τούτωι τέθαπται. The authenticity of this fragment is contested, but cf. Christoph Riedweg, *Pythagoras: His Life, Teaching, and Influence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 111.

80 Festugière translates "attire-le à toi" (NF 2:202) though citing Einarsson, "contracte-toi en toi-même," in the notes (2:212 n. 34). Scott (2:384) suggests that the object is "the incorporeal, that is, in this connexion, τὸν θεῖον νοῦν, or τὰς δυνάμεις." Cf. FR 3:169–74; Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, "La gnosi ermetica come iniziazione e mistero," *Studi e Materiali di storia delle religioni* 36 (1965): 43–62 at 59; Van den Kerchove "Pratiques rituelles et traités hermétiques," 339.

81 I owe this observation to Anna van den Kerchove, at a CNRS presentation.

82 CH VII, 2; the heart is a receptacle of light-nous in *Disc.8–9* (NHC VI, 60,12–13) and *Ascl.* 32; the heart sings hymns of praise in CH I, 31, XIII, 21, and *Disc.8–9* (NHC VI 55,12, 57,21 & 60,8); hearts equated with souls in SH XXIII, 36. The Coptic word for heart, ϩⲏⲧ, is also the word used to translate Greek nous, cf. C 714a.

eyes of the heart.[83] Now, in CH XIII, Tat will finally be given the power to see with the eyes of his mind (CH XIII, 14, 17).

So much for the withdrawal. As for the exhortation to will it, there is no need to see this as incommensurable with the dependance of the will or wish (θελήμα/βουλή) of God for receiving the rebirth, as Grese does.[84] First of all, the will of God is not as all-embracing as Grese thinks. All that is said is that the rebirth happens according to the will of God, but that does not mean that it would have happened in any case, by necessity. It is usual in the Hermetica to distinguish God's providence from fate and necessity, though the internal relationship of these terms is complex and far from unambiguous. While fate and necessity control everything material, including humans, they do not control a being who is above matter, as it is clear from § 3 that Hermes is. The process of emancipation from matter demands an act of volition on the part of the disciple, a point that emerges clearly from several Hermetica,[85] and also in CH XIII: "I wished to hear the praise through hymn, father, the one you said that you heard from the powers when you arrived at the Eighth … I want to hear,

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83 CH IV, 11: κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν σοι ὑπογέγραπται τοῦ θεοῦ εἰκών· ἣν ἀκριβῶς εἰ θεάσῃ καὶ νοήσεις τοῖς τῆς καρδίας ὀφθαλμοῖς πίστευσόν μοι, τέκνον, εὑρήσεις τὴν πρὸς τὰ ἄνω ὁδόν. The power to gaze up with the eyes of the heart is also reserved to those who have *dynamis* in CH VII, 1: ἀναβλέψατε τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς τῆς καρδίας· καὶ εἰ μὴ πάντες δύνασθε, οἵ γε καὶ δυνάμενοι.

84 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 107–8 n. 273, refers to Festugière's discussion of the need for wanting to be saved, and admits that: "If this understanding is the background for the use here of θελήσον, it would mean that Tat has to want to be regenerated before God will do it to him."

85 Cf. CH I, 3: μαθεῖν θέλω τὰ ὄντα καὶ νοῆσαι τὴν τούτων φύσιν καὶ γνῶναι τὸν θεόν· … ἔχε νῷ σῷ ὅσα θέλεις μαθεῖν, κἀγώ σε διδάξω; 30: πληρωθεὶς ὧν ἤθελον; CH V, 3: εἰ δὲ θέλεις αὐτὸν ἰδεῖν, νόησον τὸν ἥλιον, νόησον τὸν σελήνης δρόμον; 6: εἰ θέλεις καὶ διὰ τῶν θνητῶν θεάσασθαι τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ τῶν ἐν βυθῷ, νόησον, ὦ τέκνον, δημιουργούμενον ἐν τῇ γαστρὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον; CH XI, 14: εἰ δὲ καὶ ἔργῳ αὐτὸ θέλεις νοῆσαι, ἴδε τί σοὶ ἐγγίνεται θέλοντι γεννῆσαι; 21: τὸ δὲ δύνασθαι γνῶναι καὶ θελῆσαι καὶ ἐλπίσαι, ὁδός ἐστιν † εὐθεῖα ἰδία † τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φέρουσα καὶ ῥᾳδία; CH XII, 21: εἰ δὲ θέλεις αὐτὸν καὶ θεωρῆσαι, ἴδε τὴν τάξιν τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὴν εὐκοσμίαν τῆς τάξεως; CH XIV, 1: ἐπεὶ ὁ υἱός μου Τὰτ ἀπόντος σοῦ τὴν τῶν ὅλων ἠθέλησε φύσιν μαθεῖν; SH II A, 2: εἰ δὲ μὴ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἡ σύστασις ἡμῶν ἔσχε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, πῶς ἂν δύναιτο ἀλήθειαν ἢ ἰδεῖν ἢ εἰπεῖν; νοήσει δὲ μόνον ἐὰν ὁ θεὸς θέλῃ; SH XXIII, 4: πρῶτον μὲν ζητεῖν θελήσωσιν, εἶτα ἐπιθυμήσωσιν εὑρεῖν, εἶτα καὶ κατορθῶσαι δυνηθῶσι; SH XXIV, 1: εἴ τι θέλεις ἕτερον, ἐπερώτα … εἰδῆσαι θέλω πῶς γίγνονται βασιλικαὶ ψυχαί; *Ascl.* 36: *uis dicere*; *Disc.8–9* (NHC VI,6) 53,34: ⲧⲟⲩⲱⲟⲩ ⲱ ⲡⲁⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲁⲧⲣⲓⲡⲓⲟⲉⲥⲟⲁⲓ; 58,8–10: ⲧⲟⲩⲱⲟⲩ ⲉⲱⲁϫⲉ· ⲟⲩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲫⲟⲃⲟⲥ ⲣ̄ⲕⲁⲧⲉϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲉⲓ; 58,25–26: ⲧⲟⲩⲱⲟⲩ ⲉⲣ̄ⲣⲩⲛⲏⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲉⲉⲓⲕⲁⲣⲁⲉⲓⲧ; 59,21–22: ⲉⲣⲓⲁⲓⲧⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲡⲉⲧ̄ⲕⲟⲩⲁⲱⲩ̄ⲕ ⲣ̄ⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲕⲁⲣⲱϥ; 60,6–7: ⲡⲉⲧ̄ⲕϫⲱ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟϥ· ⲱ ⲡⲁ̈ⲓⲱⲧ ⲧⲟⲩⲱⲟⲩ ⲣⲱⲙⲧ ⲉϫⲟⲟϥ.

father, and I wish to understand this."[86] Of course, the disciple is ultimately dependant upon divine assent in order to ascend, but this does not preclude the need for him to demonstrate his own willpower. In view of the wavering of Tat at this point, it makes good sense for Hermes to encourage him to use his willpower in order to proceed towards rebirth.

The next exhortation is for Tat to suspend the senses of the body. Tat has been frustrated in his attempt to perceive the true being of Hermes by means of the physical senses. These must now be stilled so that the extrasensory perception of the heart, of mind, can enter into him through the rebirth. Only then can he perceive Hermes' true being, for "like is understandable to like" (CH XI, 21). According to Grese, Tat could not possibly suspend the bodily senses by himself, since this is what constitutes the rebirth. But Grese offers no evidence for this interpretation, and as we have seen, the suspension of bodily senses is the prerequisite for, not the consequence of rebirth.

Finally, Tat is told to cleanse himself of the influence of the avengers of matter. Following Tat's admittance that he is ignorant of these avengers, all twelve are listed, and it turns out that the very ignorance of Tat is the first of them. Otherwise, the list of vices is quite standard. By enumerating the avengers Hermes is thus alleviating Tat's ignorance, and the rebirth may commence: the departure, one by one, of all the avengers constitutes the "method and teaching of rebirth."

So far, the tone of the dialogue has been didactic, but also psychagogic. At the outset, Tat proclaimed that he had estranged himself from the deceptions of the world. He was quite confident that he had mastered all the *Genikoi* and was now ready for rebirth. However, he was then shaken by the enigmatic answers given by Hermes and was brought to speechlessness, *mania*, and fear that he might be powerless, before he finally admits to his ignorance. Hermes has broken his old persona down, and can now start recreating him as a divine human. This process can aptly be described as the separation phase of an initiation ritual, in which the old self is dispensed with. In fact, this phase is the culmination of a protracted period of separation, in which Tat systematically removed himself from the world while learning the *Genikoi* teachings.

86 CH XIII, 15: ἐβουλόμην, ὦ πάτερ, τὴν διὰ τοῦ ὕμνου εὐλογίαν, ἣν ἔφης ἐπὶ τὴν ὀγδοάδα γενομένου σου ἀκοῦσαι τῶν δυνάμεων … θέλω, πάτερ, ἀκοῦσαι, καὶ βούλομαι ταῦτα νοῆσαι. My trans.

5.3 Limen: The Threshold Phase

5.3.1 *CH XIII, 8: Receptive Silence*

§ 8: Having been deconstructed, so to speak, Tat is now ready to be reassembled by the divine powers invoked by Hermes. In order to receive this compassionate care from God (τὸ ἔλεος ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ), it is first necessary to observe a reverential silence.[87] In other words, through his silence Tat makes himself into a womb, as described in § 2, ready to receive the divine seminal effluence. The adverbial λοιπόν makes it clear that the silence is kept for quite some time, although the written text continues immediately.[88] The hushed atmosphere is more vividly evoked in the narrative of the *Perfect Discourse*: "When Hammon had also come into the sanctuary, the reverence of the four men and the divine presence of God filled that holy place; duly silent, the souls and minds of each of them waited respectfully for a word from Hermes, and then divine love began to speak."[89] The association between speech and Eros goes back to Plato, but the preceding reverential silence is a novel feature of the Hermetica.[90] In CH XIII, the atmosphere becomes charged by the anticipation of what is to come, so that the metaphor of a "pregnant silence" would be apt, especially in view of the role of reverent silence as the womb of rebirth.[91]

It has been pointed out in comparative studies of religion that there are different forms of ritual silence.[92] One type of ritual silence is the notion of silent prayers, found in *Disc.8–9* and CH I, 31, and another type is the oath

87 Cf. van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 85f., 342f.

88 FR 4:203; Sfameni Gasparro, "La gnosi ermetica," 59.

89 *Ascl.* 1: *Hammone etiam adytum ingresso sanctoque illo quattuor uirorum religione et diuina dei completo praesentia, conpetenti uenerabiliter silentio ex ore Hermu animis singulorum mentibusque pendantibus, diuinus Cupido sic est orsus dicere*. Trans. Copenhaver.

90 Scott 3:8. Plotinus' interpretation of Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, which was probably close in time to the *Perfect Discourse*, identifies Eros with the personal daimon of each soul in the cosmos (*Enn.* III.5 [50].4), generated by the individual souls as they emanate into the cosmos from the universal soul, Aphrodite Ouranios, whose own attendant is not a daimon but the god Eros (*Enn.* III.5 [50].6). A further allegoresis is made of the myth relating the birth of Eros from the union of Penia and Poros in the garden of Zeus: Penia is the soul of Zeus, who represents *nous*, and becomes deficient when she breaks away from him into his garden. Here, she finds the abundant Poros, representing *logos*, and wishes to conceive from him.

91 On silence cf. Silvia Montiglio, *Silence in the Land of Logos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Maria G. Ciani (ed.), *Regions of Silence: Studies on the Difficulty of Communicating* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1987).

92 Bohdan Szuchewycz, "Silence in Ritual Communication," in *Silence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (ed. Adam Jaworski; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), 239–60 at 242.

of silence, the taboo of speaking of the mysteries, found in CH XIII, 22 and *Ascl.* 32.[93] Silence is also a necessary preliminary condition to make a prayer undisturbed.[94] Then there is the famous five-year period of silence for Pythagorean novices.[95] In CH XIII, 8, however, the ritual silence is conceived of neither as a prayer nor as the withholding of a secret, but rather as a passive, receptive state. It is likely that this state also entails a silencing of thoughts, since Tat was told in § 7 to quiet his bodily sensations and get rid of the material avengers, which include vices dependent upon cognitive activity, such as greed and deception. This internal stillness can be called deep silence, and in ritual contexts "the expectancy generated in the silence intensifies the significance of the speech which does eventually follow."[96]

Tat is told not only to keep silent (σιώπησον), but also to observe a reverent silence (καὶ εὐφήμησον), a traditional theme which already in the *Iliad* (9.171) was seen as a prerequisite for making an effectual prayer to Zeus.[97] The basic meaning of *euphêmia* is double: it denotes both well-omened speech, and conversely the holding of one's tongue to avoid portentous words.[98] In the Hermetica the word is most often used to correct the disciple when he says something irreverent, as an injunction for him to guard his tongue,[99] but it can also be used synonymously with praise, either of god(s), kings, or other humans.[100] The silence which is commanded in CH XIII, 8 is thus qualified

93 Emma Brunner-Traut, "Weiterleben der ägyptischen Lebenslehren in den koptischen Apophthegmata am Beispiel des Schweigens," in *Studien zu altägyptischen Lebenslehren* (ed. Erik Hornung and Othmar Keel; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 173–216, includes other types of silence: cultic silence in the presence of god(s), polite silence, humble silence, silence of self-control, silence to avoid ill omens or "sins of the tongue."

94 Cf., e.g., the Christian musical hymn of P. Oxy. 1786.

95 Alain Petit, "Le silence pythagoricien," in *Dire l'évidence: philosophie et rhétorique antiques* (ed. Carlos Lévy and Laurent Pernot; Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 287–96.

96 Szuchewycz, "Silence in Ritual Communication," 242–43, 246.

97 Paolo Scarpi, "The Eloquence of Silence. Aspects of a power without words," in Ciani, *The Regions of Silence*, 19–40 at 29. Hom., *Il.* 9.171: εὐφημῆσαί τε κέλεσθε, ὄφρα Διὶ Κρονίδῃ ἀρησόμεθ'. Cf. Diog. Laert., *Vit.* 8.33, where Pythagoras recommends honoring the gods with reverent silence, and Iamb., *Myst.* 8.3, where according to the books of Hermes the primal object of intellection should be worshipped by silence alone (cf. above, chap. 3.6).

98 Ibid., 16. Hermetic uses of *euphêmeô*: CH I, 22; II, 10; VIII, 5; X, 21; XI, 22; XII, 16; XIII, 8 & 14; XVIII, 15; *euphêmia*: CH XVIII, 10–15. Cf. Larry J. Alderdink and Luther H. Martin, "Prayer in Greco-Roman Religions," in *Prayer from Alexander to Constantine: A Critical Anthology* (ed. Mark Kiley; London: Routledge, 1997), 123–27 at 125.

99 CH I, 22; II, 10; VIII, 5 (although here it appears together with an injunction to contemplate: εὐφήμησον, ὦ τέκνον, καὶ νόησον τί θεός, τί κόσμος κτλ.); XI, 22; XII, 16.

100 CH X, 21; XVIII, 10–15.

as well-omened, inviting the divine presence, as in *Ascl.* 1, and care must be taken not to utter anything portentous, since that would interrupt the outflowing of God's compassionate care into the womb of silence—a mystical *coitus interruptus*, so to speak. This is a clear sign that we are moving into the labile liminal phase, where every word and motion is strictly circumscribed by ritual taboo.

The notion that silence is constitutive for the candidate's further progress is, as we have already seen, supported by other Hermetica:

τότε γὰρ αὐτὸ ὄψει, ὅταν μηδὲν περὶ αὐτοῦ ἔχῃς εἰπεῖν. ἡ γὰρ γνῶσις αὐτοῦ καὶ θεία σιωπή ἐστι καὶ καταργία πασῶν τῶν αἰσθήσεων … περιλάμψαν δὲ πάντα τὸν νοῦν καὶ τὴν ὅλην ψυχὴν ἀναλάμπει καὶ ἀνέλκει διὰ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ὅλον αὐτὸν εἰς οὐσίαν μεταβάλλει. ἀδύνατον γάρ, ὦ τέκνον, ψυχὴν ἀποθεωθῆναι ἐν σώματι ἀνθρώπου θεασαμένην ⟨τὸ⟩ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ κάλλος.

At the moment when you have nothing to say about it (sc. the beauty of the good), you will see it, for the knowledge of it is divine silence and suppression of all the senses …[101] Once (the vision) has illuminated all his mind, it makes his whole soul shine and draws it upward through the body, and changes him entirely into essence. For it is impossible for soul to be deified while still in a human body, my son, even if it has beheld ⟨the⟩ beauty of the good.[102]

Divine silence and suppression of the senses correspond exactly to the state in which Tat finds himself presently, in the rite of rebirth, and as we shall see, knowledge and vision will follow shortly. We can further infer from this passage that during the silence Tat is conceived to be drawn out from his body, in order to be made into essence—that is, to become wholly mind (CH X, 19), and thus deified—by the vision of the good.[103] An out of body experience is strongly implied in CH XIII by the statement of Hermes that he has issued from himself into an immortal body,[104] that he wishes also for Tat to issue from

101 CH X, 5. Trans. Copenhaver.

102 CH X, 6. My trans.

103 We find a parallell to the vision drawing the soul upwards in CH IV, 11: ἔχει γάρ τι ἴδιον ἡ θέα· τοὺς φθάσαντας θεάσασθαι κατέχει καὶ ἀνέλκει, καθάπερ φασὶν ἡ μαγνῆτις λίθος τὸν σίδηρον. To practice leaving the body as a preparation for death is recommended in SH IIB, 8 and SH VI, 18.

104 CH XIII, 3: ὁρῶν † τι † ἐν ἐμοὶ ἄπλαστον θέαν γεγενημένην ἐξ ἐλέου θεοῦ, καὶ ἐμαυτὸν ἐξελήλυθα εἰς ἀθάνατον σῶμα.

himself,[105] and that the divine birth is later said to be a result of Tat leaving his bodily senses behind,[106] since the essential birth can only take place far from physical bodies.[107] The verb used for leaving the body, ἐξέρχομαι, is particularly interesting since it is also used for offspring issuing from the womb.[108] The silence observed by the candidate is thus conceptualized as the womb through which the soul can leave the material body, so as to be reborn as divine mind.

The connection between silence, rebirth, and leaving the body can also be found in the *Poimandres*. Near the end of the treatise, after Poimandres, the mind of sovereignty, has merged with the powers of the narrator, the benefactions of Poimandres are extolled:

ἐγὼ δὲ τὴν εὐεργεσίαν τοῦ Ποιμάνδρου ἀνεγραψάμην εἰς ἐμαυτόν, καὶ πληρωθεὶς ὧν ἤθελον ἐξηυφράνθην. ἐγένετο γὰρ ὁ τοῦ σώματος ὕπνος τῆς ψυχῆς νῆψις,

καὶ ἡ κάμμυσις τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἀληθινὴ ὅρασις,

καὶ ἡ σιωπή μου ἐγκύμων τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ,

καὶ ἡ τοῦ λόγου ἐκφορὰ γεννήματα ἀγαθῶν.

τοῦτο δὲ συνέβη μοι λαβόντι ἀπὸ τοῦ νοός μου,

τουτέστι τοῦ Ποιμάνδρου, τοῦ τῆς αὐθεντίας λόγου.

As for me, I engraved the benefaction of Poimandres within myself, and since I had been filled with what I wanted, I was very glad. For the sleep of the body became soberness of the soul, and the closing of the eyes became true vision, and my silence became pregnant with good things.

This happened to me because I conceived from my mind,[109] namely from Poimandres, the word of the sovereign power.[110]

Here, it seems that the same pattern is followed as in the rebirth, except that the narrator is alone, and has no human teacher present. The sleep of the body and the closing of the eyes in CH I correspond to making the soul leave the

105 CH XIII, 4: εἴθε, ὦ τέκνον, καὶ σὺ σεαυτὸν διεξελήλυθας, ὡς οἱ ἐν ὕπνῳ ὀνειροπολούμενοι χωρὶς ὕπνου.

106 CH XIII, 10: τὴν σωματικὴν αἴσθησιν καταλιπών.

107 CH XIII, 14: τὸ αἰσθητὸν τῆς φύσεως σῶμα πόρρωθέν ἐστι τῆς οὐσιωδοῦς γενέσεως.

108 LSJ, s.v. "ἐξέρχομαι."

109 Reitzenstein and Scott both emended τόν τῆς αὐθεντίας λόγον to get an object, whereas Festugière saw λαβόντι as absolute, i.e.: "Cela—cette gestation et cette parturition—m'arriva parce que j'avais conçu de mon Noûs etc." (FR 3:167–68; cf. 4:165). Copenhaver has: "receptive of mind," which disregards μου: "my mind."

110 CH I, 30. My trans.

body and shutting down the bodily senses in CH XIII, the prerequisites for receiving a vision, as is clear from CH I, 1.[111] Naturally, silence is, if not necessary, then at least conducive to achieving such a state, as cross-cultural studies of mysticism tend to confirm.[112]

There is a further close parallel to this passage in the Armenian *Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius*, which has generally been overlooked: "Since nous conceives logos in silence, only (that) logos (which comes) from silence and nous (is) salvation. (But that) logos (which comes) from logos (is) only perdition; for by (his body) man is mortal, but by logos (he is) immortal."[113] This sentence is a close parallel to CH I, 30, and also recalls the statement of CH I, 6, that the union of logos and nous is life.[114] If nous and silence give birth to logos, silence as a feminine noun must here be the female partner to the masculine nous.

In CH IX it is said that the human nous conceives good things when it receives seed from God, and bad things when it receives its seed from lower demons. This offspring of nous is called a *noema* or *noesis*, a thought that can only be externalized by means of its brother, logos.[115] The common pattern is that only the purified human is capable of receiving the seed of the good from above, and the offspring is in some way connected to divine logos. All these references to mental procreation are likely to stem ultimately from Plato's *Symposion* 206c, though the references to silent contemplation cannot be found there. Indeed, it has been claimed that such an introvert and silent *ekstasis* was foreign to classical Greek thought, appearing only after the proliferation of

111 CH I, 1: ἐννοίας μοί ποτε γενομένης περὶ τῶν ὄντων καὶ μετεωρισθείσης μοι τῆς διανοίας σφόδρα, κατασχεθεισῶν μου τῶν σωματικῶν αἰσθήσεων, κτλ.

112 Cf. Leonard Angel, *The Silence of the Mystic* (Toronto: Morgan House Graphics, 1983). I do not wish to delve into the extensive debate on the term mysticism here; cf. Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 1–9, 17–20. Cf. also FR 2:55–71 (on cosmic mysticism), 4:141–99 (on extraverted mysticism), 4:200–57 (on introverted mysticism; CH XIII). Silence is a recurring element in introverted mystical experience.

113 DH V, 2: Քանզի ի լռութեան միտք յղանան զբանն, որ ի լռութենէ և ի մտաց բան մու փրկութիւն. որ ի բանէ բան՝ մի կորուստ. զի կասն մարմնոյն մարդն մահկանացու, բայց վասն բանին՝ անմահ: Arm. HHE 2:372; Trans. Mahé, "Definitions of Hermes."

114 HHE 2:428–30. The parallel is noted by Mahé on p. 373.

115 CH IX, 3; cf. also CH IX, 2.

Egyptian forms of devotion in the Hellenistic era.[116] The Hellenistic patron god of silence is indeed Harpocrates, Horus-the-Child, whose childlike gesture of a finger on the mouth was interpreted by the Romans as commanding silence.[117] We will consider this Egyptian silence at a later point.

A similar pattern of mental birth as in CH I, IX and DH V, 2 can be found in CH XIII. The womb is said to be *noeric* wisdom in silence,[118] which receives the good as a seminal outpouring from God, as in CH I & IX. The offspring is "a god and son of God, the All in All, put together from all powers."[119] The advent of the powers follows right after the silence. They purify Tat for the articulation or joining together (συνάρθρωσις) of the logos,[120] and the combination of the ten powers is said to constitute the *noeric* birth.[121] Tat thus becomes both a logos and a god and son of God, which makes him equivalent to the demiurgic nous of CH I.[122] Anna van den Kerchove notes the presence of the antonym of the unusual noun συνάρθρωσις in CH I, 4.[123] Here, an inarticulate cry (βοή ἀσυνάρθρως) was uttered from the dark nature, which was then answered by the descent of the creative holy word (CH I, 5: λόγος ἅγιος), also called a son of God, emanating from the light (CH I, 6). The logos can be assumed to be articulate (συνάρθρως), as in CH XIII, 8, in contrast to the inarticulate cry. The joining together of the word in the rebirth can thus be seen as an allusion to the articulation of the creative logos in the cosmogony. The rebirth mirrors divine birth: The hypercosmic light-nous of the *Poimandres*, which is presumably silent (CH I, 4: εὔδιόν), begets the logos in response to the descending darkness, just as, in humans, the descent and joining together of the divine powers as

116 Franz Cumont, "Le culte égyptien et le mysticisme de Plotin," *Mon. Piot* 25 (1921): 1–92; Ruth Padel, *Whom Gods Destroy: Elements of Greek and Tragic Madness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

117 Cat. 74.41; Varro, *Ling. lat.* 5.57; Ovid, *Met.* 9.692; Aug., *Civ.* 18.5; Mart. Cap., *Nupt. Phil. Merc.* 1.90.

118 Scott, 2:376, claims that it "can hardly be doubted that νοερά is a corruption of μήτρα." Nock and Festugière had their doubts, however, and kept νοερά.

119 CH XIII, 2: ἄλλος ἔσται ὁ γεννώμενος θεοῦ θεὸς παῖς, τὸ πᾶν ἐν παντί, ἐκ πασῶν δυνάμεων συνεστώς.

120 CH XIII, 8: ἀνακαθαιρόμενος ταῖς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεσιν, εἰς συνάρθρωσιν τοῦ λόγου.

121 CH XIII, 10: τῆς δεκάδος παραγινομένης, ὦ τέκνον, συνετέθη νοερὰ γένεσις.

122 Although Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 119, notes the divine hypostasis of *logos* in CH I, he does not perceive the further implications, and unconvincingly suggests that "Λόγος is used here simply as another term for the divine."

123 Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 354.

logos happens in opposition to the dark avengers of matter. Cosmogony is thus ritually reenacted.[124]

The combination of silence and womb is also found in Valentinian cosmogony, where in some systems Silence (Σιγή) is one of the names of the divine syzygos of the first principle. When the first principle wishes to beget a beginning, as Tertullian relates, "This beginning he places instead of seed in his Silence, as if in the genital parts of the womb. Immediately this Silence conceives and becomes pregnant and gives birth, assuredly in silence, and it is Nus that she gives birth to, who resembles the Father and is his equal in every respect."[125] Divine nous is thus born from silence, and this also has a ritual counterpart, in that silence according to the *Tripartite Tractate* is a name for baptism (NHC I 128,31).[126] In Valentinianism we thus have an important parallel where ritual mirrors protology, using many of the same terms, at about the same time and in a similar religious milieu. We must defer the question of dependency, and at present merely note that the parallel adds some plausibility to our argument that the rebirth constitutes a Hermetic rite of initiation.[127]

Leonard Angel has suggested, in his otherwise problematic typology of mysticism, a useful distinction between observational behaviour of the mystic, phenomenological reports of mystic experience, and mystic doctrine. These categories could be usefully applied to the Hermetic rebirth, even though our sources are of course limited. Taking the narrative of CH XIII at face value, as if it reflected an actually performed ritual, an outsider would have observed

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124 Cf. Tambiah, "A Performative Approach," 129–30: "cosmological constructs are embedded … in rites, and … rites in turn enact and incarnate cosmological conceptions."

125 Tert., *Val.* 7.5: *hoc* (*sc. initio*) *vice seminis in Sige sua velut in genitablibus vulvae locis collocat. suscipit illa statim et praegnans efficitur et parit, utique silentio, Sige, et Nus est quem parit simillimum Patri et parem per omnia*. My trans. Latin edition in Jean-Claude Fredouille, *Tertullien: Contre les Valentiniens* (SC 280; Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1980), 94. Tertullian's account is likely based on Iren., *Haer.* 1.1.1. Cf. also Clem. Alex., *Exc.* 29, connecting Sigê with the ineffability of Bythos (FR 4:76). Cf. also *Val. Exp.* (NHC XI 22,22–27) where the ineffable Father dwells alone, as a Monad, in silence, which is his "pair" (ⲡⲉⲩⲥⲁⲉⲓϣ). According to the *Refutation of All Heresies* ([Hipp.], *Ref.* 6.29.2–5), there were also some Valentinians who claimed that the Father was alone, without a consort.

126 Cf. Einar Thomassen and Louis Painchaud, *Le Traité tripartite* (*NHC I, 5*) (BCNH.T 19; Québec: Peeters, 1989), 280, 284, 444 (entity); Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 180–81, 196; FR 3:168, 4:76–77, 201 (no entity). Cf. *Chald. Or.* 30.

127 Unlike Valentinianism, neither Silence nor Wisdom is a divine hypostasis within Hermetism, although the latter is equated with a hypostasized Aion in CH XI, 3. But cf. NF 2:208 n. 13.

Hermes and Tat first being in intense and reverent dialogue, during which Tat would have been increasingly agitated. Then, the two men would have kept silent for a period, no doubt in a specific pose we are not informed about. Thereafter, further dialogue would follow, and finally the two would go to an open space at sunset, turn southwards and kneel, singing hymns. The experience that Tat undergoes is reportedly that of his soul leaving his body, in order to achieve visionary power. Later he informs us: "I see the All, and myself in nous." The doctrinal explanation of what is going on is also supplied: the silence constitutes a divine womb, in which the powers of God can descend and transform the candidate to a new human. Silence is thus the outwardly observable ritual behaviour at this point, experienced by Tat as leaving the body, and doctrinally construed as rebirth in a divine womb.

5.3.2 *CH XIII, 8–9: Rebirth—The Invocation of Divine Powers as Speech-Acts*

When Hermes breaks the silence, it is in order to rejoice that Tat is being purified by the powers of God, for the "composition of the word." Of the ten divine powers, the first two are said by Hermes to have already arrived (ἦλθεν), whereas the remaining eight are subsequently invoked. It is thus during the course of their silence that knowledge of God and knowledge of joy arrive, driving away the first two avengers, ignorance and sorrow. It is interesting to note that knowledge of God is the first power, since its attainment is often described as the main goal of Hermetism.[128] As we have seen, in CH X, 5, gnosis is said to be divine silence and the suppression of the senses, and there too, gnosis seems to be a precondition for, rather than the completion of the process whereby a soul is drawn out of the body and changed into essence. This is consistent with the statement of CH IV, 9, that gnosis is the beginning of the good which can be known. So why is gnosis a necessary precondition? It is because ignorance is the root evil, which oppresses the inner human, permitting the other vices to run rampant.[129] The absence of gnosis and episteme is said in *Ascl.* 21–22 to permit the material passions to gnaw on the soul like vipers, and in CH XVI, 15 the sublunar demons control souls by infiltrating them through matter, and their reign is called fate, or ignorance (CH XVI, 11). Those few who are able to

128 Kroll, *Die Lehren*, 353. Cf. Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 122, who claims that the common meaning of gnosis is to be reminded of one's divine nature, but that it here comes as a power from without, since unregenerate man is not divine. But yet again, Grese fails to account for the fact that it is the inner man, ὁ ἐνδιάθετος ἄνθρωπος, who is said to be suppressed by the avengers, a notion that Grese claims is "left indefinite" (115).

129 CH VII, passim; X, 8; XIV, 8.

liberate their rational soul from the demons will become a suitable container for God.[130] So in CH XIII, knowledge enters into Tat and annuls his ignorance, thus providing a bridgehead for the other divine powers to establish themselves in him, since Tat has now been purified of the most fundamental vice.

The presence of the knowledge of joy (γνῶσις χαρᾶς) is harder to explain. Scott suppressed γνῶσις, since it is not needed to provide the antithesis to the vice of sorrow (λυπή),[131] and indeed the subsequent sentence mentions joy alone.[132] Perhaps the logic is that to know God is also to know joy, that the two are necessary corollaries. It could also be a consequence of Hermes telling Tat to rejoice, so that the two commands have their corresponding powers: σιώπησον—ἦλθεν ἡμῖν γνῶσις θεοῦ :: χαῖρε—ἦλθεν ἡμῖν γνῶσις χαρᾶς. We find similar instances of rejoicing in the Coptic Hermetica: in *Disc.8–9*, Hermes embraces Tat and bids him rejoice that they have received the luminous power,[133] and soon after Tat declares: "I am silent … I understand mind … I rejoice."[134] In the *Prayer of Thanksgiving*, the encomiasts rejoice that they have received gnosis and have become divine.[135] Franz Cumont drew attention to the parallel between the rejoicing of CH XIII, 8 and that of a Mithraic exclamation made to a newly initiated "bridegroom" (*nymphus*), the second initiatory grade: "Hey, bridegroom! Rejoice, bridegroom! Rejoice, new light!"[136] Grese's objection against this parallel, that the initiation in CH XIII is not complete at this point, is invalid. *Disc.8–9* clearly demonstrates that the rejoicing can occur in the midst of visionary experience, and furthermore, our source for the Mithraic formula, Firmicus Maternus, does not provide the full context, so we cannot know where in the ritual proceedings it would have occurred. The best way to make sense of the ritual sequence, in my view, is thus to assume that the two first stages of the rebirth proper would be, first, ritual silence, in which

130 CH XVI, 15–16; cf. CH XII, 19.

131 Scott 1:244.

132 CH XIII, 9: δύναμιν καλῶ ἐπὶ χαρᾷ τὴν ἐγκράτειαν.

133 NHC VI 57,28–30: ⲣⲁϣⲉ ⲉϫⲙ ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲏⲇⲏ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲧⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ ⲉⲧⲟ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲏⲩ ϣⲁⲣⲟⲛ· Cf. comment in HHE 1:111.

134 NHC VI 58,24–31: †ⲕⲁⲣⲁⲉⲓⲧ … †ⲣ̄ⲛⲟⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲥ … †ⲣⲁϣⲉ.

135 NHC VI 64,15–19: ⲧⲛ̄ⲣⲁϣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲣⲛ̄ϫⲓ ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ ⲉ̄ⲛ̄ ⲧⲉⲕⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ· ⲧⲛ̄ⲣⲁϣⲉ ϫⲉ ⲁⲕⲧⲥⲉⲃⲟⲛ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ· ⲧⲛ̄ⲣⲁϣⲉ ϫⲉ ⲉⲛⲉ̄ⲛ̄ ⲥⲱⲙⲁ ⲁⲕⲁⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉ̄ⲛ̄ ⲧⲉⲕⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ = PGM III.599–601: χαίρομ[ε]ν, ὅτι σεαυτὸν ἡμῖν ἔδειξας, χαίρομεν, ὅτι ἐν πλάσμασιν ἡμᾶς ὄντας ἀπεθέωσας τῇ σεαυτοῦ γνώσει = *Ascl.* 41: *… gaudeamus, hoc lumine saluati tuo. Gaudemus quod te nobis ostenderis totum; gaudemus, quod nos in corporibus sitos aeternitati fueris consecrare dignatus.*

136 Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.* 19: ⟨ἅι⟩ δὲ νύμφε, χαῖρε νύμφε, χαῖρε νέον φῶς. Greek text from NF 2:213 n. 43 and Bidez and Cumont, *Mages hellénisés*, 2:154.

the knowledge of God is realized, and second, a ritual acclamation of joy over this knowledge.

Having successfully completed the first two steps, knowledge of God and of joy, which drives out the avengers of ignorance and sorrow, Hermes next takes a more direct approach in his role as *genesiourgos*,[137] and invokes the remaining powers. This is in fact a summoning of divine powers, and the only thing which separates the language used here from similar summonings in the Greek Magical Papyri and Hekhalot formulas, is that the powers are invoked as virtues instead of divine names.[138] Whereas the utterances of Hermes have so far been either expository of exhortatory, they now seem to have a direct impact on the divine powers invoked. Hermes invokes the divine powers by exclaiming "I call upon" (καλῶ) so-and-so, and immediately the power appears. The verb in the first-person singular present indicative active quite often has a peculiar illocutionary force, to use the term of J.L. Austin,[139] and we could indeed call it a speech-act or a performative utterance. Austin's student, John R. Searle, elaborates: "In uttering a performative sentence a speaker performs the illocutionary act … named by the performative verb by way of representing himself as performing that act."[140] In other words, in uttering "I call" or "I summon", Hermes *is* calling or summoning.[141] Since the summonings are not uniform, and thus apparently not entirely formalized, it is worthwhile to consider each in turn:

137 *Pace* Scott 2:386: "The Rebirth is wrought by God alone; and the ministrations of the human τελεσιουργός, by which the way is prepared for it, consist of nothing but teaching."

138 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 123–24 perceives that the passage "brings us into the very midst of the regeneration process itself," but sees no connection to the magical papyri. As always, his base of comparison is early Christian literature.

139 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 56, 100, et passim. Austin starts his book by distinguishing between performatives and statements, but ends up by claiming that they in fact both possess an illocutionary force (since "stating" something is to do something). This reduces the book's utility for religious studies. Subsequent scholars of religion have circumscribed the illocutionary forces utilized in rituals from everyday speech, e.g., Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words"; id., "A Performative Approach to Ritual"; Maurice Bloch, "Symbols, song, dance and features of articulation: Is religion an extreme form of traditional authority," *European Journal of Sociology* 15 (1974): 54–81.

140 John R. Searle and Daniel Vanderveken, *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3.

141 Cf. also, on speech-acts as ritualization in the Hermetica, Chlup, "The Ritualization of Language in the Hermetica," 141–44.

3rd power: Continence

δύναμιν **καλῶ** ἐπὶ χαρᾷ τὴν ἐγκράτειαν· ὦ δύναμις ἡδίστη, προσλάβωμεν, ὦ τέκνον, αὐτὴν ἀσμενέστατα· πῶς ἅμα τῷ παραγενέσθαι ἀπώσατο τὴν ἀκρασίαν;[142]

The power I summon after joy is continence. O sweetest power! Let us receive her most happily, my son. How she has repulsed incontinence as soon as she arrives![143]

Hermes first invokes the power of continence, in the first-person singular present indicative active, in what clearly corresponds to Austin's notion of a speech-act. There is not much propositional content in the statement, nor is it an exhortation: By the very words of Hermes the power invoked appears, as becomes clear by the following vocative, where the power is addressed directly: "O sweetest power!" Still in real-time, Hermes continues with an exhortation to Tat, in aorist subjunctive: "let us receive her." Finally, we are given an aorist description of the effects of their having received the power, namely that the corresponding avenger has now been repulsed.

4th power: Perseverance

τετάρτην δὲ νῦν **καλῶ** καρτερίαν, τὴν κατὰ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας δύναμιν.

In the fourth place I now summon perseverance, the power opposed to lust.

This is a straightforward present first person singular invocation. The addition of the temporal adverb νῦν adds to the illocutionary force, by actualizing the utterance, similar to "I *hereby* declare …"[144]

5th power: Justice

ὁ βαθμὸς οὗτος, ὦ τέκνον, δικαιοσύνης ἐστὶν ἕδρασμα· χωρὶς γὰρ κρίσεως ἴδε πῶς τὴν ἀδικίαν ἐξήλασεν· ἐδικαιώθημεν, ὦ τέκνον, ἀδικίας ἀπούσης.

This stage, my son, is the basis of justice. See how she has expelled injustice, without a judgement. With injustice gone, my son, we have been justified.

142 Nock has a question mark here, although certainly it is an exclamation.

143 The translations of the following summonings are mine.

144 Amina Kropp, "How Does Magical Language Work? The Spells and Formulae of the Latin Defixionem Tabellae," *Magical Practice in the Latin West* (ed. Francisco M. Simón and Richard L. Gordon; RGRW 168; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 357–80 at 360. Cf. Austin, *How to do things with Words*, 57; Searle, "How Performatives Work," 539, 543, 552.

This passage stands out, in that it does not contain an invocation. The meaning might be that the former power of perseverance is the foundation of justice, which therefore does not need to be summoned individually. The imperative to see (ἴδε) the unfolding effects of the advent of justice, makes it clear that we are still in the midst of an ongoing process. The notion of "stages" (βαθμός), shows that the invocations follow a fixed ritual pattern.[145]

6th power: Fellowship

ἕκτην δύναμιν **καλῶ** εἰς ἡμᾶς, τὴν κατὰ τῆς πλεονεξίας, κοινωνίαν.	The sixth power that I summon to us is the one opposed to greed—fellowship.

Again, we have a straightforward invocation.

7th power: Truth

ἀποστάσης δὲ ἔτι **καλῶ** τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ φεύγει ἀπάτη,	And when it has departed, yet again I summon truth, and deceit flees away.

Another invocation, this time with the adverb ἔτι, which emphasizes the repetition of the invocatory formulae.[146]

8th power: The Good

ἀλήθεια παραγίνεται ἴδε πῶς τὸ ἀγαθὸν πεπλήρωται, ὦ τέκνον, παραγινομένης τῆς ἀληθείας· φθόνος γὰρ ἀφ' ἡμῶν ἀπέστη·	Truth arrives; see how the good has been fulfilled, my son, when truth arrives, for envy has withdrawn from us.

The invocations are concluded with the appearance of truth, it seems, and the first seven powers together constitute the fulfillment of the good. The process of rebirth is still unfolding, however, as Tat is told to observe (ἴδε) the effects of the good, as envy withdraws.

145 Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 97 n. 9, cites this as one of the instances demonstrating that there are stages on the way of Hermes. But the word here refers to the stages in the specific ritual of rebirth, not in the overall way of Hermes.

146 Cf. parallelism in listing, Tambiah, "A Performative Approach to Ritual," 140.

9th and 10th powers: Life and Light

τῇ δὲ ἀληθείᾳ καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐπεγένετο, ἅμα ζωῇ καὶ φωτί, καὶ οὐκέτι ἐπῆλθεν οὐδεμία τοῦ σκότους τιμωρία, ἀλλ' ἐξέπτησαν νικηθεῖσαι ῥοίζῳ.

After truth, the good also arrives, together with life and light, and no longer does any torment of darkness make its attack, but vanquished, they have flown away with a hiss.

Concurrently with truth and the good, life and light arrive, and all the remaining torments of darkness fly away, with a whistle, piping or hiss (ῥοίζῳ).

We can observe that there are three main types of illocutionary force at play in this passage. First, there is the calling, invoking, or summoning, which can be said to be a special form of address, containing the force of an order or invitation to appear, directed at a superhuman invisible agent. Second, there are several orders directed at Tat, to behold or to receive the coming power. Thirdly, there are propositional utterances, which describe the arrival of the powers, or make predications about them. The first kind of utterance must preoccupy us a bit longer. As previously mentioned, we find the same kind of invocations in the roughly contemporary Greek Magical Papyri and the Hekhalot literature, as well as in other so-called magical rituals, but it is also a common staple in prayers. The much debated difference, if any, between magic spells and religious prayers, needs not detain us here; I will here consider both forms under the rubric of religion, in the sense of Melford Spiro, that they both contain "culturally patterened interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings."[147] This definition of religion also touches upon some central dimensions of performative utterances, or illocutionary acts: These must be conventional, that is, there must be a set of conditions generally agreed upon for the illocutionary force to function. Some illocutionary acts can only be performed in certain contexts, and by certain agents who are authorized to do so.[148] In our case, there is explicit mention of a tradition of rebirth (*paradosis*), containing both a method (*tropos*) and a formula or explanation (*logos*), which thus sets the parameters for the rebirth to be enacted. As we have seen, there are several preconditions which Tat must fulfill in order for the ritual to work. As for Hermes, he does indeed have a special authorization to perform the illocutionary acts, since he is the *genesiourgos* of the rebirth, having previously undergone the rebirth himself, and he is thus the "one human, god and son of

147 Melford E. Spiro, "Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (ed. Michael Banton; London: Tavistock Publications, 1966), 85–126 at 96. Cf. below, chap. 8.1.

148 Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 7.

God." In addition, Hermes has a particular authority in relation to utterances, since he is the patron god of the word as such. This is a paratextual circumstance that must have informed the ancient reader. It seems quite apparent that a sentence such as "I now summon perseverance, the power opposed to lust," only possesses its illocutionary force in a certain context, and when uttered by someone authorized to do so. Of course, it was possible for people at large in antiquity to invoke their gods when in need, so that one could conceivably exclaim "I invoke Pallas Athena to help me overcome this lust I feel." This would be a similar utterance to ours, though its illocutionary force is considerably lesser, since the speaker has no commonly accepted authority to call upon Athena (such as Kryses has in the *Iliad*, as a priest (ἀρητήρ), when he calls upon Apollo), nor necessarily does he utter his invocation in a conventional context, such as during a sacrifice, where the deity is considered more inclined to listen.

An invocation of a deity is common in Greco-Roman prayers, preceding the justification (historiola or argumentum) and request.[149] However, most invocations address the deity invoked, along with their epithets, with requests to "hear" the speaker, or "show mercy", "be benevolent", etc. The invocation is meant to catch the attention of the deity, but it does not constitute, in and of itself, the *presence* of the deity, as the invocations of Hermes do here.

The illocutionary point of the utterance is to direct the power invoked to appear. Should we thus class the illocutionary act under Searle's category of directives? There is definitely a difference, unnoticed by Searle, between the sentences "the defense calls on so-and-so, to the witness-stand," and "I summon you, the archangel Raphael, to appear before me." Since the entity invoked, Raphael, has no objective reality as such, but is culturally postulated, we can say that it is the very illocutionary act that makes the power present in the minds of both the speaker and the hearer.[150] Or in other words, ritual communication gives a culturally postulated superhuman being its perceived presence in the world.

The difference between the two sentences can also be considered in view of the perlocutionary effect of the utterance. The effect of an attorney calling on a witness will normally make said witness move to the stand. If the witness does not appear, he or she has still been formally summoned, and may be subject to legal sanctions. The effect of calling a god, angel, or demon, on the other hand, must be said to be wholly psychological, and is implicit in the summoning itself. The perlocutionary effect is that the speaker and an eventual

149 Alderink and Martin, "Prayer in Greco-Roman Religions," 123.

150 *Pace* Kropp, "How Does Magical Language Work," 365, who sees no difference if the hearer is a human or a superhuman being.

audience perceive the being to be present, or at least the audience concedes the summoner's claims that this is so. It is conceivable that the summoner or his clients do not experience the presence of the invoked superhuman being, but this would signify that the act of summoning had gone awry. The performative would be an unhappy one, in Austin's terms. This is clear from the instructions for an Egyptian magician, invoking the gods to appear to a boy: "If he opens his eyes and does not see the light, you make him close his eyes, you call to him again."[151] The successful performance of a conventional act of summoning a superhuman being will always produce that being. This kind of utterance would therefore belong to Searle's category of declaratives.[152] Even imperatives directed at superhuman beings could be considered declaratives. The common injunction "come to me" (ἥκέ μοι, ἐλθέ μοι) cannot be a directive, since there is no actual hearer. Rather it must be seen as declaring that a superhuman being is now present; "It creates *and simultaneously recognizes* a certain reality."[153]

Declarations make the proposition uttered be the case, by means of the very utterance, e.g. "I pronounce you husband and wife." Searle points out that most declarations depend on an institution, which provides the proper context for the declarations and endows the speaker with the authority needed, although one class of declarations needs no institution, according to Searle, namely that of supernatural declarations, e.g., "God says 'Let there be light.'"[154] It seems that Searle may be saying that the difference is that a supernatural entity does not need an institution in order to be authorized to declare something, but he does not expound any further differences, such as in our case, where the proposed listener of the utterance is a superhuman entity. To stay with the example provided by Searle, from the book of Genesis: "Then God said, 'Let

151 Griffith and Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus*, 25–27. Cf. Christian H. Bull, "Visionary Experience and Ritual Realism in the Ascent of the Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth (NHC VI,6)," *Gnosis* 2 (2017): 169–93.

152 Cf. Rebecca M. Lesses, "The Adjuration of the Prince of the Presence: Performative Utterance in a Jewish Ritual," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki; RGRW 129; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 186–206 at 199, who claims that adjuring and calling performed by a summoner belong to Austin's category of exercitives, "because it is an exercise of his power over the angel." Cf. in the same volume David Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells," ibid., 457–76 at 467.

153 Frankfurter, "Narrating Power," 467. Frankfurter is discussing mythic historiola as declaratives.

154 Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 18.

there be light'; and there was light."[155] God's utterance bears some similarities to a directive, i.e. "I command you, light, that you shall exist." But that would presuppose that there was an individual hearer, light, which in principle could resist the command of God.[156] This is clearly not what is presupposed by the biblical text. The terse description "and there was light" makes it clear that the existence of light does not stand in a normal causal relationship to the command of God, but rather that the very declaration constitutes the existence of light.[157] Although the syntax of "Let there be light" is one common to directives, the context makes it clear that it belongs in the declaration-group.

Thus, our sentence "I now summon perseverance, the power opposed to lust," although similar to directives, must in fact be considered a declaration. By virtue of the successful performance of the utterance, Hermes makes the power present, at least in the narrative universe. In effect, he declares that the power is present. The proposed presence is further bolstered by other utterances; "let us receive her," "see how she has expelled injustice," etc. The latter are directives, aimed at Tat, Hermes' human interlocutor.

But we are at present concerned *not* with the narrative universe as such, where a god can summon light into being by his very utterance, but rather with how such a statement could function in a ritual context. The most pertinent comparison would be, as previously mentioned, the instructions found in the Greek Magical Papyri. A TLG corpus-search renders 115 instances of the verb-form ἐπικαλοῦμαι, for example: "say—Hermetic: 'I call on you who surround all things, I call in every language and in every dialect, etc.'"[158] Our form, καλῶ, is

155 *Gen*. LXX 1.3: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς.

156 Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 14: the symbol for directive illocutions is !↑*W*(*H* does *A*), where the first symbol stands for the point, namely that something should be done, the arrow is the direction of fit, here world-to-word (i.e. prescriptive rather than descriptive), *W* is the sincerity condition, namely a want or wish that something be done, and finally the propositional content, that the hearer (*H*) does something (*A*).

157 Cf. Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 17: "Declarations bring about some alteration in the status or condition of the referred to object or objects solely in virtue of the fact that the declaration has been successfully performed." The symbol for declarations is *D*‡∅ (*p*), "[w]here *D* indicates the declarational illocutionary point; the direction of fit is both words-to-world and world-to-words because of the peculiar character of declarations; there is no sincerity condition, hence we have used the null symbol in the sincerity condition slot; and we use the usual propositional variable 'p'" (ibid., 19). Cf. Helge Jordheim, *Lesningens vitenskap: Utkast til en ny filologi* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001), 15.

158 PGM XIII.138–139: λέγε. Ἑρμαϊκός· ἐπικαλοῦμαί σε, τὸν τὰ πάντα περιέχοντα, πάσῃ φωνῇ καὶ πάσῃ διαλέκτῳ. Trans. Morton Smith, in *GMPT*, who adds "Hermetic (?) [spell]." Perhaps the enigmatic "say—Hermetic" should be interpreted as "say as Hermetic" analogously

less common, but is still used 16 times. In the Demotic papyri, too, we find the formula: "come to me and do for me such and such a thing today because I am calling you with … name."[159] The formula is found in the "god's arrival" (*pḥ-nṯr*) and "vessel inquiry" (*šn hn*) rituals, in which a god is petitioned for an oracle: "**A god's arrival** of Thoth according to what is outside, also, **saying formula**: I call to you, o Thoth, the hearing-ear … everything. I call to you in your names which are great, which are divine [*voc. mag.*] Awaken to me, o lord of truth!"[160] The invocation of a deity, not only to hear a prayer, be merciful, and so on, but to appear before the summoner, is a hallmark of Egyptian religion. As Robert K. Ritner points out, "humans in particular were formed from the creator's tears, are instructed to confront 'the god who is within you,' regularly become gods at death, and in exceptional cases during life."[161] Therefore they are justified in treating gods as peers, and may even threaten them if necessary, acts which would be considered blasphemy and magic in traditional Greek and Roman religious views. Scholarly literature has tended to view the Hermetic rebirth as a form of advanced or "high" religion, and has therefore tended to insulate it from the formulae of the "magic" papyri. Even Garth Fowden's *The Egyptian Hermes*, which accords serious attention to Egyptian magic, persists in distinguishing between the "theoretical" Hermetica, and "technical" magic.[162] As Ritner has demonstrated, the distinction is a false one from the point of view of traditional Egyptian religion. Consequently, if our thesis that Hellenizing Egyptian priests were instrumental in the tradition of Hermes is correct, a comparison between the summoning of divine powers in the Hermetic rebirth and the summonings in the Egyptian "god's arrival" and "vessel inquiry" spells should prove fruitful.

In fact, the parallels are many. Both types of spells invoke gods in order to gain divinatory answers, but the vessel divination makes a boy see the gods by looking down into a vessel. Apparently, this takes place in a dark room, where a single fire reflects into the vessel that produces the vision. Like CH XIII, then,

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with "say as magic" (*ḏd ḫr-ỉ-k m ḥk.w*), cf. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice,* 17 n. 71.

159 Janet H. Johnson, "Louvre E 3229: A Demotic Magical Text," *Enchoria* 7 (1977): 55–102 at 67 (Col. 2 ln. 12 (p. 60): *ỉmi n.y mtw.k ỉr n.y tȝ mn n md.t n pȝ hrw ḏd tw.y ʿš r-r.k n pȝ … rn*).

160 PDM Suppl. 149–162, text and trans. in Johnson, "Louvre E 3229," 72–3, col. 6/1–19; id. in *PGMT*, 328. The underlined text is written in red ink.

161 Robert K. Ritner, "The Religious, Social, and Legal Parameters of Traditional Egyptian Magic," in Meyer and Mirecki, *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, 43–60 at 51.

162 Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 79–87.

the vessel divination makes a boy, who is sometimes called the son of the ritualist, gain a vision of divine powers. The gods are asked to speak through the boy for a limited period for divinatory purposes, while the divine powers of CH XIII effectuate an initiatory rebirth. However, in both cases emphasis is put on the visionary experience of an epiphany, and the techniques to achieve this are structurally similar, although the divinatory rites make use of divine names and ritual gestures and objects, elements not to be found in the Hermetic rebirth. As we shall see later, the so-called Mithras-Liturgy combines elements from Egyptian divination with the motif of rebirth, and thus affords a privileged point of comparison.[163]

5.4 The Aggregation or Incorporation Phase

5.4.1 *CH XIII, 10–14: The Rebirth Explained and the Epiphanies of Tat*

ἔγνωκας, ὦ τέκνον, τῆς παλιγγενεσίας τὸν τρόπον· τῆς δεκάδος παραγινομένης, ὦ τέκνον, συνετέθη νοερὰ γένεσις καὶ τὴν δωδεκάδα ἐξελαύνει καὶ ἐθεώθημεν τῇ γενέσει·

You have come to know the method of rebirth, my son! By the appearance of the decad, my son, the noetic birth has been put together, and it drives away the dodecad, and we have been deified by this birth.

ὅστις οὖν ἔτυχε κατὰ τὸ ἔλεος τῆς κατὰ θεὸν γενέσεως, τὴν σωματικὴν αἴσθησιν καταλιπών, ἑαυτὸν γνωρίζει ἐκ τούτων συνιστάμενον καὶ εὐφραίνεται.

So the one who by grace has achieved the birth according to God, by taking leave of his bodily senses, recognizes himself as composed of these (powers), and he rejoices.[164]

Because of the successful invocation of the ten divine powers, Tat has come to know the method of rebirth, that is, he has come to experience directly the rebirth, and has thus been deified. He has finally recognized himself, as the command of God in the *Poimandres* (CH I, 18) and the herald of *The Mixing Bowl* (CH IV, 4) enjoined him to do at earlier stages of his initiation. Now Tat has been composed (συνιστάμενον) anew by means of divine forces, fulfilling the promise of § 2 that the new human would be composed (συνεστώς) of all powers. Tat has completed the initiation, having first become a stranger to the world, then separated from his body and finally filled with powers so that

163 Cf. below, chap. 8.6.

164 CH XIII, 10. My trans.

he is now entirely reconstituted. In the early stage of the way, Tat was told that self-knowledge was to hate his body so that he would be able to love himself, and now that he has freed himself from the bodily senses he can rejoice that he has gained a new immaterial body consisting of divine powers.

§ 11: Tat exclaims that he has been made unswerving by God,[165] and like Hermes he can no longer be seen by physical eyes alone. Not only has he now got a new, immaterial body, but he has also been reunited with the cosmos: "I am in heaven, in earth, in water, in air; I am in animals, in plants, in the womb, before the womb, after the womb; everywhere."[166] Tat is no longer a stranger to the world then, and it is clearly inappropriate to classify this treatise as dualistic. The expression of being before, in, and after the womb reflects that the reborn transcends the normal temporal span of human existence, and has become eternal. As Festugière points out, we find a very similar expression in CH XI, where the disciple is enjoined to "become Aion," the god of eternity:[167]

Αἰὼν γενοῦ, καὶ νοήσεις τὸν θεόν·

…

πάσας δὲ τὰς αἰσθήσεις τῶν ποιητῶν σύλλαβε ἐν σεαυτῷ, πυρός, ὕδατος, ξηροῦ, καὶ ὑγροῦ, καὶ ὁμοῦ πανταχῆ εἶναι, ἐν γῇ, ἐν θαλάττῃ, ἐν οὐρανῷ, μηδέπω γεγενῆσθαι, ἐν τῇ γαστρὶ εἶναι, νέος, γέρων, τεθνηκέναι, τὰ μετὰ τὸν θάνατον·

καὶ ταῦτα πάντα ὁμοῦ νοήσας, χρόνους, τόπους, πράγματα, ποιότητας, ποσότητας, δύνασαι νοῆσαι τὸν θεόν.

Become Aion, and you will understand God.…

Gather all the sensations of creation in yourself; fire and water, dry and moist,[168] and that you are at once everywhere; in earth, in water, in heaven, that you have not yet been born, that you are in the womb, young, old, dead, beyond death; and when you have understood all of this at once—times, places, things, qualities, quantities—then you are able to understand God.[169]

165 CH XIII, 11: ἀκλινὴς γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ. Cf. Michael A. Williams, *The Immovable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity* (NHS 29; Leiden: Brill, 1985).

166 CH XIII, 11: ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰμι, ἐν γῇ, ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν ἀέρι· ἐν ζῴοις εἰμί, ἐν φυτοῖς· ἐν γαστρί, πρὸ γαστρός, μετὰ γαστέρα, πανταχοῦ. Trans. Copenhaver.

167 FR 4:143.

168 Ibid.: ὑγροῦ = moist ether.

169 CH XI, 20. My trans.

Experiencing the world in its entirety entails becoming Aion, the year-god who changes forms yet stays the same.[170] Clearly, the two passages are related,[171] and Aion also plays a significant role in the new divine status of Tat in CH XIII. In chapter 20 of this treatise, Hermes exclaims in his hymn to the creator that he has found the eulogy from the Aion of the creator (ἀπὸ σοῦ Αἰῶνος εὐλογίαν εὗρον). Festugière interprets this as Aion having become present in the reborn (§ 19: τὸ πᾶν τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν), and thus providing the correct eulogy from within, just as the universal mind becomes present in the narrator of the *Poimandres* (CH I, 30). The Nous-Aion in human form praises the universal Nous-Aion.[172] The self-predication of Tat, that he has become omnipresent and trans-temporal, is not really a boast, then, as Grese suggests, but far closer to an aretalogy. Tat has become divine, and is thus able to sing his own praises, using the well known "I am" formula of the aretalogies. Not only in form, but also in content Tat's self-predication lies close to the aretalogies of the Aion, such as are found on the statue base set up for Aion at Eleusis: "he who by his divine nature remains ever the same in the same things … he who is and was and shall be, without beginning, middle or end, free from change, universal craftsman of the eternal divine nature."[173] Raffaele Pettazoni conjectured that in Egypt, Aion would be the translation of Egyptian *nḥḥ*, which is the common epithet of gods connected to the sun, and it is a commonplace to portray the sun-god Ra as a child in the morning, and an old man at night.[174] A parallel to Tat's omnipresence can be found in an utterance of Thoth on a stela in Dendera,

170 On Aion in the Hermetica, cf. FR 4:152–99, and for references Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 167. Cf. Reitzenstein, *Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium*, 151ff.; André-Jean Festugiere, "Les cinq sceaux de l'Aiôn alexandrin," in *Études de religion grecque et hellenistique* (Paris: Vrin, 1972), 201–9; Otto Weinreich, "Aion in Eleusis," *ARW* 19 (1916–1919): 174–90; Günther Zuntz, *Aion in der Literatur der Kaiserzeit* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992); Nock, "Mandulis Aion"; Andrew Alföldi, "From the Aion Plutonius of the Ptolemies to the Saeculum Frugiferum of the Roman Emperors," in *Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean in Ancient History and Prehistory* (ed. Konrad H. Kinzl; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1977), 1–30; Bousset, "Der Gott Aion."

171 Festugière (FR 4:164): "C'est la même expérience qui est décrite de part et d'autre."

172 FR 4:165–66, referring to Kroll, *Die Lehren*, 68 and Reitzenstein, *Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium*, 174.

173 Trans. Raffaele Pettazzoni, "Aion-(Kronos)Chronos in Egypt," in *Essays on the History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1954), 171–79 at 175; Greek text in Weinreich, "Aion in Eleusis," 174: Αἰὼν ὁ αὐτὸς ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς αἰεὶ φύσει θείαι μένων … ὁποῖος ἔστι καὶ ἦν καὶ ἔσται, ἀρχὴν μεσότητα τέλος οὐκ ἔχων, μεταβολῆς ἀμέτοχος, θείας φύσεως ἐργάτης αἰωνίου πάντα.

174 David Klotz, *Adoration of the Ram: Five Hymns to Amun-Re from Hibis Temple* (YES 6; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 78 n. 67.

from Ptolemaic times: "Je vivifie celui qui m'aime. Je suis l'eau, je suis le ciel, je suis la terre, je suis l'air. Je suis Ta-tjenen vivant de Maât."[175] Thoth identifies himself with water, heaven, earth, and air, as well as Tatenen, the epithet of the Memphite creator-god Ptah. The cosmic ubiquity of Tat thus likely has Egyptian roots, and his new identity as Aion is elaborated upon in the following passages.

§ 12: In response to Tat's question, of how only 10 powers can defeat 12 avengers, Hermes launches into a numerological explanation of the one and the many. First of all, Hermes says that although "the tent," no doubt of the body,[176] is composed from the twelve signs of the zodiac, it has one nature and an omniform appearance. The twelve avengers are internally distinguishable, but act in unison, as one. He then goes on to reveal that the ten divine powers are in fact also one. The decad gives birth to the soul (ψυχογόνος), and the union of life and light causes oneness (the henad) to be begotten by the spirit.

This is all somewhat obscure, but it seems that the explanation to Tat's question is that both the decad and the dodecad are a unity, so that it is a one-on-one fight.[177] But the twelve are separated (διαζυγαί) and united only in action, while the ten are truly one. Let us consider both numbers.

First, the twelve are equated with the zodiac and constitute the tent that Hermes and Tat have passed through. The use of the term σκῆνος, tent, for the body is well attested, and seems to imply that the body is merely the dwelling-place of the soul. The zodiac has one single nature (φύσεως μιᾶς), although it has an omniform appearance (παντομόρφου ἰδέας). The word *pantomorphos* is very rare prior to the Hermetica: Sophocles uses it as an epithet for polymorphic Thetis and Lycophron for the wiliness of the fox.[178] It thus seems that it

175 François Daumas, "Le sanatorium de Dendara," *BIFAO* 56 (1957): 35–57 at 42–43. The following passage is also suggestive: "c'est le destin prescrit à chaque homme qui donne le soufflé de vie à celui qu'il aime. Je suis Iouny, le venerable, resident dans l'horizon, illuminant tout æil lorsqu'il brille. Je suis le *ba* des *bas*, le prestigieux des prestigieux, grand de puissance parmi les dieux. Je suis Celui-dont-le-nom-est-caché mais dont la statue est brillante parmi les dieux de la terre. C'est Horus, fils d'Isis, fils d'Osiris, c'est l'enfant issu de moi." Klotz, *Adoration of the Ram*, 129, translates the given passage somewhat differently: "Mine are the waters, the heavens and the earth, I am Tatenen." Admitting that both translations are possible, he opts for the possessive, claiming that the priests were concerned with maintaining the transcendence of the deity.

176 For parallels, cf. Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 139 n. 452, to which can be added SH II A, 1, 11; V, 4.

177 Ibid., 141.

178 Soph., fr. 618 (*Troilus*); Lyc., *Alex.* 1393. Cf. Ps.-Hipp., *Ep.* 23: παντάμορφα σπλάγχνων γένη.

is an innovation to use the term in relation to the cosmos in the Hermetica, unless the Hermetic texts took it from some source now lost to us. We should consider the twelve avengers of matter in light of the demonology of CH XVI and the *Perfect Discourse*, for *pantomorphos* appears in both these texts, either as an impersonal adjective, modifying ἰδέα (= *species*/*imago*),[179] or as the deity Pantomorphos, who is the essence-ruler (οὐσιάρχης) of the 36 *Horoscopi*.[180] "Omniform" is thus a designation used both to describe how the sensible cosmos is shaped into an infinity of forms, and as the name of the deity of astral determinism. The term Horoscopos, normally the astrological moment of birth, is here used to designate the 36 decans, as is also the case in a Hermetic work used by Pamphilus, according to Galen.[181] In SH VI, the decans are said to dwell between the zodiac and the circle of the All, and they work their influences on mankind by means of demons. We thus see the outline of a Hermetic melothesia, in which astral influences are at work from top down, and where the tent of the body is perceived as the product of demonic forces.[182] In CH XIII it is the zodiac which is at work in the body, while elsewhere this role is assumed by the seven planets (CH I, 26; SH XXIX), or the 36 decans (SH VI;

179 CH XVI, 12: ὀγκῶν ταῖς ποικίλαις καὶ παντομόρφοις ἰδέαις; *Ascl.* 3: *mundus autem praeparatus est a deo receptaculum omniformium specierum;* 34: *Omnia enim ab eo* [*sc. deo sive voluntate dei*] *et in ipso et per ipsum, et uariae et multiformes qualitates et magnae quantitates et omnes mensuras excedentes magnitudines et omniformes species*; 36: *solis etenim et lunae et omniformes imagines sunt*.

180 *Ascl.* 19: *xxxvi, quorum uocabulum est Horoscopi, id est eodem loco semper defixorum siderum, horum* οὐσιάρχης *uel princeps est, quem* Παντόμορφον *uel omniformem uocant, qui diuersis speciebus diuersas formas facit.* The manuscripts show great variety here. See also *Ascl.* 35: *sed inmutantur* [*sc. formae*] *totiens, quot hora momenta habet circuli circumcurrentis, in quo est ille omniformis quem diximus deus.*

181 Galen, *Simpl. med.* 11.797–798 Kühn: εἰ δὲ ἄρα καὶ δέοιτο τοῦ βιβλίου, τίς οὕτως ἄθλιος ὡς παρελθεῖν τὰ Διοσκουρίδου καὶ Νίγρου καὶ Ἡρακλείδου καὶ Κρατεύα καὶ ἄλλων μυρίων ἐν τῇ τέχνῃ καταγηρασάντων, βιβλία γραμματικὰ γράφοντος ἐπῳδὰς καὶ μεταμορφώσεις καὶ δεκανῶν καὶ δαιμόνων ἱερὰς βοτάνας ἀνάσχοιτ' ἄν; ὅτι γὰρ γόητες ἄνθρωποι ἐκπλήττειν τὸν πολὺν ὄχλον ἔργον πεποιημένοι τὰ τοιαῦτα συνέθεσαν ἐξ αὐτῶν ἔνεστί σοι γνῶναι τοῦ Παμφίλου βιβλίων … ἔν τινι τῶν εἰς Ἑρμῆν τὸν Αἰγύπτιον ἀναφερομένων βιβλίων ἐγγεγράφθαι, περιέχοντι τὰς λς' τῶν ὡροσκόπων ἱερὰς βοτάνας, αἳ εὔδηλον ὅτι πᾶσαι λῆρός εἰσι καὶ πλάσματα τοῦ συνθέντος, ὁμοιότατα τοῖς ὀφιονίκοις τοῖς Κόγχλας.… καὶ αἱ λστ' αὗται βοτάναι μέχρι τῶν ὀνομάτων προέρχονται, μηδενὸς αὐταῖς ὑποκειμένου πράγματος. Cf. Wilhelm Gundel, *Dekane und Dekansternbilder: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Sternbilder der Kulturvölker* (Glückstad: Augustin, 1936), 27, and Cumont, "Écrits hermétiques II," 107 n. 1, who also cites P. Lond. 98.

182 Cf. Joachim F. Quack, "Dekane und Gliedervergotterung: Altägyptische Traditionen im Apokryphon Johannis," *JAC* 38 (1995): 97–122.

Ascl. 19). In none of the Hermetic texts are these forces perceived as purely evil entities, as for example the comparable demons in the melothesia of the *Apocryphon of John*,[183] but rather as the agents of fate who tie the human souls to their bodies, according to the will of a beneficent creator. A reader would get a decidedly bleaker impression here of the "pantomorphic ideas" of the twelve avengers, which lead mankind astray (εἰς πλάνην τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), than in the other Hermetica, which do not portray cosmic pantomorphism in a negative light at all. But this difference is due to the radical shift in consciousness which Tat undergoes in the rebirth, and not any strict ontological dualism. This can be demonstrated with reference to the discussion of pantomorphism in CH XI:

παντόμορφος δέ ἐστιν, οὐ τὰς μορφὰς ἐγκειμένας ἔχων, ἐν ἑαυτῷ δὲ αὐτὸς μεταβάλλων. ἐπεὶ οὖν ὁ κόσμος παντόμορφος γέγονεν, ὁ ποιήσας τί ἂν εἴη;

ἄμορφος μὲν γὰρ μὴ γένοιτο. εἰ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς παντόμορφος, ὅμοιος ἔσται τῷ κόσμῳ.

ἀλλὰ μίαν ἔχων μορφήν; κατὰ τοῦτο ἐλάττων ἔσται τοῦ κόσμου. τί οὖν φαμεν αὐτὸν εἶναι, μὴ εἰς ἀπορίαν τὸν λόγον περιστήσωμεν; οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄπορον περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ νοούμενον· μίαν οὖν ἔχει ἰδέαν, εἴ τίς ἐστιν αὐτοῦ ἰδέα, ἥτις ταῖς ὄψεσιν οὐχ ὑποσταίη, ἀσώματος. καὶ πάσας διὰ τῶν σωμάτων δείκνυσι.

The cosmos is omniform: it does not have forms inserted in it but changes them within itself. Since the cosmos came to be omniform, who can have made it? Let us not call him formless. But if he, too, is omniform, he will be like the cosmos. What if he has one form? In this respect he will be less than cosmos. What do we say he is, then, so as not to bring our discourse to an impasse? For there can be no impasse in our understanding of God. Therefore, if he has any structure in him, it is one structure, incorporeal, that does not yield to appearances. And he reveals all structures through bodies.[184]

Our Hermetic author is here struggling with the question of unity and multiplicity. The creator of the cosmos, identified with Aion in this treatise (CH XI, 2–3), can not be formless, nor be omniform, like the cosmos, but rather he has only one incorporeal structure (ἰδέα). The omniform appearance of the cosmos

183 Ibid.

184 CH XI, 16. Trans. Copenhaver.

therefore acts to distract humankind from the one incorporeal form of the god Aion, but is not in and of itself a deficiency of the cosmos.[185]

As already stated, Aion appears only once in *On the Rebirth* (CH XIII, 20), there as a personified deity. However, it may be that we can also detect his presence in the numerological speculation on the unity of the twelve as opposed to that of the ten: the ten powers can eject twelve punishers because they are in fact one, a henad. The ten contains the one, and the one contains the ten. In *The Mixing Bowl* (CH IV, 10), the monad creates all numbers, and is contained in everything as root and principle.[186] In relation to this passage, Scott drew attention to the numerology of the Egyptians as reported in the *Refutation of All Heresies*, where the monad and the decad are the beginning and end of numbers, connected through the Pythagorean tetraktys, and the decad is an equipollent monad.[187] The decad is thus the completion of the monadic system, but these Egyptians also had a dyadic system, of which the dodecad is part (συγγενὴς δὲ ἀριθμός ἐστι τοῦ δ′ καὶ η′), and which is opposite to the monadic system: "And light has been appropriated to the monad, and darkness to the dyad, and life to light according to nature, and death to the duad. And to life, justice; and to death, injustice."[188] Life, light and justice are three of the ten divine powers in CH XIII, 8, and injustice is one of the avengers.[189] It therefore seems likely that the source of *Refutation*, speaking for "the Egyptians," is Hermes,[190] especially since the cosmogony resulting from the numerology is structurally similar to that of the *Poimandres*: as we have seen, nous there corresponds to the monad, and the dark descending nature to the dyad.[191]

185 Iamblichus defends divination against someone—perhaps Porphyry—who "is attributing a certain kind of deceptive nature, both omniform and versatile, which takes on the forms of gods, daemons, and ghosts of the dead." (*Myst.* 3.31: ἡ γένος τι ἀπατηλῆς φύσεως παντόμορφόν τε καὶ πολύτροπον). The reference to a deceptive, omniform nature seems close to CH XIII, 12, but we have no mention of divination in our text.

186 CH IV, 10: ἡ γὰρ μονάς, οὖσα πάντων ἀρχὴ καὶ ῥίζα, ἐν πᾶσίν ἐστιν ὡς ἂν ῥίζα καὶ ἀρχή.

187 [Hipp.], *Ref.* 4.43.4. Cf. Scott 2:152–53; NF 1:56–57 n. 28. Neither sees the connection to CH XIII, 12. For the passage from *Ref.*, cf. above, pp. 46, 143–46.

188 [Hipp.], *Ref.* 4.43.12: προσῳκείωται δὲ τῇ ⟨μὲν⟩ μονάδι τὸ φῶς, τῇ δὲ δυάδι τὸ σκότος· καὶ τῷ μὲν φωτὶ κατὰ φύσιν ἡ ζωή, τῷ δὲ σκότει ὁ θάνατος· καὶ τῇ μὲν ζωῇ ⟨ἡ⟩ δικαιοσύνη, τῷ δὲ θανάτῳ ἡ ἀδικία. My trans. Justice is associated with the number four in Pythagorean sources, Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans*, 34.

189 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 143 mentions the text, but fails to note more than 1=10.

190 Marcovich, *Hippolytus*, 20, supposes the source to be "a Pythagorizing *Psephos*-treatise." This is not incommensurable with a Hermetic treatise.

191 Cf. above, chap. 3.6.

It is furthermore said that by counting the monad it becomes 361 (*Ref.* 4.43.12), clearly meant to approach the number of days in a year. This is obscure, but possibly means that the year-god, Aion, who is completed by the planetary circuits (CH XI, 7), is a second monad, like the demiurge is a second nous.[192]

Although neither the *Refutation* nor CH XIII mention Aion in connection with the monad-decad numerology, J.-P. Mahé has pointed out that Aion could be interpreted numerically as alpha, iota, and *ôn*, that is, the one which is ten.[193] Indeed, Mahé postulates a Hermetic decadic cosmology, drawing upon CH I and *Disc.8–9*, as well as the *Eugnostos* (NHC III,3; V,1) and Iamblichus, to show that the upper three levels of being, the decad, ennead and ogdoad, are to be identified respectively with the unborn god, the self-born nous of light and life, and the born logos who is also the demiurgic nous. The hebdomad he identifies with the lower seven powers of CH XIII, 9–10. The solution, elegant as it is, does not account for the fact that the upper three powers are the good, life, and light. The good is the eighth power, and must therefore represent the ogdoad, but life and light are in the Hermetica used to describe both the monadic nous of the ennead and the demiurgic nous of the ogdoad, and never the unborn pre-essential one in the decad. The ten powers thus only reach up to the ogdoad or the ennead. Nor can our Aion be identified with the unborn god residing in the decad. Rather, it is the power or mind of God (CH XI, 2; *Ascl.* 32), and thus belongs to a lower stage. A clue to the placement of Aion might be found in the *Prayer of Thanksgiving*:

ἐγνωρίσαμεν, ⟨ὦ φῶς νοητόν⟩, ὦ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ζωῆς ⟨ζωή⟩,

ἐγνωρίσαμεν, μήτρα πάσης ⟨φύ⟩σεως,

ἐγνωρίσαμεν, ὦ μήτρα κυηφόρε ἐν πατρὸς φυτείᾳ,

ἐγνω⟨ρί⟩σαμεν, ὦ πατρὸς κυηφοροῦντος αἰώνιος διαμονή·

We have known you, O noetic light, O life of human life;

We have known you, O womb of all nature;

We have known you, O womb who conceives from the sowing of the father,

We have known you, O eternal permanence of the father who conceives.[194]

192 [Hipp.], *Ref.* 4.43.8. Cf. Bousset, "Der Gott Aion."

193 Mahé, "La voie d'immortalité," 363 and n. 77; id., "Générations antédiluviens et chute des eons," 161.

194 PGM III.602–609. My trans. The corrupt Greek has been modified according to the Coptic translation, which is probably closer to the original, cf. Jean-Pierre Mahé, "La prière d'actions de grâces du codex VI de Nag-Hamadi et le discours parfait," *ZPE* 13 (1974): 40–60; HHE 1:137–67. The Greek of PGM III varies wildly between the editions, so it is

The first sentence pays homage to the first nous of the *Poimandres*, consisting of light and life. The womb of the next two sentences must belong to this same nous, which is thus the androgynous father who conceives from his own nature.[195] The eternal (αἰώνιος) permanence seems to be born from the father who conceives (κυηφοροῦντος), and permanence together with immortality are indeed said to be the energies of the demiurge in CH XI, where he is called Aion, and these energies are used to shape matter into a cosmos.[196] It is perhaps overly optimistic to tie together divine epithets of three different texts into one hypostasis, the demiurgic nous-logos-Aion, born from the womb of the androgynous father, the self-begotten nous. But the appearance of a noetic womb also in CH XIII, which through the effluence of the father gives birth to a new, eternal body for Tat, strengthens the hypothesis: the result of the rebirth is to make the reborn equal to the demiurge, variously characterized as nous, logos, Aion, and son of God.

Another aspect of the decad must be discussed: It is soul-begetting, and because of the union of life and light, the henad is born from the spirit.[197] The spirit makes its first appearance in the text here. Later on, in the hymn of rebirth, it is one of the four elements (§ 20), but it also appears together with life and light in an obscure passage: "The All which is in us, save it, life; enlighten it, light; shine, spirit."[198] Here, spirit is clearly working together with life and light on the "All in us," i.e. the One which is All, Aion. In the *Discourse on the Eighth*

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quite unclear what is actually on the papyrus. However, the Coptic translator has misunderstood the second ἐγνωρίσαμεν to refer to life, thus leaving the last stanza without an ἐγνωρίσαμεν. NHC VI, 64,22–29: ⲁⲛⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛϫ ⲱ ⲡⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲏⲧⲟⲛ· ⲱ ⲡⲱⲛϩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲱⲛϩ ⲁⲛⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛϫ ⲱ ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲣⲁ ⲛ̄ⲭⲟ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲁⲛⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛⲉ ⲱ ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲣⲁ ⲉⲧⲭⲡⲟ ⲣⲛ̄| ⲧⲫⲩⲥⲓⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲱⲧ ⲁⲛⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛⲉ ⲱ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲉⲛⲉϩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲭⲡⲟ. Cf. *Ascl.* 41 Nock: *cognouimus te et lumen maximum solo intellectu sensibile; intellegimus te, o uitae uera uita, o naturarum omnium fecunda praegnatio; cognouimus te, totius naturae tuo conceptu plenissimae* [*cognouimus te*] *aeterna perseueratio*. There is much confusion in the critical apparatus if the last *cognouimus te* is in the mss; Nock brackets it, while Mahé leaves it unbracketed, noting in his apparatus "cognouimus: cognomus *L* [= Laurentianus]." Scott's emendation is impenetrable.

195 Cf. *Ascl.* 20–21.

196 CH XI, 2–3; Cf. also XII, 21; XVI, 8–9; SH V, 5; XXIII, 3. PGM IV.1206 equates Aion and the wisdom of Helios. Cf. Helena M. Keizer, "Life Time Entirety. A Study of AIŌN in Greek literature and Philosophy, the Septuagint and Philo" (Ph.D. diss., University of Amsterdam, 1999).

197 CH XIII, 12: ἡ γὰρ δεκάς, ὦ τέκνον, ἐστὶ ψυχογόνος· ζωὴ δὲ καὶ φῶς ἡνωμέναι εἰσίν, ἔνθα ὁ τῆς ἑνάδος ἀριθμὸς πέφυκε τοῦ πνεύματος.

198 CH XIII, 19: τὸ πᾶν τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν, σῷζε ζωή, φώτιζε φῶς, πνεῦμα θεέ. For the translation, see below, p. 307 n. 289.

and the Ninth, in a praise of the ruler of the kingdom of power, "whose logos is born by light,"[199] we are told: "He gives birth to everyone; the one who [...] the Aion in/among/by means of spirits."[200] Mahé suggests restoring the lacuna as [ϫѡ]ρ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ, thus "the one who spread/divided the Aion between spirits," and he points out the parallels in FH 24, on the divine spirit which gives life to all, and PGM V.460, which calls on the lord of the spirits, Aion Iao Ouei. I would rather suggest [ⲥѡ]ρ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ, to "spread out, abroad, prepare."[201] The verb is similar to that suggested by Mahé, but gives us the translation "the one who set Aion among spirits," or "prepared Aion by means of spirits." In other words, the first nous established the second demiurgic nous, who according to the *Poimandres* was born by means of logos and is lord of fire and spirit (CH I, 9). Once again, the rebirth of the candidate mirrors protology.

But what of the description of the unitary decad as "soul-begetting"? The word ψυχογόνος is a hapax,[202] but the cognate ψυχογονικὸς is known elsewhere, especially from Pythagorean sources. Here, however, it is largely the number six which is said to be "soul-begetting."[203] John Lydus provides us with other

199 NHC VI 55,26–27: ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲉϥⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ ⲱⲡⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ϫⲡⲟ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ.

200 NHC VI 56,6–7: ϥϫⲡⲟ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲏ· ⲡⲉⲣ[. .]ρ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲓ̄ⲛⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲉ̄ⲓ̄ⲛ ⲉ̄ⲏⲡⲛ̄ⲁ̄.

201 Cf. Walter E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1939), 354a.

202 While noting this, Grese (*Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 143) does not point out that ψυχογονικὸς is known elsewhere. He also believes that the term means that Tat is changed into psyche in the rebirth, and claims that the passage is a deductive argument requiring psyche to be equivalent with pneuma. The only conclusion he is able to reach is that "all these terms (ψυχή, ζωή, φῶς, πνεῦμα, νοῦς, λόγος) refer to the divine realm into which the regenerate is transferred." (ibid., 144)

203 Cf. Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans*. Later authors refer to the psychogony of the *Timaeus*, seen as a Pythagorean treatise, when they use the term. In this text, the world soul is composed of three parts—being, the same, and the different—each consisting of a mixture of the divisible and the indivisible. Thus 3×2=6, giving us a soul-generating hexad. Perhaps this is related to Aristoteles' report of the Pythagoreans: "Indeed, they assert also that Ξ, Ψ and Z are concords (according to Alexander ζ was connected with the fourth, ξ with the fifth, and ψ with the octave) and that because there are three concords, there are three double consonants" (Arist., *Metaph.* 14.1093a). The compound of these three parts are yet again divided in seven unequal parts, with the intervals filled by the leftovers. The only possible way to interpret a soul-generating decad in the *Timaeus* would thus be if the author of CH XIII saw the initial triad (which is actually a hexad) completed by a heptad; and this indeed seems to be the case: life, light and the good clearly constitute a triad apart from the lower seven powers. However, it is hard to reconcile life, light and the good with being, the same and the different.

soul-begetting numbers too, citing both Hippocrates, who says it is seven,[204] and the followers of Epimenides, who say that it is (it seems) three.[205] The key to the soul-begetting decad can be found in the Neopythagorean *Theology of Arithmetic*, attributed to Iamblichus but making heavy use of the treatise of Nicomachus of Gerasa bearing the same name. In the section on the tetrad, we are told that it is the principle of soul, since ensoulment happens in the perfect harmony, which consists of the three concords 4:3, 3:2, and 2:1, that is, the decadic tetraktys.[206] This same harmony is also the principle of the universe, which is composed of body and soul.[207] However, the hexad is later also claimed to be the maker of soul. Apparently, such incongruent views coexisted comfortably in the maze of Neopythagorean numerologies. In the chapter on the decad, it is explicitly stated that one of its (admittedly numerous) epithets is Aion, because it encompasses everything and brings everything to fulfillment.[208] It is clear, then, that CH XIII relies on some such Pythagorean source for the soul-begetting decad.

§ 13: This interpretation, that the monadic decad should be identified with Aion, also makes sense of the exclamation of Tat: "Father, I see the All and myself in the nous."[209] According to Grese, this fits poorly with the foregoing, and was probably misplaced from its original position, right after the declaration of ubiquity in § 11. However, if Tat properly understood the numerological explanation of Hermes, as meaning that the one which is ten means Aion (A-I-ὤν), his vision here suits his new status as Aion well: He sees himself united

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204 Joh. Lyd., *Mens.* 2.11.76–80 (Hippocrates): ἡ γὰρ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ **ψυχογονικὴ** δύναμις τὰ ἑπτάμηνα τέλεια ἀποφαίνει, διότι τελείας περίοδος σφαιρικῆς ἀριθμῷ τελείῳ καὶ κοσμικῷ, τῷ ψυχοκρατητικῷ καὶ **ψυχογονικῷ** περιέχεται· καὶ γὰρ τὴν ψυχὴν ὁ Τίμαιος ἐξ ἑπτὰ ἀριθμῶν συνέστησε.

205 Here, the Dioscuroi are said to be male and female, designated respectively as the monadic Aion and the dyadic Physis, from whom "the whole lifebegetting and soulbegetting number springs forth." Joh. Lyd., *Mens*. 4.17 (= Epimenides fr. 15 Jacoby/26 DK): οἱ φιλόσοφοί φασι Διοσκόρους εἶναι τὸ ὑπὸ γῆν καὶ ὑπὲρ γῆν ἡμισφαίριον· τελευτῶσι δὲ ἀμοιβαδὸν μυθικῶς οἱονεὶ ὑπὸ τοὺς ἀντίποδας ἐξ ἀμοιβῆς φερόμενοι. οἱ δὲ περὶ Ἐπιμενίδην ἄρρενα καὶ θήλειαν ἐμύθευσαν τοὺς Διοσκόρους, τὸν μὲν αἰῶνα, ὥσπερ μονάδα, τὴν δὲ φύσιν, ὡς δυάδα, καλέσαντες· ἐκ γὰρ μονάδος καὶ δυάδος ὁ πᾶς ζωογονικὸς καὶ **ψυχογονικὸς** ἐξεβλάστησεν ἀριθμός.

206 Cf. Johan C. Thom, *The Pythagorean Golden Verses: with introduction and commentary* (RGRW 123; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 175, where additional litterature on this topic is listed.

207 [Iamb.,] *Theol. arith.* 30.7–15: ὄντων δὲ ἀριθμῶν τεσσάρων τῶν πρώτων α′ β′ γ′ δ′, ἐν τούτοις καὶ ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς ἰδέα περιέχεται κατὰ τὸν ἐναρμόνιον λόγον· … εἰ δὲ ἐν τῷ δ′ ἀριθμῷ τὸ πᾶν κεῖται ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος, ἀληθὲς ἄρα καί, ὅτι αἱ συμφωνίαι πᾶσαι κατ' αὐτὸν τελοῦνται.

208 [Iamb.,] *Theol. arith.* 80.4, 81.9–11: αἰῶνα δέ, ὅτι περιεκτικὸς τῶν ὅλων οὗτος τελειότατος ὢν καὶ ἀίδιος, τελεστικὸς τῶν ἁπάντων, ὡς ἡ δεκάς, ἐλέχθη.

209 CH XIII, 13: πάτερ, τὸ πᾶν ὁρῶ καὶ ἐμαυτὸν ἐν τῷ νοΐ. My trans.

with the nous of the all, Aion. His perception has been permanently changed, and he now sees himself *sub specie aeternitatis*. The powers thus make Tat able to see, and could very well be labeled a power to see God (θεοπτικὴ δύναμις).

From having made himself a stranger to the world, Tat now identifies himself with the nous of the world, pervading everything. He has obtained an incorruptible body that is wholly foreign to his material one, which will eventually perish. "This is the rebirth," Hermes reaffirms, "to no longer be visible to the body, in three dimensions."[210] Extension into three dimensions is precisely the point of the Pythagorean tetraktys, at least in its Academic version: point (monad), becomes line (dyad), becomes plane (triad), becomes solid (tetrad).[211] Later Neopythagoreans would claim that number derived from the monad and dyad, and the point from the number etc., with the result that the monad becomes even more transcendent.[212] However, the unembodied souls were also seen as monads, projecting themselves downwards into the world in a parallel way as the protology, in the testimony of Macrobius: "The soul, descending from the place where the zodiac and the Milky Way intersect, is protracted in its downward course from a sphere, which is the only divine form, into a cone, just as a line is sprung from a point and passes from this indivisible state into length; from its point, which is a monad, it here comes into a dyad, which is its first protraction."[213] This doctrine of the descent of the monadic soul through the planetary spheres, and its subsequent reascent, has been attributed to Numenius by many scholars, though Ioan Culianu has attributed at least the ascent through the spheres to the Hermetic astrological *Panaretos*, on which he claims the *Poimandres* and Numenius depend.[214] At any rate, it is possible that the author of CH XIII knew of a similar doctrine.

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210 CH XIII, 13: αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ παλιγγενεσία, ὦ τέκνον, τὸ μηκέτι φαντάζεσθαι εἰς τὸ σῶμα τὸ τριχῇ διαστατόν. My trans.

211 Arist., *Metaph.* 14.1090b20–24; cf. William D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 208–12. This is probably an elaboration on the solid numbers of the early Pythagoreans.

212 Cf. Diog. Laert., *Vit.* 8.25. Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans*, 80–81.

213 Macrob., *In Somn. Scip.* 1.12.4: *Illinc ergo, id est a confinio quo se zodiacus lacteusque contingunt, anima descendens a tereti, quae sola forma divina est, in conum defluendo producitur, sicut a puncto nascitur linea et in longum ex individuo procedit: ibique a puncto suo, quod est monas, venit in dyadem, quae est prima protractio*. Trans. William H. Stahl, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio by Macrobius* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 134.

214 Cf. Cumont, *Lux Perpetua*, 157–62; Culianu, *Psychanodia*, 30, 48–54; id., "Ordine e disordine delle sfere," 96–110. Cf. Herman De Ley, *Macrobius and Numenius: A Study of Macrobius*, In Somn. *I, c. 12* (Brussels: Latomus, 1972), 36, 40, 44.

Rebirth is thus an inversion of creation: souls were incarnated into bodies in a movement from unity to multiplicity, while the rebirth is a counter-movement from multiplicity back to unity. Similarly, the rebirth of the essential human is structurally inverted in relation to the cosmogonic birth of the *Poimandres*: The light-nous begat logos without a partner, and sent its offspring down into matter, while humans must receive the seminal outflowing from God above, in order for a "new human" to be born. The rebirth thus rather corresponds to the reascent of logos in the second phase of the cosmogony: when logos descended into matter, the light-nous gave birth to a second, demiurgic nous, god of fire and spirit, who created the seven planets. In response to this, the logos immediately reascended and merged with the demiurgic nous, leaving irrational matter behind.[215] The ritual rebirth thus mirrors the cosmogony of *Poimandres*: The reborn is ritually transformed into logos, which remerges with the demiurgic nous. However, we do not see realized the post-mortem ascent of CH I, 25–26, where the deceased leaves behind the body, the senses, and all the planetary vices, before he reaches the eighth and the ninth. The reborn remains *in* the cosmos, though his true self is no longer *of* the cosmos. The ascent is only performed at a still higher stage of the way of immortality, namely that reflected in the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth*. Before moving on to that treatise, however, we should finish our treatment of the rebirth-treatise, which now concludes with injunctions for secrecy and a rather lengthy hymn. The hymn will not be treated at length presently, we shall only dwell on the issues that concern the claim that the treatise reflects a ritual that could realistically have been performed.

The final sentence of § 13 is unfortunately corrupt. In order not to divulge the teaching of the rebirth to everyone, but only to those God wants to reveal it to, Hermes either has or has not written it down, or he has only written it to Tat.[216] The emphasis on an initiation that is only given to those who the deity

215 CH I, 10: ἐπήδησεν εὐθὺς ἐκ τῶν κατωφερῶν στοιχείων [τοῦ θεοῦ] ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος εἰς τὸ καθαρὸν τῆς φύσεως δημιούργημα, καὶ ἡνώθη τῷ δημιουργῷ νῷ (ὁμοούσιος γὰρ ἦν), καὶ κατελείφθη [τὰ] ἄλογα τὰ κατωφερῆ τῆς φύσεως στοιχεῖα, ὡς εἶναι ὕλην μόνην.

216 CH XIII, 13: … διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦτον τὸν περὶ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας †εἰς ὃν ὑπεμνηματισάμην† ἵνα μὴ ὦμεν διάβολοι τοῦ παντὸς εἰς τοὺς πολλούς, ⟨ἀλλ'⟩ εἰς οὓς ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸς θέλει. Rest. Reitzenstein, followed by Festugière. The obelized part can be emended as either {εἰς} ὃν ⟨οὐχ⟩ ὑπεμνηματισάμην, or ⟨ὃν⟩ εἰς ⟨σὲ μόν⟩ον ὑπεμνηματισάμην. We lack a finite sentence, and thus Reitzenstein posited a lacuna. Cf. NF 2:215 n. 61. Jean-Pierre Mahé, "L'hymne hermétique: Une propédeutique du silence," in *L'hymne antique et son public* (ed. Yves Lehman; Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 275–89 at 276, takes for granted that the meaning is that the treatise is not written down. Cf. Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 146–48; van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 103–6.

pick out is also found in the mysteries of Isis, where apparently the individual mystes had to receive a dream from Isis in order to be initiated.[217] The relationship between writing and secrecy is a difficult one: obviously the text, at least in the state it is preserved, was available also to outsiders. We shall probably never know for sure if it was at some time kept within the confines of a closed religious community, but can only conclude that this is exactly the impression that the author wants to convey. The motif of a written revelation recurs a little later, in § 15. The concern not to be considered divulgers or blasphemers (διάβολοι) also recurs in § 22.

§ 14: Tat asks if the new body he has received, consisting of divine powers, can ever be dissolved. Hermes chides him for this question, but his answer is interesting:

εὐφήμησον καὶ μὴ ἀδύνατα φθέγγου· ἐπεὶ ἁμαρτήσεις καὶ ἀσεβηθήσεταί σου ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς τοῦ νοῦ. τὸ αἰσθητὸν τῆς φύσεως σῶμα πόρρωθέν ἐστι τῆς οὐσιωδοῦς γενέσεως· τὸ μὲν γάρ ἐστι διαλυτόν, τὸ δὲ ἀδιάλυτον, καὶ τὸ μὲν θνητόν, τὸ δὲ ἀθάνατον.

ἀγνοεῖς ὅτι θεὸς πέφυκας καὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς παῖς, ὃ κἀγώ;

Be silent, and do not utter impossibilities! When you stray the eye of your mind will also be profaned. The sensible body of nature is far from the essential birth; for the one is dissolvable, the other indissoluble; and the one is mortal, the other immortal. Are you ignorant that you have been born a god and the son of the One, just as I?[218]

First, it seems that the "eye of the mind" can still be made impure by incorrect action, even if it cannot perish.[219] There is a hitherto unnoticed parallel to this passage in CH X, which we have already commented upon, where Tat states that the eye of his mind was nearly deified (ἐσεβάσθη) by the speech of Hermes. The root of these two verbs, σεβάζομαι and ἀσεβέω, is the same: σέβομαι.[220] It has to do with religious awe, which must be shown to everything pertaining to the gods. The eye of Tat's mind has now become σεμνός, a state

217 Apul., *Metam.* 11.21–22.

218 CH XIII, 14. My trans.

219 ἁμαρτήσεις probably not in the meaning of "sin." Festugière takes this not as the answer to the question, but a possible consequence of asking such stupid questions: "Silence! Ne dis pas des choses impossibles, car ce serait un péché, et l'œil de ton intellect en serait affecté d'une souillure" (NF 2:206).

220 Hjalmar Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (3 vols.; Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1960–1972), 2:686–87. Cf. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 273.

that he hoped to achieve but did not quite reach in CH X, but care must still be taken for it not to lose this new-found lustre. However, his new, immaterial body is impervious to destruction, and will survive the dissolution of the corporeal body. But is not every soul strictly speaking immortal, according to the Hermetica? What distinguishes the incorporeal body of Tat from every other immortal soul? It must be that his soul has been "made into essence," as CH X predicts of the few souls who will not be bereft of their attendant nous after death, but who merge with it while they are still alive.[221]

§ 15: Tat now requests to hear the hymn that is sung by the powers of the Ogdoad, since Hermes had heard Poimandres make predictions (ἐθέσπισε) about the hymns sung in the Ogdoad earlier.[222] This is no doubt an allusion to CH I, 26, where indeed Poimandres foretells the hymns which will be heard by the reverent soul that ascends to the Ogdoad after death. The fact that Tat is familiar with this work must mean that the author of CH XIII presupposes that the candidate has already read the *Poimandres* at this point. Does the request of Tat mean that he has already reached the Ogdoad?[223]

Probably not. Hermes commends Tat's desire to be released (λῦσαι) from the "tent,"[224] now that he has been purified from the avengers of matter. Grese rightly refers to CH I, 24, where the newly dead is first released from the body (ἐν τῇ ἀναλύσει τοῦ σώματος),[225] after which the soul ascends through the spheres. As we have seen, purification[226] and release from the body are prerequisites for the rebirth, so Tat must already have been released from the body.[227]

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221 Cf. above, chap. 4.6.6.

222 CH XIII, 15: ἐβουλόμην, ὦ πάτερ, τὴν διὰ τοῦ ὕμνου εὐλογίαν, ἣν ἔφης ἐπὶ τὴν ὀγδοάδα γενομένου μου ἀκοῦσαι τῶν δυνάμεων, καθὼς ὀγδοάδα ὁ Ποιμάνδρης ἐθέσπισε. Nock follows Reitzenstein in emending to γενομένου σου, but cf. FR 4:206–7. It is unclear whether καθὼς … ἐθέσπισε belongs to Tat's question, or introduces Hermes' response (cf. NF 2:216 n. 66). In favor of the latter is the fact that the sentence is immediately followed by τέκνον, which nearly always stands in the second place in sentences in the Hermetica. However, the only two exceptions to this can be found in CH XIII, 2 & 21, (though with the vocative article ὦ). Festugière points out the presence of Ogdoas as the "great name of the lord" to which "all things under the creation have been subjected," in PGM XIII.743–753.

223 Mahé, "Paliggenesia," 143, answers in the affirmative.

224 CH XIII, 15: καλῶς σπεύδεις λῦσαι τὸ σκῆνος· κεκαθαρμένος γάρ.

225 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 154. Grese sees this as the dissolution of the body, but the primary meaning of λύω and ἀνάλυσις is not dissolution but release.

226 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 154, points out that nous only comes to the pure ones in CH I, 22.

227 CH XIII, 7. Cf. above, chap. 5.2.1.

The present injunction to "hurry to be released from the tent" likely refers to the moment when Tat will transcend the realm of astral fatality and reach the Ogdoad (ἐπὶ τὴν ὀγδοάδα γενομένου μου). The injunction therefore likely refers to the coming ascent to the Ogdoad in the *Disc.8–9*, and is certainly not a recommendation to commit suicide, as the only logical conclusion of Grese's suggestion would be.[228] The request of Tat to hear the hymn of the Ogdoad is thus approved of, but presently deferred.

Hermes further explains: "For Poimandres, the mind of the sovereign power, did not hand over to me more than what is written down, since he knew that I would be able to understand everything on my own—both to hear what I want and to see everything—and he trusted me to do the right thing."[229] This must be a reference to the fact that the hymn of the Ogdoad is not written down in the *Poimandres*, but apparently Hermes claims that he managed to see the Ogdoad and hear its hymn on his own, with the authorization of Poimandres.[230] This is the reason that his powers are in tune with the universal harmony: "Therefore the powers in me also sing in everything."[231] Once again, the Pythagorean affinities of Hermes shine through. The hymn of the powers in the Ogdoad is sung by the powers residing in Hermes, and this is apparently the music of the spheres, the song that resonates throughout the cosmos. The Ogdoad might also be an allusion to the octave (2:1), which together with the perfect fifth (3:2) and perfect fourth (4:3) was said to constitute the tetraktys.[232] Thus the hymn that Tat will presently hear is not the hymn of the Ogdoad, since this is only sung in silence, but rather it is a hymn sung by the powers residing in Hermes that also sing in the entire universe. This cosmic hymn is in harmony with the hypercosmic hymn, as a sort of sonic image.

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228 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 154 n. 544, refers to CH IV, 8; XII, 12; SH II B, 8, but none of these recommends "doing away with the body," but rather, as we have seen, to practice leaving the body while alive.

229 CH XIII, 15: ὁ Ποιμάνδρης, ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς, πλέον μοι τῶν ἐγγεγραμμένων οὐ παρέδωκεν, εἰδὼς ὅτι ἀπ' ἐμαυτοῦ δυνήσομαι πάντα νοεῖν καὶ ἀκούειν ὧν βούλομαι, καὶ ὁρᾶν τὰ πάντα, καὶ ἐπέτρεψέ μοι ἐκεῖνος ποιεῖν τὰ καλά. My trans.

230 Festugière (NF 1:172–73) suggests a possible link here to the sayings of Agathodaimon in CH XII, 8, which "if they had been published in written form, really would have been a great help to the human race" (εἰ ἐγγράφως ἐκδεδώκει, πάνυ ἂν τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος ὠφελήκει). Cf. van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 25–26.

231 CH XIII, 15: διὸ καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν αἱ δυνάμεις αἱ ἐν ἐμοὶ ᾄδουσι. My trans.

232 Cf. Plato, *Resp.* 10.617b, on the sirens: ἐκ πασῶν δὲ ὀκτὼ οὐσῶν μίαν ἁρμονίαν συμφωνεῖν. James Adam in his commentary points out that "Proclus more suo assures us that the Sirens are ψυχαί τινες νοερῶς ζῶσαι." One name for the octave was ἡ ὀγδοάτη (LSJ).

5.4.2 *The Hymn of Rebirth*

§ 16: Instead of the hymn of the Ogdoad, Hermes sings the secret hymn of the rebirth to Tat:

—ἡσύχασον, ὦ τέκνον, καὶ τῆς ἁρμοζούσης νῦν ἄκουε εὐλογίας, τὸν ὕμνον τῆς παλιγγενεσίας, ὃν οὐκ ἔκρινα οὕτως εὐκόλως ἐκφάναι, εἰ μὴ σοὶ ἐπὶ τέλει τοῦ παντός.

ὅθεν τοῦτο οὐ διδάσκεται, ἀλλὰ κρύπτεται ἐν σιγῇ.

Fall to rest, my son, and now hear the harmonious praise, the hymn of the rebirth, which I would not lightly have decided to reveal, if it was not to you, at the completion of the All.

Therefore this is not taught, but hidden in silence.[233]

The hymn of the rebirth is a praise which is "in tune" (ἁρμοζούσης), presumably with the octave (ἁρμονία) being sung soundlessly in the Ogdoad. Hermes again emphasizes the esoteric nature of this hymn, saying that Tat is only now allowed to hear it, ἐπὶ τέλει τοῦ παντός, which has mostly been interpreted as "at the end of it all," meaning the end of the teaching or the initiation.[234] But since Tat "sees the All, and himself in the nous," we should probably read ἐπὶ τέλει τοῦ παντός as indicating again that the new Aionic body of Tat has been completed, although the initiatory connotation of *telos* is probably implied too.[235]

The following passage gives ritual instructions to perform the hymn correctly: "And so, my son, standing in an open space, and facing south at the descent of the setting sun, kneel down in prayer, and likewise face east at sunrise. Fall to rest, my son."[236] Then follows the title of the hymn, "Secret hymnody, chapter four."[237] As has often been pointed out, the instructions are similar to the narrative preceding the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* in *Ascl.* 40, which in addition mentions that the interlocutors leave the inner sanctuary of a temple, in order to stand under the open skies. The title of the hymn indicates that there were more hymns, and that the author has excerpted the hymn from a Hermetic hymnal.[238] It is likely that the author added to his paradigmatic

233 CH XIII, 16. My trans.

234 Albeit tentatively, Festugière NF 2:216 n. 73; FR 4:243; and Tröger, *Mysterienglaube und Gnosis*, 40.

235 Cf. also § 21, where Tat praises god: σοῦ γὰρ βουλομένου πάντα τελεῖται.

236 CH XIII, 16: οὕτως οὖν, ὦ τέκνον, στὰς ἐν ὑπαίθρῳ τόπῳ, νότῳ ἀνέμῳ ἀποβλέπων περὶ καταφορὰν τοῦ ἡλίου δύνοντος, προσκύνει· ὁμοίως καὶ ἀνιόντος πρὸς ἀπηλιώτην. ἡσύχασον, ὦ τέκνον. My trans.

237 CH XIII, 16.: ΥΜΝΩΔΙΑ ΚΡΥΠΤΗ, ΛΟΓΟΣ Δ′. My trans.

238 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 158–61, claims that the ritual instructions would also have come from this source, and that the title could not have been the "Secret hymnody," since

account of the rebirth one of the preexistent hymns that his Hermetic group regularly used at the conclusion of rituals of rebirth. It is of course possible that the author made up the ritual instructions and the title of the hymn as narrative devices, but it is in my view much more plausible that hymns are composed with group performance in view. Furthermore, as we shall see, the so-called Mithras-liturgy clearly demonstrates that rituals of rebirth, such as the one portrayed in CH XIII, were actually performed.

§§ 17–20: These chapters contain the "Secret hymn" of the rebirth.[239] Greek hymns are normally musical performances, generally composed in specific meters, often relating to the divinities invoked. They aim to extol superhuman forces, expressing the gratitude of the singers and thereby obtaining the good graces (χάρις) of the gods.[240] Hymns are prayers (ἐυχαί) performed musically.[241] Both hymns and prayers invoke divinities and seek their favor, but hymns are generally less specific in their requests.[242] In Greek religion, hymns could be performed in choral contests, precede epic recitation, accompany a sacrificial procession, or be sung as part of the sacrificial ritual.[243] The hymns mainly follow a pattern of invocation–argument–petition, where the invocation involves naming and praising the deity, the argument lists the reasons why divine favor should be granted, especially mentioning past divine aid and past sacrifices and votive gifts, and finally the petition states what the hymnists seek divine aid for.[244] Also philosophically tinged hymns, such as Cleanthes'

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it was performed in the open. But under open skies is not the same as in public, and there is no reason not to consider a secluded space such as the courtyard or roof of an Egyptian temple, as in the *Ascl.* Grese also alleges that the first part of the hymn, which praises the world, is incommensurate with the "sharp rejection of the world" of the rest of the treatise. As we have seen, this is not the case.

239 Cf. Jørgen Podemann Sørensen, "The Secret Hymn in Hermetic Texts," in *Mystery and Secrecy in the Nag Hammadi Collection and Other Ancient Literature: Ideas and Practices* (ed. Christian H. Bull, Liv I. Lied, and John D. Turner; NHMS 76; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 465–86.

240 William D. Furley, "Prayers and Hymns," in *A Companion to Greek Religion* (ed. Daniel Ogden; Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 117–31; Jan-Maarten Bremer, "The Reciprocity of Giving and Thanksgiving in Greek Worship," in *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (ed. Christoper Gill, Norman Postlewaite, and Richard Seaford; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 127–38 at 134f.

241 Jan-Maarten Bremer, "Greek Hymns," in *Faith, Hope and Worship* (ed. Henk S. Versnel; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 193–215 at 193f.

242 Furley, "Prayers and Hymns," 119.

243 Furley, "Prayers and Hymns," 129–31.

244 Furley, "Prayers and Hymns," 122f. The parts are often referred to as *invocatio, pars epica*, and *precatio*, which Bremer, "Greek Hymns," 194–96, calls invocation, argument and

Hymn to Zeus, follow this pattern.[245] In the Hellenistic era, a second section was often added after the invocation, describing the universal omnipotence of the deity.[246] Günther Zuntz has analyzed the hymn of CH XIII metrically, although his treatment extends to only one part of the hymn, and involves major textual reconstruction.[247] Grese, on the other hand, suggests that the hymn might have been translated from Egyptian.[248] Although such a claim is hard to prove, there is at least a distinct possibility that the author of the hymn, even if he did not originally compose it in Egyptian, at least was familiar with such hymns, and was perhaps unable to compose in Greek meter. One possible argument in favor of a translation from the Egyptian is provided by the Greek hymns to Isis. In 1944 Richard Harder made a study of four prose hymns to Isis, and concluded that they all derived from one prototype, which he argued was a translation of an Egyptian hymn engraved on a stela in Memphis.[249] A.D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière both disagreed, and claimed that the hymn was originally written in Greek, though likely by an Egyptian.[250] Since then, several Egyptologists have decided in favor of an Egyptian origin for the hymn, at least in part, and notably Joachim F. Quack has pointed out that the parallels must be sought in contemporary Demotic materials, rather than in the classic or classicizing Egyptian literature.[251] Hopefully, future studies on Demotic hymns

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petition, a scheme I will follow.

245 Johan C. Thom, *Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (STAC 33; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 8.

246 Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 89.

247 Günther Zuntz, "On the Hymns in Corpus Hermeticum XIII," *Hermes* 83 (1955): 68–92.

248 Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 164.

249 Richard Harder, *Karpokrates von Chalkis und die memphitische Isispropaganda* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1944). Cf. Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 89.

250 André-Jean Festugière, "À propos des arétalogies d'Isis," *HTR* 42 (1949): 209–34; repr. *Études de religion grecque et hellenistique* (Paris: Vrin, 1972), 138–63 at 142ff.; Arthur D. Nock, review of Harder, *Karpokrates von Chalkis*, *Gnomon* 21 (1949): 221–28 at 226: "we have here Memphis, I think, rather than Alexandria."

251 Joachim F. Quack, "Ich bin Isis, Herrin der beiden Länder.' Versuch zum demotischen Hintergrund der memphitischen Isisaretalogie," in *Egypt—Temple of the Whole World: Studies in Honour of Jan Assmann* (ed. Sibylle Meyer; Numen BS 97; Leiden: Brill, 2003): 319–65. Quack even provides a Demotic retroversion of the Kyme hymn. Cf. Bergman, *Ich bin Isis*, 28; Thomas M. Dousa, "Imagining Isis: on Some Continuities and Discontinuities in the Image of Isis in Greek Hymns and Demarie Texts," in *Acts of the Seventh International Conference of Demotic Studies. Copenhagen, 23–27 August 1999* (ed. Kim Ryholt; CNI Publications 27; Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002), 149–84; Philippe Matthey, "Retour sur l'hymne 'arétalogique' de Karpocrate à Chalcis," *ARW* 9 (2007): 191–222 at 200f.

will illuminate the hymns of Isis as well as the Hermetic hymn of rebirth. Meanwhile some other Egyptian hymns composed in Greek may be pointed out: the Isiac hymns of Isidorus are mostly metrical, relying on epic-poetic formulae.[252] Another interesting case is an Oxyrhynchus papyrus, which on the recto side (P. Oxy. 1380) contains a prose hymn to Isis, apparently composed in Greek by an Egyptian, while on the verso (P. Oxy. 1381) we find a prose hymn to Asclepius-Imouthes, which Quack believes to stem from an unpublished Demotic work on Imhotep and the Pharaoh.[253] Overall, with the danger of over-generalisation, it seems that Greek religious sensibilities preferred metric hymns, while non-Greeks continued their prose traditions.[254]

In an Egyptian context, hymns were above all connected with temple-worship: "Adoration is the 'morning rite' *par excellence* … In the sun cult, hymns are addressed, not to an uncovered statue, but to the rising sun. Also at sunset, the sun-god is addressed with a hymn."[255] The ritual instructions of the Hermetic hymn of rebirth, to sing the hymn at sunset under open skies, facing southwards, are thus in conformity with Egyptian practice. The hymn does not conform exactly to the Greek invocation–argument–request scheme, since instead of an argument there is a two-fold invocation: The first invokes the cosmic elements and the cosmic deity, while the second invokes the divine powers residing within Hermes, which are identical to the cosmic deity. The very short request (*precatio*) that follows is hardly distinguishable from the rest of the hymn, and is directly followed by another invocation of God, and a self-predication of the hymnist.

5.4.2.1 Opening the Cosmos

§ 17: The first two stanzas of the hymn address the cosmic forces, and bid them attend the hymn. Hermes calls on earth, the inundation,[256] and the heavens to open, using respectively the imperatives ἀνοίγηθι, -τω, -τε. These imperatives are very rare, we find them only once in 3 Baruch and once in Ephrem the Syrian, but several times in the magical papyri. The imperatives there occur

252 Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 87.

253 Quack, "Ich bin Isis," 331; id., "Das Buch vom Tempel und verwandte Texte. Ein vorbericht," *ARG* 2 (2000): 1–20 at 19.

254 Quack, "Ich bin Isis," 334–35.

255 Jan Assmann, "Prayers, Incantations, and Curses: Egypt," in *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide* (ed. Sarah I. Johnston; Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 350–53 at 350.

256 πᾶς μοχλὸς ὄμβρου. Festugière translates "tout verrou de la pluie," but this is still obscure. The expression must refer to the "bolts of the inundation," i.e., the force of the source of the Nile, Khnum. Cf. the *Famine stela* of Elephantine: Barguet, *La stéle de la famine á Séhel*.

mostly in quite utilitarian spells, in spells to loosen bonds, to open doors or to open the genitals and womb of a woman.[257] In the Great Paris Magical Papyrus, however, we find the imperative in a cosmic prayer addressed to "the One and blessed of the Aions, and father of the cosmos,"[258] later called Helios, and identified by Walter Bousset as Aion.[259] The invocation of cosmic forces is here quite similar to our hymn:

> Pay attention, form, spirit, earth, and sea, to a word from the one who is wise concerning divine Necessity, and accept my words as fiery darts … Heaven, be opened (ἀνοίγηθι); accept my words. Listen, Helios, father of the world; I call upon you with your name [voc. mag.].[260]

The similarity between this text and ours, as well as the parallel to the rebirth in the so-called Mithras-liturgy, induce us to think that the Sitz-im-Leben of this spell in the Great Paris Magical Papyrus and CH XIII must have been quite similar.[261] The Great Paris Magical Papyrus is part of the so-called Thebes-cache,[262] where we also find other similar invocations in both Demotic and Greek, as in the bilingual Leiden papyrus (PGM XII):

> Open to me, O heaven! Open to me, O earth! Open to me, O underworld! Open to me! I am Horus. Open to me![263]
> The gates of heaven were opened; the gates of the earth were opened.

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257 Doors: PGM XXXVI.316–317. Loosen bonds: PGM XII.162. Genitals and womb: PGM LXII.103 (with Coptic equivalent).

258 PGM IV.1169–1171: σέ, τὸν ἕνα καὶ μάκαρα τῶν Αἰώνων πατέρα τε κόσμου, κοσμικαῖς κλήζω λιταῖς. My trans.

259 Bousset, "Der Gott Aion," 198; Wolfgang Fauth, *Helios Megistos: Zur synkretistischen Theologie der Spätantike* (RGRW 125; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 6–7, 74ff.

260 PGM IV.1174–1183: πρόσεχε, μορφὴ καὶ πνεῦμα καὶ γῆ καὶ θάλασσα, ῥῆμα τοῦ σοφοῦ θείας Ἀνάγκης, καὶ πρόσδεξαί μου τοὺς λόγους ὡς βέλη πυρός, ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι ἄνθρωπος, θεοῦ τοῦ ἐν οὐρανῷ πλάσμα κάλλιστον, γενόμενον ἐκ πνεύματος καὶ δρόσου καὶ γῆς. ἀνοίγηθι, οὐρανέ, δέξαι μου τὰ φθέγματα, ἄκουε, Ἥλιε, πάτερ κόσμου· ἐπικαλοῦμαί σε τῷ ὀνόματί σου κτλ. Trans. William C. Grese, in *PGMT*.

261 Cf. below, chap. 8.

262 Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 168–73; Roger S. Bagnall, *Early Christian Books in Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 83–86; Korshi Dosoo, "A History of the Theban Magical Library," *BASP* 53 (2016): 251–74.

263 PDM xii.21–25, trans. Janet Johnson.

> The course of the sea was opened; the course of the rivers was opened. My spirit was heard by all gods and demons.[264]

Likewise in the bilingual London-Leiden papyrus (PGM XIV):

> [...] Open to me, O earth! Open to me O Underworld! Open to me, O primeval waters![265]
>
> Open to me heaven, O mother of the gods! Let me see the bark of Phre descending and ascending in it; for I am Geb, heir of the gods; prayer is what I make before Phre my father on account of the things [lit. "words"] which have proceeded from me.
>
> O Heknet, great one, lady of the shrine, the Rishtret (?), Open to me, mistress of the spirits, [open] to me, primal heaven, let me worship the Angels! [for] I am Geb, heir of the gods.[266]

The latter invocation goes on to also call upon "the mistress of the spirits" and commands the primal heaven to open, and the practitioner identifies himself as the "Opener of earth." The invocation of opening heaven, earth and underworld is important in Egyptian hymns, to the extent that the High Priest of Amun of Thebes had the title "Opener of the Doors of Heaven" (*wn-ʿ3.wy p.t*), which was also an epithet of Ptah-Tatenen.[267] It is found in mortuary literature:

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264 PGM XII.324–326: ἠνοίγησαν αἱ πύλαι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, ἠνοίγησαν αἱ πύλαι τῆς γῆς. ἠνοίγη ⟨ἡ⟩ ὅδευσις τῆς θαλάσσης, ἠνοίγη ἡ ὅδευσις τῶν ποταμῶν, ἠκούσθη μου τὸ πνεῦμα ὑπὸ πάντων θεῶν καὶ δαιμόνων. Trans. Ian S. Moyer and Jacco Dieleman, "Miniaturization and the Opening of the Mouth in a Greek Magical Text (PGM XII.270–350)," *JANER* 3 (2003): 47–72 at 63. For a critique of this article, see Joachim F. Quack, "Miniaturisierung als Schlüssel zum Verständnis römerzeitlicher ägyptischer Rituale?" in *Ritual Dynamics and Religious Change in the Roman Empire* (ed. Olivier Hekster, Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner, and Christian Witschel; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 349–66.

265 PDM xiv.5. Trans. Janet Johnson. Cf. Griffiths & Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus*, 21, whose translation takes earth as the object ("open to me the earth"), though in the critical apparatus they note the possibility of a vocative translation, and further conjecture [Open to me, O heaven] in the lacuna.

266 PDM xiv.295ff. Trans. Janet Johnson. This invocation recurs in 805–816.

267 Klotz, "Kneph," 43, 84 n. 256, 244 n. 1142, 428; id., *Adoration of the Ram*, 126 n. 389; id., "Domitian at the Contra-Temple of Karnak," *ZÄS* 135 (2008): 63–77 at 66.

> Glorification: The sky will open. The earth will open. The door bolts will open.[268]

The roots of this motif are probably to be found in the Daily temple ritual, where the "Chapter to reveal the god," i.e. to open the naos containing the image, instructs the priest to declaim:

> Open, doors of heaven; open, doors of earth; hail, Geb; may the gods remain on their thrones; open, gates of heaven; shine, Ennead.[269]

In the *Invocation Hymn* of the temple of Amun at Hibis, we are told that "it is so that the Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands might shine in his manifestations, that the doors of heaven are opened upon earth."[270] Then follows an invocation of the ten powers (*bȝ.w*) through which the hidden Amun makes himself manifest. The call for heaven and earth to open thus has long roots in Egypt, and is connected to beholding the creator-god at least since the time of the New Kingdom temple hymns.

5.4.2.2 Invoking the Cosmic God

Hermes now goes on to identify the deity about to receive the hymn as the nature of the cosmos, the lord of creation, the All and the One, the immortal cycle of God, the creator of everything, the one who is raised above the heavens, the creator of all nature, and, finally, the eye of mind. This collection of epithets is no doubt meant to convey the universal nature of the One and All, who transcends all division: he is both the nature of the cosmos, and the creator of all nature. In other words, he creates himself. The appellation of the All and One is key here, and together with the "immortal cycle of God," it makes one think of the ouroboros snake, the emblem of the all-embracing, self-creating creator,[271] which is drawn encircling just the phrase "the All is One" (ἕν τὸ

268 Spell 4 of the Roman period *Book of Glorifying the Spirit*, in Mark Smith, *Traversing the Afterlife: Texts for the Afterlife from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 176.

269 Alexandre Moret, *Le rituel du culte divin journalier en Égypte d'après les papyrus de Berlin et les textes du temple de Séti ier, à Abydos* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1902), 49 (chap. 10). The verbs can be translated either as imperatives or regular third person singulars. Cf. also chap. 22. Cf. Moyer and Dieleman, "Miniaturization and the Opening of the Mouth," 64; Podemann Sørensen, "The Secret Hymn in Hermetic Texts," 480.

270 Klotz, *Adoration of the Ram*, 16.

271 It could also refer to the decad, which "runs and circles back to itself," cf. [Iamb.], *Theol. arith.* 79.19–22: διαμετρικά τε καὶ σφαιρικὰ καὶ κυκλικά, μηδεμίαν δὲ ἰδιάζουσαν ἢ

πᾶν) in the *Authentic Memoirs* of Zosimus of Panopolis.[272] The origins of the saying that all things are one seem to lie with Xenophanes, or possibly even before him: Plato states that "our Eleatic tribe, beginning from Xenophanes, *and even before*, explains in its myths that what we call all things are actually one."[273] The saying can also be found in CH XII, 8, as a saying of Agathodaimon, who is also known to quote Democritus,[274] and variants can be found in the *Perfect Discourse*.[275]

The connection of the saying with Aion is attested in the Leiden magical papyrus (PGM XIII): "And as in the fifth book of the Ptolemaica: 'The One and the All, as it is written in the book *Panaretos*, encompasses the birth of spirit and fire and the darkness. It is lord of Aion, the one who created all things, sole God, unutterable [voc. mag.], The great, great Aion, God, lord (?) Aion.'"[276] *Panaretos* as a book title can be found many places, e.g. for the Wisdom of Solomon,[277] but also for a work of Hermes Trismegistus, about the lots of the

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φυσικὴν ἄλλως παραλλαγὴν καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἔχουσα, ὅτι μὴ κατ' ἐπιδρομὴν καὶ ἀνακύκλησιν τὴν εἰς ἑαυτήν.

272 One of the manuscripts label this page full of diagrams as the "goldworking of Cleopatra," but Mertens, *Zosime*, 175–78, has persuasively argued that this is part of the oeuvre of Zosimus. Cf. Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 249 n. 1 and frontleaf; Bull, "Wicked Angels and the Good Demon," 11. On the ouroboros symbolizing the universe among Egyptians, cf. Horap., *Hier.* 1.2; Serv., *In Verg. Aen.* 5.85. Cf. Jan Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt* (trans. David Lorton; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 240, who points out the Egyptian background of the expression in the epithet "the one who makes himself into millions." On the later career of this saying among Enlightenment romantics, there intimately connected to Egyptian *prisca theologia*, see Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 80ff.

273 Plato, *Soph.* 242d (= Xen., fr. 21 A 29 DK): τὸ δὲ παρ' ἡμῖν Ἐλεατικὸν ἔθνος, ἀπὸ Ξενοφάνους τε καὶ ἔτι πρόσθεν ἀρξάμενον, ὡς ἑνὸς ὄντος τῶν πάντων καλουμένων οὕτω διεξέρχεται τοῖς μύθοις; Trans. Kirk & Raven. Cf. Simpl., *In Phys*. 22.26; Cic., *Acad*. 2.118; Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 247.

274 CH XII, 8: ἕν ἐστι τὰ πάντα.

275 *Ascl.* 1: *omnia unius esse aut unum esse omnia*; 2: *totum unum et ex uno omnia esse uideantur*; 20: *hic ergo, solus ut omnia*.

276 PGM XIII.980f. ὡς δὲ ἐν τῇ ε′ τῶν Πτολ⟨ε⟩μαϊκῶν, ἕν καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐπιγραφομένον (P. ἐπιγραφομένῃ emend. Norden; -ων emend. Preis.) Παναρέτῳ βίβλῳ περιέχει γέννησιν πνεύματος πυρὸς καὶ σκότος· κύριος αἰῶνος, ὁ πάντα κτίσας, θεὸς μόνος, ἄφθεγκτος, [voc. mag.] ὁ μέγας, μέγας Αἰών, θεέ, (κύ)ρ(ιο)ς Αἰών. I have modified the translation of Morton Smith (*PGMT* 194): rather than seeing Ἕν καὶ τὸ Πᾶν as the title of the fifth Ptolemaic book, which must be a pseudepigraphal book attributed to Ptolemy, I think it is more likely that the fifth book of Ptolemy quoted the *Panaretos* regarding the One and All. This depends on how one interprets ἐπιγραφομένον. Instead of emending it, like Preisendanz, Norden and Smith, I prefer to read it so that the One and All is "written in," "entered in," or "inscribed upon" (in case the narrative device of a stela was used) the *Panaretos*.

277 Epiph., *Mens*. Ex. Gr. 8.68: ἡ δὲ Πανάρετος, τουτέστιν ἡ Σοφία τοῦ Σολομῶντος.

different planets.[278] I also understand περιέχει not to mean that the book "contains" the following, which is grammatically impossible, but that the One and All "encompasses" the birth of fire and spirit, as well as darkness. The syntax is awkward, which is not uncommon in the PGM. Now in the *Poimandres*, the birth of fire and spirit follows directly upon the descent of the divine logos into dark nature (CH I, 5), and the demiurgic nous is the god of fire and spirit (CH I, 9), and he is the great power that encompasses (περιίσχεσθαι) fire (CH I, 7). Just as Aion encompasses the darkness in the *Panaretos*,[279] the demiurgic nous in the *Poimandres* creates seven governors encycling the sensible cosmos (CH I, 9–11).

Returning now to CH XIII, the deity praised in the prologue of the hymn is also called the "eye of mind," which is precisely the expression used in the newfound noetic state of the initiand in CH XIII (§ 14: σου ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς τοῦ νοῦ). This again confirms that there is thought to be an essential unity of the reborn with the demiurgic nous.

§ 18: The second invocation of the hymn, comprising § 18 and the first half of § 19, can be labelled the hymn of the powers: "Powers that are in me, sing hymns to the One and the All!"[280] If we can assume that the knowledge invoked covers both the knowledge of God and the knowledge of joy,[281] the first two powers, then only one power is missing, namely perseverance (καρτερίαν), which may be due to an oversight by either author or copyist. The powers in effect sing hymns to themselves (ἀφ' ὑμῶν εἰς ὑμᾶς χωρεῖ ἡ εὐλογία), which probably means that the powers residing in Hermes are in harmony with their corresponding powers in the Ogdoad.

The powers then go on to praise God, who is now identified as the energy of Hermes' powers, and the power of his energies. It is hard to understand precisely what this means. Hermetic texts related to CH XIII sometimes use an Aristotelian *ousia–dynamis–energeia* scheme. Perhaps the sentence indicates that the energy of God, i.e. the emanation of his power into cosmos, is identical with the powers gained through rebirth? At any rate, the expression is meant to underline the essential identity of Hermes and God, an identity that is further bolstered by the following statement: "Your logos sings hymns to you through me." All distinction between hymnist and deity is obliterated, and Hermes is fully integrated with the divine logos. Jørgen Podemann Sørensen has referred

278 Paul Alex., *El. Apotel.* 47ff.; Heliod., *Comm. Paul.* 42.7: περὶ τούτων τῶν κλήρων γέγραπται Ἑρμῇ τῷ Τρισμεγίστῳ ἐν βίβλῳ λεγομένῃ Παναρέτῳ. Cf. also 51.13, 51.17, 55.12.

279 Preisendanz emended σκότο⟨υ⟩ς, but that is unnecessary.

280 CH XIII, 18: αἱ δυνάμεις αἱ ἐν ἐμοί, ὑμνεῖτε τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ πᾶν.

281 Supporting this is the presence, in the invocation of gnosis, of χαίρω ἐν χαρᾷ νοῦ.

to this unity between the subject and object of the Hermetic hymn as a *unio hymnica*.[282]

This tight identity notwithstanding, God can still be asked to receive an offering, just as deities are in more conventional cultic prayer: "Receive the All through me, by means of logos, as a *logikê thysia*."[283] Instead of the sacrificial food and fumes normally offered to a deity, in the conventional sacrificial rituals,[284] God is asked to receive the All by means of logos. The precise meaning of *logikê thysia* cannot be established, and we find similar expressions in Christian literature.[285] Should we understand a "sacrifice of words" as opposed to a bloody or material one, such as we find in the narrative framework of the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (*Ascl.* 41), or are we speaking rather of an immolation of the logos? As Mahé points out, the expression "implies all at once a metaphor, a spiritual exercise and a liturgical act."[286] As a metaphor, the expression likens the singing of hymns with animal sacrifice, the quintessential religious act in the Greco-Roman world. The metaphor transposes the material sacrifice to a symbolic plane, where some immaterial and internal substance, "the All in us," is presented as a more acceptable offering to the immaterial god, just as the injunction of Hermes against offering material sacrifices to the immaterial god in *Ascl.* 40. As a spiritual exercise, in the sense established by Pierre Hadot, the *logikê thysia* would signify the intense upward attention of the orant's cognitive faculties, as in the closing hymn of the *Poimandres*: "Receive pure *logikai*

282 Podemann Sørensen, "The Secret Hymn in Hermetic Texts," 479ff. The phrase is borrowed from Peter Schäfer's *unio liturgica*, in Peter Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God* (trans. Aubrey Pomerance; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 165. Cf. also Jan Assmann, "Unio Liturgica. Die kultische Einstimmung in Götterweltlichen Lobpreis als Grundmotiv 'esoterischer' Überlieferung im alten Ägypten," in *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions* (ed. Hans G. Kippenberg and Guy G. Stroumsa; SHR 65; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 37–60.

283 CH XIII, 18: δι' ἐμοῦ δέξαι τὸ πᾶν λόγῳ, λογικὴν θυσίαν.

284 On the role of traditional sacrifice in the Hermetica, cf. Anna van den Kerchove, "Les hermétistes et les conceptions traditionelles des sacrifices," in *L'Oiseau et le poisson. Cohabitations religieuses dans les mondes grec et romain* (ed. Nicole Belayche and Jean-Daniel Dubois; Paris: Presses de l'université Paris-Sorbonne, 2011), 61–80; Bull, "No End to Sacrifice in the Hermetica"; Jørgen Podemann Sørensen, "The All as *logikê thusia*. The Egyptian Prehistory of a Hermetic Idea," in *Philosophy and the End of Sacrifice* (ed. Anna-Pya Sjödin and Peter Jackson; Sheffield: Equinox, 2016), 123–42. I wish to thank the author for making a pre-print version available to me.

285 E.g., Paul, *Rom.* 12.1. Cf. Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 181–82, for references.

286 Mahé, "L'hymne hermétique," 277.

thysiai from a soul and heart that stretches up towards you."[287] In the liturgical sense, the word *thysia* does imply a rule-bound, established practice. Since the expression *logikê thysia* is also found in the *Poimandres* and the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth*, it is obviously not an ad-hoc term, but rather a *terminus technicus* in the Hermetic ritual community. It was not simply a way to express reverence, but was understood to have a specific effect on the orant, as the officiant of the sacrifice. We should in this context recall the position of Iamblichus, that matter is purified by the sacrificial fire and can thus reach the gods.[288] Perhaps what is intended is a similar transmutation of the logos of the hymnist, where the lower parts of the soul are burned away and thus purified. Some support for this interpretation can be found in the next passage.

§ 19–20: Again, the powers residing in Hermes are identified as the hymnists: "they sing hymns to the All; they fulfill your wish; your will comes from you, the All goes to you. Receive from everyone, as a *logikê thysia*, the All in us; save it, life; illuminate it, light; spirit, shine!"[289] I identify this request to be saved and illuminated as the *preces* proper. The immolated sacrificial victim is "the All in us," and if the deity accepts it, it will be transformed by light, life and spirit. As we have seen, Tat has already gained light and life, whose union effectuates the birth of unity by means of the spirit (§ 13). Hermes also already possesses these powers, which now sing hymns to their counterparts in the Ogdoad.[290] The additional effect of the sacrifice must then be understood as that of facilitating contact between the officiant below, and the deity invoked above. However, whereas in traditional sacrifices this contact is achieved by

287 CH I, 31: δέξαι λογικὰς θυσίας ἁγνὰς ἀπὸ ψυχῆς καὶ καρδίας πρὸς σὲ ἀνατεταμένη. My trans. Cf. also the similarity in the *Prayer of Thanksgiving*, which can probably also be considered a *logikê thysia*: "We give you thanks, with all our soul and our heart stretching up towards you." (NHC VI 63,34–35: ⲧⲛⲁⲡ ⲉⲙⲟⲧ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲕ̄ ⲩⲩⲭⲏ ⲛⲓⲙ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲫⲏⲧ ⲡⲟⲣⲱ ϣⲁⲣⲟⲕ = PGM III. 591–592: χάριν σοι οἴδαμεν· ψυχῇ πάσῃ, καὶ καρδίαν πρὸς [σὲ] ἀνατεταμένην).

288 Iamb., *Myst.* 5.11.

289 CH XIII, 19: τὸ πᾶν ὑμνοῦσι, τὸ σὸν θέλημα τελοῦσι, σὴ βουλὴ ἀπὸ σοῦ ἐπὶ σέ, τὸ πᾶν. δέξαι ἀπὸ πάντων λογικὴν θυσίαν· τὸ πᾶν τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν, σῷζε ζωή, φώτιζε φῶς, πνεῦμα θεέ. My trans. Pneuma obelized by Nock. My translation is here more literal than the one I gave on p. 289. The last two words are hard to comprehend: in line with the invocations of life and light, one would expect one imperative and one vocative; as it stands, we read "flourish" or "shine, spirit": Cf. LSJ, s.v. θέω. One could also interpret θεέ as a vocative, as in § 18, then getting "spirit, God," or emend it to "spiritualize, God." (πνευμά⟨τιζε⟩ θεέ, sic Keil). The latter option is accepted without discussion by Mahé, "L'hymne hermétique," 282. On θεέ as a vocative, cf. Nock, "Mandulis Aion," 100.

290 CH XIII, 18: ζωὴ καὶ φῶς, ἀφ' ὑμῶν εἰς ὑμᾶς χωρεῖ ἡ εὐλογία.

external means—namely the sacrificial fumes from the animal victim—the *logikê thysia* emphasizes the wholly internal experience of the contact: it is the "All in us" which rises as fumes, and rather than establishing a subject-object relationship, where inferior humans offer sacrifice to far superior gods, the *logikê thysia* establishes identity. The powers in the orant are identical to the powers receiving the sacrifice, and this identity is acutely experienced during the hymn, as a *unio hymnica*.[291]

Once again we must take recourse to the *Poimandres*, where we are told that when the divine Human descended to earth, he was transformed from life and light to soul and mind. The union of life and light through spirit thus reclaims the prelapsaric divine state of the reborn. The allusion to the *Poimandres* is pretty much guaranteed by the verb ποιμαίνει in the subsequent sentence: "For the nous shepherds your logos, spirit-bearer, creator; you are God!"[292] The demiurgic nous "shepherds" the logos and is a bearer of spirit, meaning that logos and pneuma are his preferred instruments to put creation in order, and like a good shepherd he guards those who are his. The allusion to the *Poimandres* continues, with the hymnist identifying himself as "your (i.e. God's) human," who shouts the praises "through fire, through air, through earth, through water, through spirit, through your creations."[293] In other words, even though the hymnist is still earthbound, surrounded by the elements, he has yet been reborn as the divine human.[294] In this passage the pneuma is treated as the fifth element, as it also seems to be in the *Poimandres*.[295] The hymn winds down with a thanksgiving that actually resembles an argument, a *pars epica*, in which the benefactions of God are summed up: "From you I have found the praise of Aion that I seek; by your decision I have found rest; by your will I have seen."[296] It is unclear if εὐλογία refers to a blessing from above, or to the hymn of praise. As we shall see, the dialogue of the next passage seems to

291 Podemann Sørensen, "The Secret Hymn in Hermetic Texts," 480–82.

292 CH XIII, 19–20: λόγον γὰρ τὸν σὸν ποιμαίνει ὁ νοῦς. πνευματοφόρε, δημιουργέ· σὺ εἶ ὁ θεός. My trans.

293 CH XIII, 20: ὁ σὸς ἄνθρωπος ταῦτα βοᾷ διὰ πυρός, δι' ἀέρος, διὰ γῆς, διὰ ὕδατος, διὰ πνεύματος, διὰ τῶν κτισμάτων σου. My trans.

294 Cf. also the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (PGM III.600–601): "even though we were still in the body, you have deified us with the knowledge of yourself" (ἐν πλάσμασιν ἡμᾶς ὄντας ἀπεθέωσας τῇ σεαυτοῦ γνώσει).

295 In the cosmogony, the pneumatic logos draws with it fire and air up to the heights in its reascent (CH I, 5).

296 CH XIII, 20: ἀπὸ σοῦ αἰῶνος εὐλογίαν εὗρον καί, ὃ ζητῶ, βουλῇ τῇ σῇ ἀναπέπαυμαι. εἶδον θελήματι τῷ σῷ. My trans. I follow Festugière in attaching the following τὴν εὐλογίαν ταύτην λεγομένην to Tat's response, rather than an object for εἶδον.

support the interpretation that what Hermes was seeking, and now has found, is the hymn of praise, which he indeed said earlier that he had found on his own (§ 15).[297]

The very last words of the hymn emphasize the dependency on divine providence in order to achieve rest and obtain visions. Grese claims that this is a major departure from the view of *Poimandres*, where humans are not dependent of providence, but in CH I, 22–23, we find nous proclaiming that he will only guard over those who are pure and reverent, so that "they immediately realize everything, and they give thanks to the father, by regularly blessing him and singing hymns to him with affection."[298] The wicked, on the other hand, are left to the punishing demon (τῷ τιμωρῷ δαίμονι). In both treatises, humans have themselves to blame for godlessness, and receive providential care only when they become reverent.

§ 21: The interchange between Hermes and Tat after the hymn is very intriguing: "This praise that you have said, father, I have also placed in my cosmos.—Say 'In the noetic (cosmos),' my son.—In the noetic (cosmos), father; I have power! From your hymn and your praise my mind has been illuminated."[299] Scott points out that "the cosmos in me" refers back to "the All in us,"[300] but Hermes corrects Tat by saying that he should have said "the noetic cosmos," since he is now identical to the cosmic nous-Aion, and not to the material cosmos. To place the hymn in his noetic cosmos means to store it in his memory,[301] and a parallel to the passage can be found in *Ascl.* 32, where Hermes discusses the total nous (*omnis sensus*), the nous of the cosmos (*sensus mundi*), and the human nous, and states that the latter is dependent on its memory: mind stretches down from divinity, through the cosmos to the humans, and it is because of the tenacity of their memory that humans

297 It is unclear if αἰών should be interpreted impersonally, as eternity or a gnostic eon, or if the praise is "of Aion," as translated above, or "from your Aion," or indeed "from you, Aion." Cf. NF 2:218 n. 85.

298 CH I, 22: εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς καὶ εὐχαριστοῦσιν εὐλογοῦντες καὶ ὑμνοῦντες τεταγμένως πρὸς αὐτὸν τῇ στοργῇ. My trans.

299 CH XIII 20–21: τὴν εὐλογίαν ταύτην λεγομένην, ὦ πάτερ, τέθεικα καὶ ἐν κόσμῳ τῷ ἐμῷ.—ἐν τῷ νοητῷ λέγε, τέκνον.—ἐν τῷ νοητῷ, ὦ πάτερ· δύναμαι. ἐκ τοῦ σοῦ ὕμνου καὶ τῆς σῆς εὐλογίας ἐπιπεφώτισταί μου ὁ νοῦς. My trans. As previously stated, I follow Festugière in appending the first four words to Tat's reply.

300 Scott 2:405.

301 The passage as a whole is suggestive of memory techniques known from antiquity (cf. Vitruvius), where one would imagine a physical space where memories were to be stored. To retrieve these memories, one would then move around in this memory-space, a mnemotope.

have been made rulers of the earth. The nous of Aion (*Aeternitatis sensus*) is then suddenly interposed between the world and God.[302] Hermes directs his gratitude to the highest god (*summus deus*) who has illuminated him with the light that permits him to see God, and asks Tat, Asclepius and Hammon to "hide these divine mysteries in silence among the secrets of your heart and shield them with reticence."[303] That the hymn of rebirth should also be kept secret has already been stated (CH XIII, 15), and is repeated in the last section (§ 22).

Finally, it seems that the ability to behold different layers of the divine economy comes in stages: "Knowledge differs from mind in this, however: that our knowledge comes to know and discern the quality of the mind of the cosmos by concentrating the mind, while the world's knowledge comes to know Aion and the gods who are above the world."[304] In other words, only by becoming like the mind of the cosmos can knowledge of Aion and the hypercosmic gods be attained, and presumably, only by becoming like Aion can one understand God (CH XI, 20). The several thematic parallels between *Ascl.* 32 and CH XIII, 21 make it likely that they relate to the same body of teachings, or more likely that the author of the *Perfect Discourse* knew CH XI and CH XIII.

The statement made by Tat, that he has now become illuminated (ἐπιπεφώτισται) by the hymn of praise, even though he has already been illuminated before, in the rebirth proper, has aroused some puzzlement. Scott claims that the hymn produces "further or fuller illumination (ἐπι-πεφώτισταί μου ὁ νοῦς)."[305] and Festugière concurs, translating "illuminé a plein," which implies the completion of the illumination of rebirth.[306] Indeed, it seems that the rebirth is a necessary prerequisite for taking part in the hymn of rebirth.

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302 In the *Theologoumena arithmeticae*, the Decad is called both Universe, Aion, All and Memory.

303 *Ascl.* 32: *Sed tibi, deus summe, gratias ago, qui me uidendae diuinitatis luminasti lumine. Et uos, o Tat et Asclepi et Hammon, intra secreta pectoris diuina mysteria silentio tegite et taciturnitate celate*. My trans. It is probable that *uidendae diuinitatis … lumine* translates θεοπτικὴ δύναμις, or possibly θεοπτικόν φώς.

304 *Ascl.* 32: *Hoc autem differt intellectus a sensu, quod intellectus noster ad qualitatem sensus mundi intellegendam et dinoscendam mentis peruenit intentione intellectus autem mundi peruenit ad aeternitatem et deos noscendos, qui supra se sunt*. My trans. The Coptic version shows us that for the most part, *intellectus* equals gnosis, and *sensus* equals nous (though in some instances also *aisthesis*).

305 Scott 2:405–6, while adding that when the author assumes that "illumination may be conveyed from one man to another," he "is not adopting an Egyptian superstition; he is recognizing a fact of universal experience."

306 NF 2:218 n. 87a.

It is only during rebirth that the divine powers that sing hymns to the creator and themselves are acquired, and this is why the hymn can only be revealed "at the completion of the All" (§ 15). During the rebirth, the candidate is filled with ten powers, the totality of which can be expressed by the term nous, or life and light, and during the hymn these powers reach back up towards their noetic prototypes. No ascent per se is mentioned, but it is clear that Tat is in some sense established in the noetic realm through his powers.

This makes good sense for a ritual element that is part of the aggregation phase of a rite of passage, which is all about establishing the candidate in his newfound status. We could therefore consider the hymn as the seal of rebirth: the powers attained in the rebirth become active during the hymn, and this is why Tat now says that "I have power" (δύναμαι). He furthermore asks permission to sing a hymn of his own: "I, too, wish to send praise to God from my own heart."[307] In this way, Tat affirms his status as one who is reborn. He is now qualified to sing praises by himself, and Hermes seems to agree, though with some hesitation: "Not aimlessly, my son."[308] Undeterred, Tat gives his own short hymn of praise, where the identities of his father Hermes and God the father seem to blend somewhat: "I say what I contemplate in mind, father. To you, God, the *genarch* of *genesiourgia*, I, Tat, send *logikai thysiai*. God, you are father, you are lord, you are mind; receive from me *logikai* as you want. For when you wish it, everything is completed."[309] The recipient of the praise is identified as God, father, lord, mind,[310] and as the "progenitor of all geniture." The praise of Tat is not very impressive, but it is notable because of all the Hermetica—except for the *Disc.8–9*, to which we shall return—this is the only real individual contribution of the disciple in the dialogues with Hermes.[311] Otherwise, the role of the disciples is to passively soak up whatever seeds of wisdom the master imparts, and to be rebuked if they overstep their boundaries. This is the hallmark of the revelation-dialogue, as opposed to the

307 CH XIII, 21: πλέον θέλω κἀγὼ πέμψαι ἐξ ἰδίας φρενὸς εὐλογίαν τῷ θεῷ. My trans.

308 CH XIII, 21: ὦ τέκνον, μὴ ἀσκόπως. My trans.

309 CH XIII, 21: ἐν τῷ νῷ, ὦ πάτερ, ἃ θεωρῶ, λέγω. σοί, γενάρχα τῆς γενεσιουργίας, Τὰτ θεῷ πέμπω λογικὰς θυσίας. θεέ, σὺ πάτερ, σὺ ὁ κύριος, σὺ ὁ νοῦς, δέξαι λογικὰς ἃς θέλεις ἀπ' ἐμοῦ· σοῦ γὰρ βουλομένου πάντα τελεῖται. My trans.

310 Cf. CH I, 6; V, 2; FH 23; *Ascl.* 20.

311 Cf. Tage Petersen, "From Perplexity to Salvation: The Gospel of Judas Read in Light of Platonic Didactic," in *The Gospel of Judas Papers* (ed. April DeConick; NHMS 71; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 413–34 at 419–22; Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, "*Religio mentis*: The Hermetic Process of Individualization," in *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (ed. Jörg Rüpke; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 387–434.

Socratic one.[312] Hermes approves of his son's contribution, but still has some ritual detail to add: "My son, you have correctly sent an acceptable sacrifice to the father of everone, God; but add also 'through the logos,' my son."[313] This seems like nitpicking on the part of Hermes, and furthermore it is unclear what he actually means. Is it the *logikê thysia* which is made "through the logos," or should it be added at the end that everything is completed "through the logos"? Both options seem viable, and although the former seems redundant, it is very close to § 18, where God is asked to receive the All "by means of logos" (λόγῳ), as a *logikê thysia*.

§ 22: Tat expresses his gratefulness that Hermes approves of his prayer, whereupon Hermes rejoices that Tat "has bore good fruits from the truth; the immortal produce."[314] Hermes' metaphor here recalls the statement in CH IX, 3, that the nous that receives good seeds from God gives birth to good offspring. The metaphor is mixed, since the terms used can apply both to botanics and obstetrics (κύει, τὰ σπέρματα λάβῃ). If we refer back to the opening passage of CH XIII, we saw there that the seed of rebirth was the true good (ἡ σπορὰ τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἀγαθόν), while here at the end the seed seems to be received from truth, and the produce is the good. In § 9, we learned that the good has been fulfilled with the arrival of truth, together with life and light. The immortal produce, then, must be the ten divine powers, expressed metonymically by the individual powers of the good and truth. The statement of Hermes is thus an expression of relief that the rebirth has been successful, and that Tat has sprouted good fruits from the seed he received from God.

Nothing remains, then, except to once again impress upon Tat the need to keep silent about the tradition of rebirth. As already stated, this final passage brings together several elements typical for a *traditio mystica*: The oath of secrecy (σιγὴν ἐπάγγειλαι), not to disclose the tradition of rebirth to anyone (μηδενί … ἐκφαίνων τῆς παλιγγενεσίας τὴν παράδοσιν), so as not to be considered "slanderers" (διάβολοι). To be a slanderer means to illegitimately reveal the mysteries, and such people are subject to divine punishment: "I come announcing the slander of NN, a defiled and unholy woman, for she has slanderously brought your holy mysteries to the knowledge of men" (PGM IV.2474–2479). The assumption behind this denouncement of slandery, whether justly or not,

312 Cf. Pheme Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 19f., 25f.

313 CH XIII, 21: ⟨ε⟩ὖ, ὦ τέκνον, ⟨ἔ⟩πεμψ⟨ας⟩ δεκτὴν θυσίαν τῷ πάντων πατρὶ θεῷ. ἀλλὰ καὶ πρόσθες, ὦ τέκνον, διὰ τοῦ Λόγου. My trans. I accept here Keil's emendation.

314 CH XIII, 22: χαίρω, τέκνον, καρποφορήσαντος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας τὰ ἀγαθά, τὰ ἀθάνατα γενήματα. My trans.

is that God will punish the transgression.[315] The oral tradition is extolled: "It is sufficient that each of us has charge of it; I who speak, and you who listen."[316] Literary denigrations of written tradition is not uncommon, with Plato's myth of Theuth in the *Phaedrus* as perhaps the foremost example, but one cannot help but to feel that the emphasis on orality here is significant. In stark contradiction to Reitzenstein's notion of CH XIII as a "Lesemysterium,"[317] Hermes is here quite explicit that the tradition of rebirth can only properly be transmitted orally. In order to receive the divine powers, you need a *genesiourgos* as a midwife of rebirth who can call the powers down for you. A likely reason for this insistence on esoteric oral tradition, in a treatise that at least by the fourth century, when it was included in the Codex Tchacos, was manifestly not confined to such a tradition, could be that a reader should ideally be gripped by a desire to experience such a rite for themselves. We know of Egyptians in the period—both individual entrepreneurs, cultic associations (*thiasoi*), as well as the larger temples—who would stand to benefit from such religious propaganda.[318] We shall return to this point in our discussion of the Sitz-im-Leben of the tradition of rebirth.

At last, Hermes affirms the successful completion of the rebirth: "You have mindfully come to know yourself and our father."[319] This is likely to be an allusion to the adaptation of the Delphic maxim in the *Poimandres*: "Let the one who has nous come to know himself, that he is immortal."[320] Tat has now fulfilled the command of the creator, which he made when he separated the primal human into male and female and thus instituted death. Having come to know himself, Tat has overcome the fragmentary state of earthbound humans, and has been reconstituted by the ten divine powers as a divine androgyne. The clue to this is the couplet life-light. The soul and nous of Tat has become

315 Cf. Eitrem, "Die rituelle ΔΙΑΒΟΛΗ"; van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 100f.

316 CH XIII, 22: ἱκανῶς γὰρ ἕκαστος ἡμῶν ἐπεμελήθη, ἐγώ τε ὁ λέγων, σύ τε ὁ ἀκούων. My trans.

317 Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*, 52.

318 I do not use this term in its perjorative sense. All religious movements of the period—and later—as well as philosophical schools, medical traditions etc., which wanted to expand their operations, were in need of good publicity. Cf. Panayotis Pachis, "The Hellenistic Era as an Age of Propaganda: The Case of the Isis Cult," in *Theoretical Frameworks for the Study of Graeco-Roman Religion: Adjunct Proceedings of the XVIIIth World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Durban, South Africa, 2000* (ed. Luther H. Martin and Panayotis Pachis; Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2003), 97–125 at 109, who considers the Isis aretalogies "as a means of consolidation of the way of thought that this cult promotes before the complete presentation of her *hieroi logoi*."

319 CH XIII, 22: νοερῶς ἔγνως σεαυτὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα τὸν ἡμέτερον. My trans.

320 CH I, 18: ἀναγνωρισάτω ⟨ὁ⟩ ἔννους ἑαυτὸν ὄντα ἀθάνατον. My trans.

life and light, thus reversing the descent and division of the androgynous primal human in CH I, 17–18. This motif of an androgynous primal human is of course to be found in the Platonic tradition, in the jocular anthropogony of Aristophanes in the *Symposium*. Later proponents of the idea prominently include Philo of Alexandria, who interpreted Genesis so that God first created a generic man, containing male and female, and only afterwards the specific Adam.[321] Another allegorical interpretation saw Adam as mind, and Eve as sensation (αἴσθησις).[322] This teaching has an afterlife in Jewish esoteric traditions of the primal Adam of light, Adam Qadmon, who was seen as a hermaphrodite containing Eve, "life," within himself.[323] The texts of Zosimus of Panopolis demonstrate that at least by ca. 300 CE, Hermetic and Jewish anthropogonies were read in tandem.[324]

5.5 Concluding Remarks on the Rebirth

One main objective in this extensive reading of the treatise of rebirth, is to show that it can not be categorized simply as dualistic, monistic or mixed, as previous commentators have been wont to do, with the entailing world-denying or world-affirming outlooks that are usually affixed to these terms. Rather, the treatise describes a threshold in the spiritual formation of Tat, where the initial estrangement from the world permits him to free himself from his material body so as to receive a new body, consisting of ten unified

321 Phil. Alex., *Leg.* 2.13. Cf. Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 208f.

322 Phil. Alex., *Leg.* 2.24. Eve-aisthesis is created from Adam-nous when he sleeps, which is interpreted so that only when bodily sense is asleep can nous awaken, cf. CH I, 30.

323 Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*, 314 n. 324.

324 Jonathan Peste, "Zosimos from Panopolis. A Micro-Level Study of Syncretism," in Martin and Pachis *Theoretical Frameworks*, 143–57. Despite the common scholarly tendency to give chronological priority to Jewish tradition, in light of Hermetic dependance on the Septuagint, we can in my view not at all be certain of the origin of this motif. Both the Septuagint, as well as the commentaries of Philo of Alexandria, were written in Greco-Roman Egypt, and we know far too little about contemporary Egyptian literature in Greek, now largely lost to us. The Septuagint was not translated in a vacuum; to what degree did other translations from the Egyptian, made for the court of the Ptolemies, play a role? We have little beyond legends about the translation of the Torah. Likely, the influences went both ways: both Egyptian priests and Jewish scribes had to convert their native idioms to the conventions of Hellenism, and their native traditions had already mutually influenced each other over centuries.

powers. After this, he is, like his father Hermes, no longer identified with his body, but has merged with the mind of the All, Aion. This is not an anti-cosmic stance, it is not even an anti-body stance. The material cosmos, and the astral powers which rule over it, are not evil per se, rather they are obstacles to be overcome by those who want to reaffirm the divine status of the primal human, the human of God: "Your human shouts this, through fire, through air, through earth, through water, through spirit, through your creations."[325] Tat did not ascend beyond the cosmos; instead, the transcendent noetic limit of the cosmos was realized within himself, as "the All in us." The pedagogical dualism of the initial steps of the Way of Immortality has been overcome, and the candidate now feels himself to be one with the world, or with the mind of the world.[326]

The rebirth could be considered, at least in part, as a kind of exorcism, in which the twelve material avengers are banished. However, it would perhaps be more accurate to see it as the seal that makes the banishment permanent: the avengers are necessarily already kept at bay, since the candidate for rebirth has already made himself a stranger to the world and stilled the corporeal senses by the time he is filled by the powers. Metaphorically, the candidate is a receptacle—a womb or a mixing-bowl—which must be cleansed before it is filled with heavenly effluences.[327] While formerly the passions of matter flooded over him, he is now filled with divine powers that make him unassailable to further material avengers. The new human is now impervious to the vicissitudes that befall his body, and the death of the body will merely entail the release of the inner human, who can return reconstituted to his place of origin above. But before that final ascent, the reborn human is also able to visit these upper regions temporarily. This ascent is described in some detail in the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth*.

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325 CH XIII, 20: ὁ σὸς ἄνθρωπος ταῦτα βοᾷ διὰ πυρός, δι' ἀέρος, διὰ γῆς, διὰ ὕδατος, διὰ πνεύματος, διὰ τῶν κτισμάτων σου.

326 Cf. now Pleše "Dualism in the Hermetic Writings," 276.

327 Cf. Eric R. Dodds, "New Light on the 'Chaldaean Oracles,'" *HTR* 54 (1961): 263–73 at 271: "In both [sc. the *Chaldean Oracles* and Numenius], the human mind must make itself empty (κενεόν, Oracles, p. 11 K., the ἐρημία of Numenius, fragm. 11) in order to receive God."

CHAPTER 6

Heavenly Ascent: *The Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* (NHC VI,*6*)

The importance of *Disc.8–9* for Hermetic studies can hardly be overstated. As the only text among the Nag Hammadi Hermetica that was previously unknown, it came to light too late to have any impact on the influential magnum opus of A.-J. Festugière, who simply brushed aside what he apparently saw as an insignificant discovery of "une jarre d'Égypte."[1] Due to the slow process of publication, it was only a generation later that the text led scholars such as J.-P. Mahé and later Garth Fowden to postulate a way of Hermes.

Commentators soon noticed the similarities between the present treatise and *On the Rebirth*, and concluded that the two texts were different versions of essentially the same phenomenon: spiritual regeneration.[2] J.-P. Mahé is the scholar who has contributed the most to advance our understanding of the treatise, though his work has focused mostly on the cosmology underlying the text. In his view, with which we shall largely agree, the Decad would reflect the unbegotten sovereign power of CH I, the Ennead is the noetic

1 Afterword to the second edition of FR 1:427. To be fair, Festugière reacts against the claim of Jean Doresse that the Coptic translation proves a more profound link with Egyptian thought, and does not seem to have any knowledge of the content of *Disc.8–9*. Cf. Doresse and Mina, "Nouveaux textes gnostiques," 137.

2 Cf. Jean-Pierre Mahé, "Le sens et la composition du traité hermétique, 'L'Ogdoade et l'Enneade', conservé dans le codex VI de Nag Hammadi," *RSR* 48 (1974): 54–65; id., "A Reading of the *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead* (Nag Hammadi Codex VI.6)," in *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (ed. Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff; New York: State University of New York, 1998), 79–86; id., "Accolade ou baiser? Sur un rite hermétique de régénération, ἀσπάζεσθαι en NH VI, 57,26 et 65,4," in *Coptica—Gnostica—Manichaica. Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier; BCNH.É 7; Québec: Les presses de l'Université Laval, 2006), 557–66 at 562–63 contra Holzhausen, *Das Corpus Hermeticum Deutsch*, 1:159 on CH XIII: "in ihm wird Tat zur geistigen Wiedergeburt und Vergottung geführt"; 2:509: "Die Wiedergeburt ist NHC VI,6 also keineswegs der Höhepunkt der Unterweisung, sondern metaphorischer Ausdruck für den erforderlichen Zustand vor dem Eintritt in die Achtheit."

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light-realm of the self-begotten Poimandres, and the Ogdoad is the begotten realm of the demiurgic nous-logos.[3]

Richard Valantasis has attempted to reconstruct the ritual sequence reflected in the treatise, but his approach is deeply flawed: his basic premise is that the three Coptic treatises contained in Nag Hammadi codex VI were intentionally chosen because they were related in a "cultural matrix of meaning," and that reading the internal narrative development of these texts "will determine both the significance of the relationship in and the wider significance of such a relationship to Hermetic religions."[4] This presumes a much larger degree of intentionality on the part of the scribe than is warranted, and furthermore presupposes that the scribe himself actually partook in Hermetic activities. While Valantasis often makes assertions based on the internal arrangement of the treatises in the codex,[5] he never once reflects on the undisputed fact that the users of the codex were Christians and not Hermetists.[6]

Giovanni Filoramo likewise took both CH XIII and *Disc.8–9* to "describe a typical process of regeneration, whose gnostic nature is evident."[7] Recently, however, Wouter Hanegraaff has suggested a progression from rebirth to ascent, though he did not respond to the arguments of J.-P. Mahé against such an interpretation: 1) In both treatises the disciple at a crucial stage exclaims that he "sees himself" (CH XIII, 13; NHC VI 58,8, 61,1), to which Hermes answers that "this is the rebirth" in the Greek text (CH XIII, 13).[8] 2) Mahé

3 Cf. Mahé, "Mental Faculties and Cosmic Levels." I can however not agree with the tight relationship with Jewish Adam-speculations that Mahé postulates. No doubt these speculations derive from the same milieu of Stoic-Platonic allegoresis as the Hermetica, but I see no direct relationship between them, though later commentators such as Zosimus of Panopolis would interpret the Hermetica in the same direction as Mahé.

4 Richard Valantasis, *Spiritual Guides of the Third Century: A Semiotic Study of the Guide-Disciple Relationship in Christianity, Neoplatonism, Hermetism, and Gnosticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 66–67.

5 Valantasis, *Spiritual Guides*, 86, explains that the *Pr. Thanks.* prepares for the *Ascl.*, and implies that both lay the groundwork for *Disc.8–9*, ignoring that the latter text precedes the other two in the codex. He also completely avoids any discussion of the Latin *Asclepius*, where of course the *Pr. Thanks.* comes at the end.

6 Even after quoting Säve-Söderbergh on the problem of seeing the *Logos Teleios* fragment as edifying literature for Christian monks (*Spiritual Guides*, 78–79), Valantasis does not realize the problem.

7 Giovanni Filoramo, "The Transformation of the Inner Self in Gnostic and Hermetic Texts," in *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions* (ed. Jan Assmann and Guy G. Stroumsa; SHR 83; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 137–49 at 141.

8 Hanegraaff, "Altered States." Cf. Mahé, "Paliggenesia," 136–37.

assumes that the rebirth is a regeneration of the primal human in the *Poimandres*, and that the rebirth must therefore take place in the Ogdoad.[9] 3) The "ritual embrace" (57,26) in Mahé's opinion conveys the rebirth.[10] In the following we will respond to these arguments, and reconsider the position of the *Disc.8–9* on the way of Hermes.

Luckily, we possess excellent commentaries on this crucial text by Jean-Pierre Mahé and Alberto Camplani,[11] so that it will not be necessary to provide a running commentary as we did in the case of CH XIII. We will however follow the outline of the text, since it shows the sequence of the rite of ascent:

1. Introduction: The sequence of the tradition (52,1–13).
2. Explanation of spiritual generation (52,14–55,23).
3. The visionary ascent (55,24–61,17).
   a. Prayer for Hermes to receive the power to speak (55,24–57,30).
   b. Advent of the light-power and Tat's first vision (57,31–58,22).
   c. Tat sings a hymn in silence (58,22–59,22).
   d. Tat attains a vision of the Ogdoad and the Ennead (59,23–60,17).
   e. Tat sings a hymn of praise (60,17–61,17).
4. Epilogue: Erection of a votive stela (61,18–63,32).[12]

6.1 Introduction: The Sequence of the Tradition (52,1–13)

As in CH XIII, 1, Tat[13] begins by reminding his father Hermes of an earlier promise, this time that of inducting him into the Ogdoad and the

9 Ibid., 143, claiming that CH XIII, 15 places the rebirth in the Ogdoad. However in that passage Tat says that he wants to hear the hymn that Hermes told him he would hear *when* he came to the Ogdoad, meaning that he has not arrived there yet.

10 Mahé, "Accolade ou baiser?" For an overview, see Mahé in Marvin Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (San Francisco: Harper, 2007), 409–11.

11 HHE 1:88–134; Camplani, *Scritti ermetici in copto*. Also useful is Keizer, *The Eighth Reveals the Ninth*.

12 This scheme is largely in agreement with that of Mahé (HHE 1:31–32), although I include his section 3c, "Prière du disciple à Hermès divinisé," in 3b. Compare van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 328; Valantasis, *Spiritual Guides*, 87.

13 Although the disciple is not named, he is identified as the son of Hermes, which is consistently the role of Tat in our other treatises. Jean-Pierre Mahé, "L'Ogdoade et l'Ennéade," in *Écrits gnostiques: La bibliothèque de Nag Hammadi* (ed. Jean-Pierre Mahé and Paul-Hubert Poirier; Pléiade; Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 935–71 at 948, suggests that the name is left open, to signify that "l'initiation reste ouverte à de nombreux frères." Tat is the protagonist in many other treatises, with whom each individual candidate would identify.

Ennead.[14] Hermes had then said that this was the "order of the tradition," a statement that he now confirms, although he claims that the promise was made "according to humanity,"[15] and that the promise was contingent on Tat remembering each step.[16] It would have been convenient to locate this promise in *On the Rebirth*, where Hermes commends Tat for his desire to release himself from the body and to reach the Ogdoad. However, there is no mention of a promise or any proviso of remembering each step in CH XIII. The promise is therefore either a literary fiction, or perhaps it was contained in an alternative version of *On the Rebirth*, or in some other treatise placed between these two treatises in the "order of tradition," now lost to us.

6.2 Explanation of Spiritual Generation (52,14–55,23)

Hermes explains in greater detail the circumstances of the promise he made earlier:

ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲣⲓϫⲉⲓ ⲡ̄ⲡ̄ⲛ̄ⲁ ϩⲓⲧⲛ̄ ⲧ̄ⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ· ⲁⲉⲓⲕⲱ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲉⲣⲣⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲛⲉⲣⲅⲉⲓⲁ· ⲉⲧⲛⲟⲏⲥⲓⲥ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲫⲟⲟⲡ ⲛ̄ϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ̄ⲕ̄· ϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ ϩⲱⲥ ⲉⲥⲉⲉⲧ ⲛ̄ⲥⲓ ⲧ̄ⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ· ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲣⲓⲱ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲧⲡⲏⲅⲏ ⲉⲧϩⲉϯⲉ ⲛⲏⲉⲓ ⲁⲉⲓϫⲡⲟ·

When I received the spirit from the power, I set forth the energy for you. In you there is understanding, whereas in me the power is pregnant, as it were. For when I conceived from the fountain that flowed to me, I gave birth.[17]

14 More precisely, it is Tat's "thought" (ⲡⲁⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ) that is to be brought up, a noun which is likely to be a translation of *nous*. In 55,11, ⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ is listed along with heart and soul.

15 Mahé, HHE 1:89–90, points to *Ascl.* 40, where Hermes says that everything has been explained "as far as humanly possible" (*ut humanitas potuit*), and PGM IV.650, where the ritualist, who has been reborn and made immortal, "prays with all his human power" (κατὰ δύναμιν ἀνθρωπίνην). Id., "L'Ogdoade et l'Ennéade," 955, refers to SH XXIV, 6, where the souls "fall into humanity" (πίπτουσι γὰρ εἰς τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα).

16 NHC VI 52,6–8: ⲡⲉϫⲁⲕ ϫⲉ ⲧⲁⲓ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲧⲁϫⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲁⲣⲁⲇⲟⲥⲓⲥ ⲱ ⲡⲁⲫⲏⲣⲉ· ⲧⲉⲓ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲧⲁϫⲓⲥ· ⲡⲉⲣⲛⲧ ⲇⲉ ⲁⲫⲫⲱⲡⲉ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲧⲏⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲱⲙⲉ· ⲁⲉⲓϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲣⲓⲣ̄ⲁⲣⲭⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲡⲉⲣⲛⲧ· ⲁⲉⲓϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲫϫⲉ ⲕ̄ⲡ̄ⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲁ ⲡⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲃⲁⲑⲙⲟⲥ.

17 NHC VI 52,13–20. The translations of *Disc.8–9* in the following are mine. I follow the edition of HHE 1:64–87. For an English translation and edition, cf. also James Brashler, Peter A. Dirkse and Douglas M. Parrott, "The Discourse of the Eighth and Ninth," in *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2–5 and VI with papyrus Berolinensis 8502,1 and 4.* (NHS 11; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 341–74.

It is important to pay attention to the temporal aspects here: when in the past Hermes received the spirit from the power, Tat was given a share of its effect (ἐνέργεια), and *as a consequence* understanding (νόησις) now already resides in him.[18] The passage refers to the process of rebirth. In CH XIII we learnt that Hermes was the *genesiourgos* of rebirth, a role that was not fully explained. Here it seems that Hermes was the one who was impregnated by the powers, assuming the role of the female in the act of spiritual procreation. Perhaps the womb of silence in CH XIII, 2 should be seen as the feminine aspect of Hermes' mind? Alberto Camplani points out the two separate instances of "power" (δύναμις) here:[19] Hermes' power receives spirit from another power, namely the fountain bubbling with life in the Ennead (ln. 58,13–14). Since we know that Poimandres has merged with the powers in Hermes (CH I, 27), it is not surprising that he should have such a spiritual bond to the Ennead, the realm of Poimandres.[20] As we shall see later, Tat sings hymns to Hermes as representing the mind of the Ennead during his visionary experience, so Hermes has obviously long since exceeded his human limitations in the present treatise, as he also had in CH XIII.

6.2.1 *The Pregnant Power*

Tat is amazed by something Hermes has said, namely that "the power in me is pregnant."[21] Hermes confirms that he has given birth to power,[22] and this is the third mention of "power": The first is the source, the second is in Hermes, and the third is the one that Hermes gives birth to. We already knew that Tat was reborn as a ten-fold power in *On the Rebirth*, and his surprise now is due to his realization that Hermes has also given birth to other offspring. Tat consequently wants to be counted among them, but unfortunately there is a lacuna of four

18 *Pace* Mahé, "Accolade ou baiser?" 561, who claims that only the other spiritual children of Hermes are discussed in the preamble. Valantasis, *Spiritual Guides*, 88–89, completely misunderstands the sentence, seeing Tat playing the female role in a spiritual intercourse with Hermes as the male. However, it is obvious that Tat is the offspring of the spiritual intecourse, not the female partner. Valantasis also ignores the past tense of Hermes' giving birth, seeing it as the initiation that will take place in *Disc.8–9*.

19 Camplani, *Scritti ermetici in copto*, 135 n. 2.

20 Cf. Mahé, "Mental Faculties and Cosmic Levels," 76.

21 NHC VI 52,25–26: ⲧⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ ⟨ⲉ⟩ⲉⲧ ⲛ̄ⲣⲣⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ⲣⲏⲧ. I follow the emendation of Camplani, *Scritti ermetici in copto*, 135 (and comm., 171). All others translate "the power that is in me," but Hermes mentioned no power in Tat, and if he did, Tat would hardly be amazed, since he would have to know about it.

22 NHC VI 52,26–27: ⲁⲉⲓϫⲡⲁⲥ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲱϩⲣⲉ ⲉⲱⲁⲩϫⲡⲟⲟⲩ. The direct object (ⲥ) can only refer to the power.

and a half lines just when Hermes is about to explain how to number "this good thing."[23] Thereupon Tat is told that he must honor and recognize his spiritual brothers, "for I have addressed/uttered each offspring/book; I have named it, since they are begotten like children."[24] There is an ambiguity in the word ϫω(ω)ме, which can mean either book or offspring. Indeed, it seems that the Coptic translator used this ambiguity as a word play.[25] Mahé has pointed to the similarity with Christian expressions such as "the living book of the living" in the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I 19,35–36: пιϫωωме єтаνⲍ ⲛ̄тє νєтаνⲍ) and the "book of the generation of Jesus the Christ" in the *Gospel of Matthew* (1.1 Sah.: пϫωωме ⲛ̄пєϫпо ⲛ̄ⲓ̄ⲥ̄ пєⲭ̄ⲥ̄).[26] Especially the latter expression, being the opening words of the Coptic New Testament, is likely to have loomed large in the translator's mind. However the translator does not seem to Christianize his text in general, and there is another possibility, although one that can only be advanced tentatively: at the end of the treatise, when Hermes orders Tat to write down the treatise on a stela, the Coptic word used for hieroglyphs is "the letters of the scribes of the House of Life" (61,20: ⲉ̄ⲛⲥϩаї ⲛ̄сафрамⲁ̄ⲩ).[27] The only other instance of the Coptic word is in the Bohairic *Genesis* (41.8), where сфрамⲁ̄ⲩ is the translation of the dream interpreters (ἐξηγητής) competing with Joseph.[28] It seems then that our translator was familiar with obscure Egyptian expressions pertaining to the House of Life. In that case, it is perhaps not too far-fetched to see in the double meaning generation/book a reflection of the expression used for all the books in the House of Life, namely the "emanations of Re" (*bȝ.w Rʿ*): "The scribes who wrote in the 'House of Life' were 'followers' or 'servants' of Re, embodying in their compositions that creative

23 NHC VI 52,30–53,5: пеїаγаθоν єч{ω}ωп євол ⲉ̄ⲓⲧⲛ̄ [4 ½ lns] ⲛ̣ⲟγоєⲓⲱ ⲛⲓ[ⲙ.

24 NHC VI 53,12–15: пϫωме γар пϫωме аєⲓⲣ̄просфωнеι ⲙ̄ⲙоч· аєⲓϯ ран єроч ⲥωс єγⲱооп ⲛ̄ϫпо ⲛ̄ⲑє ⲛ̄ⲛєєⲓⲱнрє·

25 HHE 1:42.

26 HHE 1:43, though only referring to the Greek text, thereby missing the very close resemblance to our text.

27 Variations include ⲉ̄ⲛⲥⲉєι ⲛ̄сафраєⲓⲱ (61,30) and ⲉ̄ⲛⲥϩаⲉⲓ ⲛ̄сафраєⲓⲱ (62,15). Enzo Lucchesi, "A propos du mot copte 'Sphransh,'" *JEA* 61 (1975): 254–56, adduces the text as support of Battiscombe Gunn, "Interpreters of Dreams in Ancient Egypt," *JEA* 4 (1917): 252, that the Egyptian original of сфрамⲁ̄ⲩ (*Gen.* 41.8, 41) is *sḫ pr-ʿnḫ*, which Mahé points out (HHE 1:125) is the Demotic equivalent for ἱεροῖς γραμμάσιν in the Canopus Decree; cf. François Daumas, *Les moyens d'expression: comparés dans les décrets de Canope et de Memphis* (Caire: IFAO, 1952), 188. Demotic *sḫ* can mean either scribe or writing; cf. Wolja Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar* (Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1954), 460.

28 Lucchesi, "A propos du mot copte 'Sphransh.'"

power to maintain life which was his."[29] We recall also that in the *Korê Kosmou*, Hermes wrote down, uttered, and spoke to his books, anointing them with the ointment of imperishability (SH XXIII, 8). We shall not push the point, but it is worth noticing this juxtaposition of life-begetting and book-writing that is inherent to the Egyptian temple milieu.[30]

6.2.2 *Spiritual Rain*

The following question of Tat is obscure, "my father, do they themselves have …?": ⲁⲣⲁ ⲱ ⲛⲁⲓⲱⲧ ⲟⲩⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩ ϩⲱⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ· (53,15–17). Mahé follows Tröger in emending the adverb ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ to ⲙ̄ⲙ⟨ⲁ⟩ⲁⲩ, "mothers," so that Tat asks if the spiritual brothers also have mothers.[31] That would be odd, however, since Hermes has already claimed that he himself conceived and gave birth to them, and should thus be considered their spiritual mother. Another meaning of ϩⲱⲟⲩ than as the reflective pronoun ϩⲱ= has so far been ignored, namely the noun "rain."[32] Understandably so, since the sentence "father, do they have rain," does not immediately make much sense. But we should not discount the possibility out of hand, for Hermes is later praised by Tat in these words: "I call on you, father, eon of eons, divine spirit, who also makes it rain (ⲉϥϯ ⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ϩⲱⲟⲩ) upon everyone with spirit."[33] And Hermes says in response to the question of Tat: "My son, they (the brothers) are spiritual ones, for they exist as energies that grow even souls. Therefore I say that they are immortal."[34] As physical rain makes plants grow, the powers born by Hermes emit spiritual rain as energies that make souls grow. Whether this "growing" means edifying the

29 Alan H. Gardiner, "House of Life," *JEA* 24 (1938): 157–79 at 168.

30 Cf. also Niclas Förster, "Zaubertexte in ägyptischen Tempelbibliotheken und die hermetische Schrift 'Über die Achtheit und Neunheit,'" in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden 2000* (ed. Mat Immerzeel and Jacques van der Vliet; OLA 133; Leuven: Dudley 2004), 723–37.

31 HHE 1:93. One would however still expect the adverb ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ following ⲟⲩⲛ̄ⲧ=, and we must furthermore postulate the disappearance of an article: ⟨ⲛ̄ⲟⲩ⟩ⲙ⟨ⲁ⟩ⲁⲩ or ⲙ̄⟨ⲛ̄⟩ⲙ⟨ⲁ⟩ⲁⲩ. Parrott et al. sees ϩⲱⲟⲩ as "day," thus "do they have a day?" Camplani simply postulates a lacuna at the end, while Keizer follows Krause in leaving the object out: "do they possess?"

32 Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, 372a. There would then be no direct object marker and no article, but this is not grammatically a problem, cf. Layton, *A Coptic Grammar*, 40 (§47: zero article), 310–11 (§ 390 d2: suffixed direct object).

33 NHC VI 59,6–9: ϯⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲡⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲡⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲡ̄ⲡ̄ⲛ̄ⲁ̄ ⲟ ⲛⲑⲉⲓⲟⲛ ⲁⲩⲱ ϩ̄ⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲡ̄ⲛ̄ⲁ̄ ⲉϥϯ ⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ϩⲱⲟⲩ ⲉⲭ̄ⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ.

34 NHC VI 53,17–21: ⲱ ⲡⲁϣⲏⲣⲉ ϩⲉⲛⲡ̄ⲛ̄ⲁ̄ⲧⲓⲕⲟⲛ ⲛⲉ ⲉⲩϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲣⲅⲉⲓⲁ ⲉⲩⲣ̄ⲁⲩⲍⲁⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲕⲉϧⲩⲭⲏ· ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲁⲓ ϯⲭⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲭⲉ ϩⲉⲛⲁⲧⲙⲟⲩ ⲛⲉ.

souls or actually making them larger is unclear, as both uses are attested for the verb αὔξομαι.[35] Actually we have already met with such powers, since one will recall that the ten powers of the rebirth were said to be soul-generating. Thus, the brothers of Tat have already been through the rebirth like Tat, and they are able to make "spiritual rain," like Hermes.

The notion of spiritual rain is an odd one, though some parallels can be found: Mahé adduces CH XIII, 17, where the creator is hailed as the one who brings sweet water to mankind, but more pertinent is CH XVIII, 11: "Thus, since we have taken our beginning from the almighty by receiving the effluence of his wisdom and have used it for growing the supercelestial roots of our souls, in return we must practice reverence towards him, from which he will water every shoot."[36] Just before this passage we were told that the sun uses its rays to gather in ambrosia from plants, and we can deduce that this ambrosial water is what nourishes the souls, for in the *Poimandres* the narrator tells us that he planted seeds of wisdom in his adherents, and watered them with ambrosial water. Moreover, Isis feeds Horus with ambrosia, "which the souls are wont to receive from gods," in the *Korê Kosmou*.[37] That the powers grow souls by means of spiritual water thus makes good sense regarded in light of the idea of souls as plants with roots in heaven, a motif apparently deriving from the *Timaeus* (90a), but appropriated in Hermetism.[38]

Regarding Hermes-Thoth as rainmaker, we should also mention the story Cassius Dio relates about the campaign of Marcus Aurelius against the Qadi, namely that the Egyptian magician Harnouphis called on Hermes Aerios to bring forth miraculous rain to save the thirsting legion.[39] A commemorative

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35 Epict., *Gnom.* 60.1–3: εὐποιήσεις σὺ τὰ μέγιστα τὴν πόλιν, εἰ μὴ τοὺς ὀρόφους ὑψώσεις, ἀλλὰ τὰς ψυχὰς αὐξήσεις; Alex. Aphr., *De an.* 35.23–25: καὶ αὗται μὲν αἱ τῆς φυτικῆς τε καὶ πρώτης ψυχῆς ἐνέργειαι· τρέφειν αὔξειν γεννᾶν. Cf. [Iamb.,] *Theol. arith.* 63.24.

36 CH XVIII, 11: οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἡμῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κρείττονος ἀρξαμένοις καὶ τῆς ἐκείνου σοφίας τὴν ἀπόρροιαν δεξαμένοις καὶ ταύτην εἰς τὰ ἡμέτερα τῶν ψυχῶν ὑπερουράνια φυτὰ καταχρωμένοις, πάλιν εἰς αὐτὸ γυμναστέον τὰ τῆς εὐφημίας, ἧς αὐτὸς ἡμῖν ἐπομβρήσει τὴν βλάστην ἅπασαν. My trans. Cf. HHE 1:117.

37 CH XVIII, 11: χεῖρες αὐτῷ αἱ ἀκτῖνες τὰ τῶν φυτῶν ἀμβροσιωδέστατα πρῶτον ἀποδρεπόμεναι; CH I, 29: ἔσπειρα αὐτοῖς τοὺς τῆς σοφίας λόγους καὶ ἐτράφησαν ἐκ τοῦ ἀμβροσίου ὕδατος; SH XXIII, 1: Ταῦτα εἰποῦσα Ἶσις ἐγχεῖ ποτὸν Ὥρῳ γλυκὺ τὸ πρῶτον ἀμβροσίας ὃ αἱ ψυχαὶ λαμβάνειν ἔθος ἔχουσιν ⟨ἀπὸ⟩ θεῶν. Cf. Plato, *Phaedr.* 247e.

38 Cf. *Ascl.* 6: *animalia, desuper deorsum radices peruenientes habent*.

39 Cass. Dio, *Hist.* 71.8.4: καὶ γάρ τοι λόγος ἔχει Ἀρνοῦφίν τινα μάγον Αἰγύπτιον συνόντα τῷ Μάρκῳ ἄλλους τέ τινας δαίμονας καὶ τὸν Ἑρμῆν τὸν ἀέριον ὅτι μάλιστα μαγγανείαις τισὶν ἐπικαλέσασθαι καὶ δι' αὐτῶν τὸν ὄμβρον ἐπισπάσασθαι. Cf. Julien Guey, "Encore la pluie miraculeus," *RP* 22 (1948): 16–62; id., "La date de la pluie miraculeuse," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 60

coin, apparently showing the erection of a chapel to the Egyptian Hermes, and a depiction on the Column of Aurelius testify to the wide currency of this tale, and Harnouphis was a real enough person, since we have a stela erected by him to Isis, on which he is entitled "sacred scribe."[40] Around a century later, we likewise find the city-council of Hermopolis writing a letter to a compatriot in Rome, expressing the wish that Hermes Trismegistus be with him everywhere and provide a calm sea for his journey home.[41] We have now of course moved from spiritual to physical rain, but it should be remarked that in Egypt water is of great importance both in this world and beyond, symbolizing renewal and rejuvenation, with the yearly renewal of the Nile flooding coinciding with the regeneration of Osiris.[42] The symbolism of water as essential for both the living and the dead makes it a privileged tool for bridging the gulf between humans and the divine realm, and we can easily imagine an ablution ritual underlying the Hermetic notion of soul-generating water.[43] Indeed we find temple reliefs of Thoth and Horus performing ablutions for the king, pouring the symbols of life (*ꜥnḫ*) and dominion (*wȝs*)[44] over him.[45] This ritual

(1948): 105–27 at 120ff.; Georges Posener, "A propos de la pluie miraculeuse," *RP* 25 (1951): 162–68; Michael Sage, "Eusebius and the Rain Miracle: Some Observations," *Historia* 36 (1987): 96–113; Garth Fowden, "Pagan Versions of the Rain Miracle of AD 172," *Historia* 36 (1987): 83–95 at 87–89; Péter Kovács, *Marcus Aurelius' Rain Miracle and the Marcomannic Wars* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), passim. Guey saw the novel epithet Aerios as a sign of syncretism between Thoth and Shu, the Egyptian god of the atmosphere, while Posener saw no need for that, since Thoth in Egyptian sources demonstrates that he has the capacity to manipulate the weather on his own. Tertullian (*Apol.* 5.6) claimed it was the Christian god who provided the rain for Marcus Aurelius' legions.

40 IG XIV 234 (Aquileia): Ἀρνοῦφις ἱερογραμματεὺς τῆς Αἰγύπτου καὶ Τερέντ(ιος) Πρεῖσκος Θεᾷ · Ἐπιφανεῖ. Cf. Michel Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des cultes égyptiens en Italie* (EPRO 22; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 428ff.

41 P. Vind. gr. 12563: τοῦ δὲ πατρῴου ἡμῶν θεοῦ τρισμεγίστου Ἑρμοῦ ὅς παρίσταταί σοι πά[ν]τ̣αχου ϙυ̣ν̣[α]ραμέν[ο]ṇ πρὸς τὴν ἐπάνοδον ὥστε καὶ γαληνὸν ἔχειν τὸ πέλαγ[ος. I thank Anna van den Kerchove for providing a handout of this text in the *Herme{neu}tica* conference (Princeton, 2012), arranged by Christian Wildberg. Cf. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 175; Kingsley, "Poimandres," 56.

42 Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 358–59; id., "Das Leichensekret des Osiris: Zur kultischen Bedeutung des Wassers im alten Ägypten," in *Hommages à Fayza Haikal* (ed. Nicolas-Christophe Grimal et al.; Cairo: IFAO, 2003), 5–16; Robert A. Wild, *Water in the Cultic Worship of Isis and Sarapis* (EPRO 87; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 126f.

43 Cf. Wild, *Water*, 129ff.

44 *Wb.* I, 260.

45 E.g. Wild, *Water,* Pl. XXIX, 2: Horus and Thoth sprinkling Ptolemy XI Neos Dionysos. Cf. Claas J. Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth* (SHR 26; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 145; Alan H. Gardiner, "The Baptism of Pharaoh," *JEA* 36 (1950): 3–12.

is indeed associated with renewal and rebirth, as the text to the ablution of Sethos I shows: "I purify thee with life and dominion, that thou mayst grow young (*rnpi.k*) like thy father Re and make Sed-festival like Atum."[46] A millennium later, a relief showing Phillip Arrhidaios in the same role shows the king in successive panels first undergoing ablution as an adult, then passing Thoth to appear before Amun, after which he is depicted as an infant suckling at the breast of Isis.[47] In a funerary context we also find Thoth and Horus performing ablutions on the deceased. One Roman period spell states: "You will stand up together with Horus. You will sit down together with Thoth on the mounds of the libation of the stars."[48] The latter obscure expression brings us close to the heavenly outpouring powers of *Disc.8–9*. The combination of Thoth, heavenly water, and heavenly ascent is found in the *Book of the Dead* of Nefer-uben-f:

> I, the *am khent* Nefer-uben-f, open the Doors of Heaven. Thoth has opened to me the doors of Qebh [the heavenly waters]. Lo, Hepi, Hep, the two sons of the Sky, mighty in splendour, grant that I may be master over the water, even as Seth had dominion over his evil power (?) on the day of the storming of the Two Lands.
>
> I pass by the Great Ones, arm to shoulder (?), even as they pass that Great God, the Spirit who is equipped, whose name is unknown. I have passed by the Aged One [or Great One] of the shoulder (?). I am Nefer-uben-f, whose word is truth. Osiris has opened to me the Heavenly Water. Thoth-Hapi, the Lord of the Horizon, in his name of Thoth the earth-cleaver, has opened to me the Heavenly Water. I am master of the water, as Set is master of his weapon. I sail over the sky, I am Re … Limitless eternity has been given to me. Lo, I am the heir of eternity, to whom everlastingness has been given.[49]

Here Thoth opens the heavenly water as Thoth-Hapi, that is, Thoth the heavenly Nile. The consistent idea of Thoth as a provider of regenerating water in Greco-Roman times makes it legitimate, I think, to also consider a Ramesside prayer to Thoth, which connects this motif with another element crucial to

46 Gardiner, "The Baptism of Pharaoh," 7.

47 Ibid.

48 Smith, *Traversing Eternity*, 177.

49 Spell 61. E. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Dead: Papyrus of Ani* (2 vols.; London: The Medici Society, 1913), 2:442–44. See also 1:pl. xv. Cf. Jack Lindsay, *Men and Gods on the Roman Nile* (London: Frederick Muller, 1968), 275–76. The spell goes back to the *Coffin Texts*, spell 353, the "Spell for having power over water," cf. Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts* (3 vols.; Warminster: Aris & Philipps, 1973–1978), 1:284–85.

both *Disc.8–9* and *On the Rebirth*, namely the call for silence. As mentioned above, the latter theme belongs to the sphere of wisdom-literature, and indeed the prayer to Thoth is found on a papyrus-roll together with scribal and wisdom literature, including the teaching of Amenemhet I.[50] The prayer is cast in the form of a letter from the chief archivist Amenemone to the scribe Pentwere:

O Thoth, convey me to Shmun,
Your town where life is pleasing;
Supply my needs of bread and beer,
And guard my mouth ⟨in⟩ speaking!
If only I had Thoth behind me tomorrow,
"Come!" They would say;
I enter in before the lords,
I leave as one who is justified.
You great doum-palm of sixty cubits,
On which there are nuts;
There are kernels in the nuts,
There is water in the kernels.
You who bring water ⟨from⟩ afar,
Come, rescue me, the silent;
O Thoth, you well that is sweet
To a man who thirsts in the desert!
It is sealed to him who finds words,
It is open to the silent;
Comes the silent, he finds the well,
⟨To⟩ the heated man you are [hidden].[51]

50 Anthony J. Spalinger, *The Transformation of an Ancient Egyptian Narrative: P. Sallier III and the Battle of Kadesh* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 331.

51 P. Sallier 1 col. 8, 2–7. Trans. Lichtheim, 2:114 (slightly altered); Hieroglyphic text in Alan H. Gardiner, *Late Egyptian Miscellanies* (Brussels: Édition de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1937), 85–86. Cf. Wilson in *ANET* 379; Gerhard Fecht, *Literarische Zeugnisse zur "Persönlichen Frömmigkeit" in Ägypten* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1965), 73–75; Louis Keimer, "Interprétation d'un passage du papyrus Sallier Ier: Une prière au dieu Thot," *BIE* 29 (1948): 275–91; François Daumas, *Amour de la vie et sens du divin dans l'Égypte ancienne* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1998), 49ff. Joachim F. Quack, "From Ritual to Magic: Ancient Egyptian Forerunners of the Charitesion and their Social Setting," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition* (ed. Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Shaul Shaked; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 43–84 at 57, proposes "Oh hot one, you are under control" for the last line, referring to the enemies of the orant.

There is much of interest in this prayer: in the first line Shmun, that is Hermopolis, is designated the holy city of Thoth. The next three lines deal with more mundane benefactions of Thoth, as he secures a pleasant life in his town, but he is also personally present to each of his worshippers, directing their speech. In line 5 the tenor changes: the worshipper wants Thoth behind him when he stands before the judges in order to leave as "justified," which is the standard epithet for the blessed dead. Should we see in the appearance before the judges "tomorrow" a reference to death, a lawsuit, or initiation? It is hard to say, especially because these different contexts are blended together: pleading before judges is common to the court of law, funerary belief, and initiatory rites.[52] We recall also that the "Chamber of Darkness" in *The Book of Thoth* was both an area of the House of Life and the Underworld,[53] which demonstrates that places of ritual activity can also represent imagined places in the beyond.

Lines 9–12 metaphorically present Thoth as a doum palm, hiding his water in the kernel of its nuts, as in a sort of Chinese box. The doum palm appears in chapter 124 of the *Book of the Dead*, as the deceased goes down to the tribunal of Osiris, and its fruits could be used as funeral possessions, which strengthens the Underworld-ties of the hymn.[54] The water of Thoth is what his worshipper desires, as we learn in the final seven lines, where the metaphor is changed: life—or the afterlife—is like a desert, and Thoth is the only source of water (*ḥnmt*). Since the doum palm was connected to the desert, it could well be that the palm is to be identified with the well.[55] The silent worshipper will find the well open, while the intemperate and loquacious man will not be able to drink from it. It seems clear that the wish of the scribe, who is enjoined to utter the prayer, is to receive the water of Thoth, which involves being initiated into his mysteries.

6.2.3 *The Location of Rebirth*

As we have seen, the silence in CH XIII, 8 signals both that Tat has left his body behind, and that he is now in the womb of rebirth. J.-P. Mahé, asserting that the Hermetic rebirth is reflected in both CH XIII and *Disc.8–9*, asks where the rebirth would take place, if not in the Ogdoad and Ennead.[56] But as we have

52 Assmann, *Ägyptische Geheimnisse*, 151–53.

53 Jasnow and Zauzich, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth*, 1:36–37. Cf. above, chap. 4.2.

54 *Pace* Quack, "From Ritual to Magic," 57–58: "there is nothing of post-mortal interest in the passage about the dum-palm and its nuts."

55 Aufrère, *Thot Hermès*, 284.

56 Mahé, "Accolade ou baiser?" 562: "S'il fallait poser, comme le pense Holzhausen, qu'on doive être régénéré avant d'entrer dans l'Ogdoade, la question surgirait immédiatement

seen, there is no mention of an ascent through the spheres in CH XIII, instead the powers that effectuate the rebirth descend to the reborn.[57] Having left his body behind, Tat's soul goes upwards, but where to? Although the destination is not spelled out clearly, we may perhaps assume that the soul is believed to go to the region immediately above earth, namely the sublunary atmosphere. This is indeed the dwelling place of demons and disembodied souls in Hermetic and Platonic demonology.[58]

As we have seen, the moon is the topmost sphere of the air, and this is where the royal souls dwell, those who are about to escape the cycle of rebirths and go up to the gods. The astrological principle for the birth, growth and decline of bodies falls under the moon (CH I, 25; *Ascl.* 3), and Nature is tightly connected to the moon: "Coursing ahead of them all (the other planets) is the moon, nature's instrument, transforming the matter below … and in between the two, the immortal and the mortal, the circling moon."[59] Nature "is a modeler and a tent-maker, ⟨and makes⟩ a vessel ⟨that⟩ the souls are thrown into."[60] In other words, nature distributes the souls among the bodies she allows to be born. Here we must mention Plutarch's treatment of the connection between the soul and the moon: "the entity that ascends to the moon after death is the *daimōn*, which remains on the lunar surface, and the intellect (*nous*), which ascends to the sun."[61] This teaching of Plutarch, who it will be recalled

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de savoir dans quel lieu, c'est-à-dire à quelle étape de la voie hermétique la regeneration se serait produite. Serait-ce dans une des spheres planetaires ou, pour choisir l'hypothèse la plus favorable, dans l'Hebdomade, qui precede immédiatement l'Ogdoade?"

57 This is also pointed out by Roelof van den Broek, "Religious Practices in the Hermetic 'Lodge': New Light from Nag Hammadi," in van den Broek, Quispel, and van Heertum, *From Poimandres to Jacob Böhme*, 77–95 at 91.

58 Frederick E. Brenk, "In the Light of the Moon: Demonology in the Early Imperial Period," *ANRW* 16.3:2068–145.

59 CH XI, 7: σελήνην δὲ ἐκείνων πρόδρομον πάντων, ὄργανον τῆς φύσεως, τὴν κάτω ὕλην μεταβάλλ-ουσαν· … μέσην δὲ ἀμφοτέρων, τῶν τε ἀθανάτων καὶ τῶν θνητῶν, τὴν σελήνην περιπορευομένην. Trans. Copenhaver. Cf. Scott 2:309–10; Plut., *Fac.* 943A: τὸ μὲν σῶμα ἡ γῆ τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἡ σελήνη, τὸν δὲ νοῦν ὁ ἥλιος παρέσχεν εἰς τὴν γένεσιν; Firm. Mat., *Math.* 4.1.1–9, however sees God as responsible for injecting the soul, and the moon for the body. Cf. NF 1:159–60 n. 25.

60 SH XXVI, 4: πλάστρια γὰρ οὖσα καὶ σκηνοποιός, ἀγγεῖον ⟨…⟩ εἰσβάλλονται αἱ ψυχαί. Festugière proposes "⟨elle varie⟩ le récaptable ⟨dans lequel⟩ sont jetées les âmes."

61 Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 166, on Plut., *Fac.* 942E–945D, *Pyth. orac.* 397C and *Def. orac.* 416D–E, paraphrasing the work of Robert Flacelière, "La Lune selon Plutarque," in *Mélanges d'histoire ancienne et d'archéologie offerts à Paul Collart* (ed. Pierre Ducrey; Lausanne: E. de Boccard, 1976), 193–95; Yvonne Vernière, "La Lune, réservoir des âmes,"

knew certain books of Hermes,[62] lends some support to the possibility that the soul during the Hermetic rebirth is thought to ascend to the level of the moon, where it encounters the divine powers descending towards it from above. The moon is by Plutarch associated with the World-Soul, into which the sun sends nous, and in the *Timaeus* the World-Soul was made in a mixing bowl.[63] It is therefore not impossible that the moon is associated with the Hermetic mixing bowl full of nous, into which Tat yearns to immerse his soul (CH IV, 6).

A testimony to the *Perfect Discourse* is very interesting in relation to the moon as the place of rebirth, preserved in Greek by Johannes Lydus:

ὅτι ὁ Αἰγύπτιος Ἑρμῆς ἐν τῷ λόγῳ αὐτοῦ τῷ καλουμένῳ τελείῳ φησὶ τοὺς μὲν τιμωροὺς τῶν δαιμόνων ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὕλῃ παρόντας τιμωρεῖσθαι τὸ ἀνθρώπειον κατ' ἀξίαν, τοὺς δὲ καθαρτικοὺς ἐν τῷ ἀέρι πεπηγότας τὰς ψυχὰς μετὰ θάνατον ἀνατρέχειν πειρωμένας ἀποκαθαίρειν περὶ τὰς χαλαζώδεις καὶ πυρώδεις τοῦ ἀέρος ζώνας, ἃς οἱ ποιηταὶ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Πλάτων ἐν Φαίδωνι Τάρταρον καὶ Πυριφλεγέθοντα ὀνομάζουσι· τοὺς δὲ σωτηρικοὺς πρὸς τῷ σεληνιακῷ χώρῳ τεταγμένους ἀποσώζειν τὰς ψυχάς.

The Egyptian Hermes, in his book called *The Perfect Discourse*, says that the punishing demons, which are present in matter itself, punishes humankind according to what they deserve, while the cleansing demons, who hold fast the souls that try to soar aloft after death, purge them in the zones of the air that consist of fire and hail—which the poets and Plato himself, in the *Phaedo*, name Tartarus and Pyriphlegethon. The saving demons, however, which are arrayed close to the space of the moon, save the souls.[64]

The passage is not a quote but a paraphrase, as a comparison with another reference of Lydus to the same text shows.[65] Moreover, the saving demons near the moon cannot be found in any of the extant manuscripts of the *Perfect Discourse*. However, the last page of the Coptic fragment contains a rather lengthy passage detailing the punishments in the hereafter, which is not preserved in the Latin translation. Since the fragment ends abruptly, it is just

in *Mort et fécondité dans les mythologies* (ed. François Jouan; Paris: Belles Lettres, 1986), 101–8.

62 Plut., *Is. Os.* 61 (375F–376A). Cf. Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch: De Iside et Osiride*, 520.

63 Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 217; Plut., *Fac.* 943E.

64 Joh. Lyd., *Mens.* 4.32. My trans.

65 Cf. HHE 2:256, where the two passages are presented synoptically. Cf. also Scott 2:270–76, 4:230–32.

possible that the Coptic text from which the text was excerpted, or its Greek prototype, also included a passage about the saving demons. Indeed, if we did not have the Coptic fragment, we would not have had any references to the demons that torment souls in the atmosphere, only to the singular Great Demon. This means that Lydus must have read a version of *PD* containing a Greek parallel to the last passage of the Coptic fragment, since he knows about the tormenting demons.[66] The purifying demons would be the ones that throw the souls into the icy and firey regions of the sky.[67] Some of the demons are in the Coptic version called "stranglers,"[68] and Mahé points out that Michael Psellus talks about avenging (τιμωρητικαὶ) demons who hold wicked souls down in their upward flight, by tying them down and strangling them (ἀπάγχουσι).[69] Since Psellus knew the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and apparently also other Hermetica,[70] it is not impossible that he here refers to a Hermetic demonology. The avenging demons that dwell in the material body will thus follow the soul up and torment it in the atmosphere. The fact that Lydus calls them avenging demons (τοὺς μὲν τιμωροὺς τῶν δαιμόνων) links the Greek version of *PD* that he read with CH XIII, which also talks about the dark avengers of matter (e.g., § 11: αἱ τιμωρίαι τοῦ σκότους).

Elsewhere, John Lydus says that the saving demons are also called heroes,[71] and indeed we learn in the *Perfect Discourse* that unlike the demons, who dwell with us, the heroes "dwell between the purest part of the air above us

66 Cf. Bull, "Great Demon of the Air."

67 NHC VI 78,36–37: ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲟⲩϫⲉ ⲉⲡⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡ̄ⲛ ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲟⲩϫⲉ ⲉⲡⲕⲱⲣⲧ. Joh. Lyd., *Mens.* 4.149: σφενδονούμεναι καὶ κατὰ τὰς πυρώδεις καὶ χαλαζώδεις ζώνας. Cf. HHE 2:270.

68 NHC VI 78,27–33: ⲛⲉⲧⲉϣⲁⲩⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲉ ϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲉϥⲱⲥ̄ⲧ̄ ⲛⲉ.

69 Mich. Psell., *Op. psych. theol. daem.* 139.19–22: οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀναγωγοὶ ἄγγελοι ἀνάγουσι τὰς ψυχὰς ἐφ' ἑαυτοὺς ἐκ τῆς γενέσεως ἐφελκόμενοι, αἱ δὲ ποιναί, ἤτοι αἱ τιμωρητικαὶ τῶν δαιμόνων φύσεις καὶ βάσκανοι τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν, ἐνδεσμοῦσι ταύτας τοῖς ὑλικοῖς πάθεσι καὶ οἷον ἀπάγχουσι … Cf. HHE 2:270.

70 Cf. Mich. Psell., *Theol.* 19.147–150.

71 Joh. Lyd., *Mens.* 4.25: ὅτι τὸ ὑπὸ σελήνην δαιμόνιον φῦλον τριχῇ διῄρηται κατὰ τὸν Ἰάμβλιχον· καὶ τὸ μὲν πρόσγειον αὐτοῦ τιμωρόν, τὸ δὲ ἀέριον καθαρτικόν, τὸ δὲ πρὸς τῇ σεληνιακῇ ζώνῃ σωτήριόν ἐστιν, ὃ δὴ καὶ ἡρωϊκὸν ἴσμεν· ἡγεῖσθαι δὲ λέγεται παντὸς τούτου μέγιστός τις δαίμων· οὗτος δ' ἂν εἴη μᾶλλον ὁ Πλούτων, ὥς φησιν ὁ αὐτὸς Ἰάμβλιχος. It is odd that Lydus here attributes the tripartite demonology to Iamblichus. Scott (2:268) suggests that our Hermetic author and Iamblichus could have the same source, but it is equally possible that Iamblichus quotes the *Perfect Discourse* in a lost work, or that Lydus has his sources confused. Iamblichus speaks of a tripartition souls-heroes-demons in *Myst.*, but they are not there avenging, purificatory and saving. The μέγιστός δαίμων is mentioned many places in the Hermetica, and could correspond to Zeus Plutonius in *Ascl.* 27 (= NHC VI 75,17).

and the place where there are no fogs or clouds or disturbance from the stirring of the signs."[72] This description could easily suit the moon, which indeed lies between the air and the planetary ether. Both the *Perfect Discourse* and the dialogues between Isis and Horus on royal souls thus give some support for seeing the moon as a possible locus of rebirth, the gateway between sublunary fate and the ether.

6.3 The Visionary Ascent (55,24–61,17)

6.3.1 *Prayer to Receive the Power to Speak* (*55,24–57,25*)

Hermes and Tat now start singing a hymn, together with the spiritual brothers. The hymnic prayer does not follow the standard threefold Greek pattern of invocation, argument and petition, but after an invocation with a string of magical vowels and names, we find three petitions, of which the two first are followed by arguments, while the last is followed by a concluding embrace.

1. Invocation of the invisible god (55,24–56,17)
2. Voces magicae (56,17–22)
3. Petition for wisdom to sing the vision of Ogdoad and Ennead (56,22–26)
4. Argument: They have already reached the Hebdomad on the way of God (56,27–57,5)
5. Petition to see the image of truth, and that God receives the mark of the fullness (57,5–11)
6. Argument / pars epica: God has created everything (57,11–18)
7. Petition that God receive speech offering and give salvation & wisdom (57,18–26)
8. Conclusion and embrace (57,26–30)

Perhaps the main point of contention here is the concluding embrace, which several commentators, and primarily Mahé, have taken to reflect a sacramental kiss like the one possibly reflected in Valentinian texts. The sacramental kiss would thus furnish us with one of very few references to concrete ritual

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Iamblichus nowhere mentions Pluto as the greatest demon. Cf. Bull, "Great Demon of the Air."

72 *Ascl.* 33: *Dico nunc daemonas, quos credo commorari nobiscum, et heroas, quos inter aëris purissimam partem supra nos et inter ea* (emend. Nock; mss: *in terram*)*, ubi nec nebulis locus est nec nubibus nec ex signorum aliquorum agitatione commotio*.

action, a rare *dromenon*. We shall however discuss the parts of the prayer in their proper sequence.

Hermes invokes (ϯⲣ̄ⲉⲡⲓⲕⲁⲗⲉⲓ) the one who rules over the kingdom of power, he whose logos was born of light, "whose will begets the life of images everywhere; whose nature gives shape to essence." Mahé sees here each member of the triad unbegotten, self-begotten, and begotten being invoked, but I would argue that the addressee is in fact one: The self-begotten mind of the Ennead. In the hymn of rebirth, in CH XIII, 15ff., we saw that the mind of the cosmos was invoked, while here we have moved one step up. The powers of the Enneadic mind dwell in the Ogdoad, and therefore this mind could be said to rule over the kingdom of power. Furthermore, his logos was indeed born of light according to CH I, 5. This is a reference to the logos of the Ogdoad, as Mahé points out, but the hymn is directed at the originator of the logos, not the logos itself. Likewise, the demiurgic will and nature of the Enneadic nous are mentioned in order to praise their originator.[73]

The next stanza is unfortunately mutilated, but as far as we can tell it credits its God with moving the souls and angels in the Ogdoad, and says something about his truth and providence, the begetter of everything, and Aion:

55,33	.....ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧⲟ̄ ⲉⲩⲕⲓⲙ	... from him are moved
56,1	ⲛ̄ⲟⲓ ⲛ̄ⲯⲩⲭⲏ ⲛ̣̄ⲧ̣[ⲙⲁϩⲱⲙⲟⲩⲛⲉ][74]	the souls of [the eighth]
56,2	[ⲙ̄ⲛ̄] ⲛ̄ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ [ⲉⲧⲛ̄ϩⲣⲁⲓ ϩ̄ⲙ̄]	[and] the angels [who are in]
56,3	[ⲡⲉⲓⲧ]ⲟ̣[ⲡ]ⲟⲩ̣ [·] ⲧ̣[ⲁⲗⲏⲑ]ⲉⲓⲁ ⲟ̣[ⲩⲱ]	[this place].[75] The [tru]th [is only]
56,4	[ⲧ] ϩ̄ⲛ̄ ⲛⲉⲧⲱⲟⲟⲡ·[76] ⲧ̣ⲉⲫⲡ̣̄[ⲣ]ⲟ̣ⲛⲟ̣[ⲓ]	in those that (really) exist. His providence

73 I find Valantasis' suggestion, that all of this is an insertion because of the move from second to third person pronouns, wholly unconvincing. We find this phenomenon also in the hymn of the *Poimandres* (CH I, 30–32).

74 Mahé first proposed ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧⲟ̄ ⲉⲩⲕⲓⲙ· ⲛ̄ⲟⲓ ⲛ̄ⲯⲩⲭⲏ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ [ⲛ̄ⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄] ⲛ̄ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ· but later changed his mind to "les âmes [de l'Ogodad]," following Brashler, Dirkse and Parrott, "Discourse": ⲛ̄ⲯⲩⲭⲏ ⲛ̣̄ⲧ̣[ⲙⲁϩⲱⲙⲟⲩⲛⲉ]. Cf. HHE 1:73; Mahé, "L'Ogdoad et l'Ennéade," 961. Both options are plausible, but the latter is the most satisfying.

75 Rather than "his place," *pace* Camplani.

76 The reconstruction of 56,2–4 is contested: Mahé restores [ⲡⲁⲓ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲧⲉ | ⲡⲉⲫⲗ]ⲟ̣[ⲅ]ⲟⲩ̣ ⲛ̣[ⲟⲣⲱ] ⲱⲁ ⲟ[ⲛⲟⲛ | ⲛⲓ]ⲙ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲱⲟⲟⲡ. Stephen Emmel however restored line 3 as ⲗ]ⲟ̣[ⲅ]ⲟⲩ̣ ⲧ̣[ⲁⲗⲏⲑ]ⲉⲓⲁ. [with a possible dotted O at the end: Stephen Emmel, "Uniques Photographic Evidence for Nag Hammadi Texts: CG V–VIII," *BASP* 16 [1979]: 179–91 at 188. On the basis of Emmel, Camplani suggests ⲧ[ⲉⲫⲥⲟⲙ] ⲉⲓ ⲁⲟ[ⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓ]ⲙ, but there is no room for [ⲉⲫⲥⲟⲙ]. My own proposal follows Emmel and SH II A, 1: ἀλήθειαν εἶναι ἐν μόνοις τοῖς ἀιδίοις σώμασιν.

56,5	[ⲁ ⲡ]ϣⲉ ⲁⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ [ⲉⲧⲥⲭ]ⲛ̣ⲟ[77]	[ex]tends to everyone [whom it beg]ets
56,6	[ⲟⲩ ⲉⲥ]ϫⲡⲟ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ· ⲡⲉⲣ	[and it] begets everyone. He is the one who has
56,7	[ⲥⲱ]ⲣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲡⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲉ̄ⲛ ⲉ̄ⲙ̄ⲡⲛ̄ⲁ̄	[prepared] Aion with spirits.

Although it is hard to feel any certainty in the reconstruction of such lacunose passages, the general meaning is clear: God is praised by all his instruments of creation: the souls and the angels who serve him in the Ogdoad; the truth which only exists in the supernal realms; his providence, which is connected with truth and has a role in procreation in SH II A; and finally Aion, whom he has prepared with or spread out among spirits. Alberto Camplani proposes that the meaning of this verb is "emanate," which seems more than likely: the first nous has emanated the second demiurgic nous, Aion, by means of spirits.

6.3.1.1 The Nomina Barbara and Voces Magicae[78]

The remainder of the invocation praises God's creative and ruling power, and goes on to call him "the invisible god to whom one speaks in silence," before it ends with two *nomina barbara* interspersed with 6 lines of *voces magicae* (56,17–22). We also find lines of *voces magicae* at the end of the visionary ascent (61,10–15), and we will therefore consider these two together. Note that the vowels are not divided into separate lines in the manuscript, but are given continuously. The stylistic arrangement of the vowels can however be found in the magical papyri, and it is likely that their original arrangement was something like this:[79]

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77 Camplani, *Scritti ermetici*, 174, suggests [· ⲡⲁⲧϫ]ⲡⲟ [ⲉⲛⲧⲁ]ⲧϫⲡⲟ ⲛⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ, but unborn is written with a reflexive ≠ⲧ, ⲁⲧϫⲡⲟⲧ (Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, 780a). Mahé here reads [ⲉⲙ̄ ⲡ]ⲧⲟ|[ⲡⲟⲥ], claiming to see a faint trace of the vertical line of the tau, and seeing a parallel to the Valentinian use of the word topos to designate the world created by the demiurge ("L'Ogdoad et l'Enneade", 961). My proposal here relies on the role of the providence of truth in SH II A, 16: πάντα δὲ τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς φθορᾷ κατέλαβε καὶ ἐμπεριέχει καὶ ἐμπεριέξει ἡ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς πρόνοια. χωρὶς γὰρ φθορᾶς οὐδὲ γένεσις δύναται συστῆναι. Another possibility would be [ⲡⲉⲧϫ]ⲡⲟ [ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧ]ϫⲡⲟ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ, "it is his birth that has begotten everything," reflecting the demiurgical logos-nous as the son of the Enneadic nous, who in turn begets all things.

78 A revised version of this chapter has been published as "Monkey Business: Magical Vowels and Cosmic Levels in the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* (NHC VI,6)," *SMSR* 83 (2017): 75–94.

79 Cf. Frankfurter, "The Magic of Writing," 200.

ϏϢϗϧϩϭϏϢ	ϩ̄
ϩ̄	ϣ̄
ϣ̄ϣ̄	ϵ̄ϵ̄
ϵ̄ϵ̄	ϣ̄
ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄	ϧ̄ϧ̄ϧ̄
ϧ̄ϧ̄ϧ̄	ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄
ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄	іїі
іїіі[80]	ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄
ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄	ѳ̄ѳ̄ѳ̄ѳ̄
ѳ̄ѳ̄ѳ̄ѳ̄ѳ̄	ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄
ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄	ϒ̄ϒ̄ϒ̄ϒ̄ϒ̄ϒ̄
ϒ̄ϒ̄ϒ̄ϒ̄ϒ̄ϒ̄	ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄
ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄	ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄
ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄	ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄ϣ̄
ϏϢϏϧϏϢϑ	ϣ̄

The seven vowels are connected to the seven planets,[81] and according to the Pythagorean numerology of Nicomachus of Gerasa, they were said to be unspeakable and related to the consonants as the soul is related to the body.[82] Probably the vowels follow the traditional planetary order Moon–Mercury–Venus–Sun–Mars–Jupiter–Saturn, with Saturn corresponding to omega.[83] However, since each vowel is followed by a string of omegas Mahé has claimed that the omegas represent the Ogdoad.[84] We shall instead propose that the omegas refer both to Saturn and the fixed stars. The double function of the omega can be elucidated with reference to Zosimus of Panopolis' treatise on the letter omega:

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80 I have followed the emendation of Mahé, HHE 1:73, reading two etas (ηη) as four iotas, but I have not erased the sixth omega in the line after. The confusion between etas and iotas recurs in the magical papyri, as we shall see. Note also that the second series contains only three iotas, likely a scribal mistake.

81 The seven ousiarchs according to Keizer, *The Eighth Reveals the Ninth*, 42. But in the enumeration of the ousiarchs in *Ascl.* 19, only some are associated with planets. In general on vowels, cf. Franz Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1922), 35–39 and 82–83; on vowels and planets, cf. Hans G. Gundel, *Weltbild und Astrologie in den griechischen Zauberpapyri* (München: C.H. Beck, 1968), 41–43.

82 Nic. Ger., *Harm. Ench.*, quoted in Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 184.

83 But cf. Charles-Émile Ruelle, "Le chant des sept voyelles grecques," *REG* 2 (1889): 38–44 and 393–395 at 42, for other schemes.

84 HHE 1:106–7, followed by Camplani, *Scritti ermetici*, 142–43 n. 45.

τὸ ω στοιχεῖον στρογγύλον, τὸ διμερές, τὸ ἀνῆκον τῇ ἑβδόμῃ Κρόνου ζώνῃ κατὰ τὴν ἔνσωμον φράσιν, κατὰ γὰρ τὴν ἀσώματον ἄλλο τί ἐστιν ἀνερμήνευτον, ὃ μόνος Νικόθεος ⟨ὁ⟩ κεκρυμμένος οἶδεν. κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἔνσωμον, τὸ λεγόμενον Ὠκεανὸς θεῶν, φησί, πάντων γένεσις καὶ σπορά, καθάπερ φασὶν[85] αἱ μοναρχικαὶ τῆς ἐνσώμου φράσεως.

Round Omega is the bipartite letter, the one that in terms of corporeal language belongs to the seventh planetary zone, that of Cronus. For in terms of the incorporeal it is something else altogether, something inexplicable, which only Nicotheus the hidden knows. In corporeal terms Omega is said to be Ocean—says he (the poet): "the birth and seed of all the gods"[86]—just as the governing principles of material language state it.[87]

Howard Jackson interpreted "round" and "bipartite" as referring to Oceanus, which is written with an omega, surrounds the world, and was androgynous in Egyptian tradition.[88] Michèle Mertens has a more prosaic explanation: the adjectives refer simply to the round, twofold shape of the miniscule ω. However, a more likely explanation is that "round" refers to the cycle of Saturn, and that "bipartite" refers to its corporeal and incorporeal aspect. We are justified in using Zosimus[89] to elucidate our Hermetic text, since he repeatedly defers to Hermes, though in this instance Zosimus refers to Nicotheus in order to explain the Omega, a name that is familiar to us as the author of apocalypses read by the Gnostics in Plotinus' circle.[90] Jackson claims that this Nicotheus was a Jew, but nothing makes this assumption necessary: the only other instance in which he appears in the work of Zosimus is as the only one who knows the true

85 Em. Mertens; ms. φησὶν.

86 Hom., *Il.* 14.200–201: εἶμι γὰρ ὀψομένη πολυφόρβου πείρατα γαίης, Ὠκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσιν καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν; ib., 245–246: ἂν ποταμοῖο ῥέεθρα Ὠκεανοῦ, ὅς περ γένεσις πάντεσσι τέτυκται. Plato follows this tradition in *Tim*., 40e when he makes Oceanus and Tethys children of Ge and Ouranus, and parents of Cronus, Rhea and the rest of the titans. Cf. *Theaet*. 152e. Diels & Kranz saw the passage in *Tim*. as an Orphic fragment. Cf. also *Orph. hymn.* 83 to Oceanus.

87 Zos. Pan., *Mém. auth*. 1.1 Mertens. I have modified the translation of Howard, who saw the entire last part to be a quotation of Nicotheus, in accordance with Mertens.

88 Jackson, *Zosimus*, 39 n. 1.

89 On Zosimus cf. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 104f.; Scott 4:112ff.; FR 1:263–73; Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 139; Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 120–26; Jackson, *Zosimus*; Mertens, *Zosime*.

90 Porph., *Vit. Plot.* 16; Wilhelm Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1907), 189–94; Jackson, *Zosimus*, 40 n. 4; Mertens, *Zosime*, 55f. n. 4.

name of Thoth, and so whatever else he may be, he was probably a commentator on Hermetic teachings.[91] Porphyry simply mentions his name among other authors of apocalypses—Zoroaster, Zostrianus, Allogenes, Messus—who were read by the Gnostics. This is confirmed by the *Book of Setheus* of the Bruce codex, where Nicotheus and Marsanes are said to have seen a revelation of the Only-Begotten god (Monogenes), and a quote of Nicotheus is given: "The Father who surpasses every perfect being (τέλειος) is, and has revealed the invisible (ἀόρατος) perfect (τέλειος) triple-power (τριδύναμις)."[92] All these apocalyptic bedfellows of Nicotheus are represented in the Nag Hammadi Library, but there is nothing that identifies him as a Jewish revealer.[93]

Two corporeal senses are actually provided by Zosimus. First, as the seventh vowel it denotes the seventh planetary cycle of Saturn. Second, it denotes Ocean as the first letter in the name, and as such is the birth and seed of all gods. In the Pythagorean *Theology of Arithmetic*, which makes use of material from Nicomachus and Iamblichus, Ocean is also connected to the sphere of Saturn.[94] Cronus and Oceanus are listed together with Tethys, the titans and universal nature as the gods envelopping all others in Artemidorus' dreambook, and dreaming about them is a bad sign for all other than philosophers and seers since "these men extend their thought to the very boundaries of the universe."[95] The Ocean encircled the entire world in Greek mythology, with all

91 Cf. below, chap. 8.1.

92 Commonly referred to as "Untitled Treatise." Trans. Birger A. Pearson in Birger A. Pearson and Søren Giversen, eds., *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X* (NHS 15; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 230–31; cf. Carl Schmidt and Violet MacDermot, *The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex* (NHS 13; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 233. A new edition of *Jeu.* was recently prepared by Eric Crégheur, *Les « deux Livres de Iéo » (MS Bruce 96): Les Livres du grand discours mystérique—Le Livre des connaissances du Dieu invisible—Fragment sur le passage de l'âme* (BCNH.T 38; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2017), rev. ed. of "Édition critique, traduction et introduction des '*deux Livre de Iéou*' (MS Bruce 96), avec des notes philologiques et textuelles" (Ph.-D. diss., Université Laval, 2013).

93 Although he is possibly listed among Shem, Sêm, Enosh and Enoch in a Middle-Persian Manichean source. Cf. John C. Reeves, *Heralds of That Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions* (NHMS 41; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 14.

94 Though here Ocean is associated with the number nine, due to the differing Pythagorean planetary sequence: Counter Earth, Earth, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, fixed stars. Cf. Waterfield, *The Theology of Arithmetic*, 90 n. 17.

95 Art., *Oneir.* 3.34: οἱ δὲ πέριξ τούτων Ὠκεανὸς καὶ Τηθὺς καὶ Κρόνος καὶ Τιτᾶνες καὶ Φύσις ἡ τῶν ὅλων.... οἱ δὲ πέριξ τούτων πονηροὶ πᾶσι πλὴν φιλοσόφων ⟨καὶ μάντεων⟩ (cf. 2.39)· οὗτοι γὰρ καὶ μέχρι ⟨τοῦ⟩ πέρατος τῶν ὅλων τείνουσι τὴν ἑαυτῶν γνώμην. Trans. Robert J. White, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New Jersey: Noyes Press, 1990), 126.

constellations and stars diving into it, and it is therefore a suitable symbol of the outer limit of the Ptolemaic spherical cosmos, girding the fixed stars.

6.3.1.1.1 *The Omegas as Decans*

Zosimus's identification of omega as both Saturn and Ocean makes some sense of the string of vowels in the *Disc.8–9*: in the upward ascent the seven vowels represent the traversal of the seven planetary spheres, while the omegas represent not only the sphere of Saturn but also the layer of fixed stars.

In Hermetic cosmology, this outer layer represents a hymen between the Hebdomas and the Ogdoas, which in some texts are identified with the thirty-six decans, Egyptian astral deities that control ten days each and together encompass the year, along with five intercalary days. In the sixth Hermetic fragment from the anthology of John of Stobi (SH VI) the decans are said to be interposed between the zodiac and the "circle of the all," separating them.[96] Although the decans are not specifically mentioned in *Disc.8–9*, they are implied in the final invocation of the seven Ousiarchs, the "rulers of essence."[97] These rulers are only otherwise attested in the *Perfect Discourse*, where Pantomorphos[98] is described as the Ousiarch of the 36 Horoscopoi, who must be identical with the decans, while two other Oursiarchs, namely Fortuna and Heimarmene are given the responsibility for the seven planets.[99]

The number of vowels in our two series indicates that they are indeed meant to symbolize the seven planets and the thirty-six decans. The simple form of the vowel string, found in the magical papyri, starts with one alpha and increases every succeeding vowel by one, which altogether adds up to 28.[100] If we add all the vowels in our series, but including only seven omegas at the end, we reach this number. According to PGM XIII, which we will

96 SH VI, 3: Ὑπὸ δὲ τὸν κύκλον τοῦ σώματος τούτου τετάχθαι τοὺς τριάκοντα ἓξ δεκανούς, μέσους τοῦ παντὸς κύκλου ⟨καὶ⟩ τοῦ ζῳδιακοῦ, διορίζοντας ἀμφοτέρους τοὺς κύκλους καὶ ὥσπερ ἐκεῖνον μὲν κουφίζοντας, τὸν ⟨δὲ⟩ ζῳδιακὸν καθορίζοντας.

97 NHC VI 63,16–19: ϯταρκο ⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲱϣ ⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲉⲉⲓⲭⲱⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲧⲡⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲡⲕⲁϩ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲡⲕⲱϩ̄ⲧ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲡⲏⲟⲟⲩ· ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲥⲁⲱϥ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁⲣⲭⲏⲥ.

98 Cf. Scott 3:120–21.

99 *Ascl.* 19: *XXXVI, quorum uocabulum est Horoscopi, id est eodem loco semper defixorum siderum, horum* οὐσιάρχης *uel princeps est, quem* Παντόμορφον *uel omniformem uocant, qui diuersis speciebus diuersas formas facit. septem sphaerae quae uocantur habent* οὐσιάρχας, *id est sui principes, quam fortunam dicunt aut* Εἱμαρμένην, *quibus inmutantur omnia lege naturae stabilitateque firmissima, sempiterna agitatione uariata.* This passage comes shortly before the start of the excerpt NHC VI, *8* = *Ascl.* 21–29.

100 Cf. Mahé, "L'Ogdoade et l'Ennéade," 962, adducing Michael Psellus (*Epist.* 187).

shortly return to, this number reflects that the seven vowels "utter their voices according to the twenty-eight forms of the moon," that is, an approximation of the lunar month.[101] However, both series of vowels are interspersed with omegas, and there are thirty-six omegas in each series of vowels. In the first series, what seemed to be a redundant extra omega following the iotas is likely a correction made in order to reach the number thirty-six. The author or scribe should have started with one omega before the alpha, in which case by adding together every number up to eight he would have arrived at the number thirty-six. Either the first omega was forgotten, or perhaps there was a desire to start with an alpha, in order to go from alpha to omega, possibly the work of a Christian scribe. At any rate, the first omega was removed from the beginning and added to the omegas following the iotas in order to reach the desired sum of thirty-six. Something similar is the case in the second series, where we also find thirty-six omegas, although it is unclear how the final twenty-two omegas were originally divided into lines, for example as 6+7+9, or 6+7+8+1.[102] I would lean towards the latter option, and in that case the final lone omega has been removed from its original place, after the epsilons. In both series, then, one single omega has been replaced from what would otherwise have been the string of 1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8=36. Lewis Keizer suggested that the strings were willfully distorted so as to confound uninitiated readers,[103] a suggestion which is plausible yet unprovable. The number thirty-six represents the decans and also the path of the sun. The seven vowels thus symbolize the seven planets, and their grouping into twenty-eight vowels and thirty-six omegas can thus symbolize the course of the moon and the sun. Naturally this symbolism would be apt for the passage through the heavenly vault into the Ogdoad and Ennead, and the return back down, the two places in the text where our series of vowels occur.

Furthermore, in his discussion of Egyptian symbolism, Plutarch identifies thirty-six with the Pythagorean greater Tetraktys: "The so-called Tetraktys, namely the thirty-six, was the greatest oath, as is commonly said, and was named Cosmos. It was completed by adding together the first four even and

101 PGM XIII.777: τῶν ζ′ φθόγγων ἐχόντων φωνὰς πρὸς τὰ κη′ φῶτα τῆς σελήνης.

102 Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 266, opts for the first division, seeing the passage from 7 to 9 as an entry into the Ennead. But then what happened to the Ogdoad?

103 Keizer, *The Eighth*, 11, suggested the extra omega was added in order to make the string unfunctional for those who were uninitiated, followed by van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 264.

odd numbers."[104] Elsewhere Plutarch adds that the Pythagoreans sang hymns to the number thirty-six.[105] Clement of Alexandria, for his part, informs us that there are thirty-six books of Hermes, making up the totality of Egyptian philosophy, that would be carried in festival processions by Egyptian priests (*Strom.* 6.4). There is thus a ritual context to the number thirty-six, and we will find that our vowels and *nomina barbara* had a ritual use in the magical papyri.

6.3.1.1.2 *The Nomina Barbara*

Papyrus Leiden J 395 (PGM XIII) is a single quire papyrus codex now located in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. It contains 32 pages and has been dated to the middle of the fourth century on paleographical grounds.[106] It belonged to the collection of magical papyri discovered in Thebes in the early 19th century that contains spells in Greek, Old Coptic and Demotic and must consequently have belonged to someone educated in an Egyptian temple.[107] The codex is thus close to the Nag Hammadi Codices both chronologically and geographically. It contains three different versions of an initiatory spell meant to make the god or an angel appear to or enter into the ritualist and provide revelations. The spell is entitled variously the *Monas* or the *Eighth Hidden Book of Moses*, and the first two versions also contain the famous *Leiden Kosmopoiia*.[108] Serge Sauneron has demonstrated that this *Kosmopoiia* is affiliated with the Roman-era cosmogony of the temple at Esna.[109] In the

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104 (1+3+5+7)+(2+4+6+8)=36. Cf. Plut., *Is. Os.* 75 (382A): ἡ δὲ καλουμένη τετρακτύς, τὰ ἓξ καὶ τριάκοντα, μέγιστος ἦν ὅρκος, ὡς τεθρύληται, καὶ κόσμος ὠνόμασται, τεσσάρων μὲν ἀρτίων τῶν πρώτων, τεσσάρων δὲ τῶν περισσῶν εἰς ταὐτὸ συντιθεμένων ἀποτελούμενος. My trans. The regular tetractys is the sum of the first four numbers.

105 Plut., *An. proc.* 1027F: ἡ μὲν οὖν ὑπὸ τῶν Πυθαγορικῶν ὑμνουμένη τετρακτύς, τὰ ἓξ καὶ τριάκοντα, θαυμαστὸν ἔχειν δοκεῖ τὸ συγκεῖσθαι μὲν ἐκ πρώτων ἀρτίων τεσσάρων καὶ πρώτων περισσῶν τεσσάρων, γίγνεσθαι δὲ συζυγία τετάρτη τῶν ἐφεξῆς συντεθειμένων.

106 Robert W. Daniel, *Two Greek Magical papyri in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden: a photographic edition of J384 and J395* (= *PGM XII and XIII*) (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991), x–xi.

107 Cf. now Richard Gordon, "The Religious Anthropology of Late-Antique 'High' Magical Practice," in *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (ed. Jörg Rüpke; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 163–86.

108 Cf. Albrecht Dieterich, *Abraxas: Studien zur Religionsgeschichte* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1891); Morton Smith, "The Eighth Book of Moses and How It Grew (P Leid J 395)," in *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh* (ed. Shaye J.D. Cohen; 2 vols.; RGRW 130; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 2:217–26; id., "P Leid J 395 (PGM XIII) and Its Creation Legend," in ibid., 2:227–34; Merkelbach, *Abrasax*.

109 Serge Sauneron, "La légende des sept propos de Methyer au temple d'Esna," *BSFE* 32 (1961): 43–48.

Leiden Kosmopoiia the creator god laughs seven times, and each laugh produces a new divine hypostasis. The fourth hypostasis is Creative Force which governs Procreation, *Genna* and *Spora* in Greek, which we recognize as the epithets of Ocean in the Homeric passage quoted by Zosimus.[110] These hypostases are also given the nomina barbara ΒΑΔΗΤΟΦΩΘ ΖΩΘΑΞΑΘΩΖ,[111] the latter of which is a close approximation of the nomina of *Disc.8–9*, ΖΩΞΑΘΑΖΩ and ΖΩΖΑΖΩΘ.[112] Mahé suggested that the Leiden version was the original one, since it could be seen as an anagram interpreted as Ζωή—θανατός + Ξ + θανατός—Ζωή.[113] However, another variant of the name, overlooked by Mahé and all other commentators on *Disc.8–9*, makes this interpretation doubtful: inscribed on four magical amulets we read the palindrome ΘΩΖΑΞΑΖΩΘ. On three of these amulets we find the Egyptian god Horus. On one, our palindrome is on the reverse and Horus is on the obverse, nude except for an Egyptian loincloth, with a falcon's head, a sun-disc as a headpiece, holding a wand with a falcon on top and an ankh, the Egyptian symbol of life, flanked by the names [Σ]αβαωθ and [Α]βρασαξ.[114] Another gem again has the palindrome on the reverse and on the obverse an ithyphallic Horus holding the falcon-staff, with scarab-body, and a wig and the Egyptian double crown on his head.[115] The third has the palindrome on the obverse as part of a lengthy formula written in a decreasing spiral around a scarab, framed by an ouroboros snake.

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110 PGM XIII.175–176: ἐκάχασε τὸ τέταρτον ὁ θεός, καὶ ἐφάνη Γέννα κρατοῦσα σποράν. Compare Zos. Pan., *Mém. auth.* 1.1: γένεσις καὶ σπορά. Dieterich, *Abraxas*, 72, saw Genna as Aphrodite Genetrix, related to the Stoic Panspermia.

111 PGM XIII.176–177: ἐκλήθη δὲ Βαδητοφωθ Ζωθαξαθωζ.

112 van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 265–6, suggests that the connection with Genna means it is a symbol of birth.

113 HHE 1:106–7.

114 Inv. BM G 1986,0501.99; Simone Michel, *Die Magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum* (2 vols.; London: British Museum Press, 2001), 1:90, no. 139. This gem is very similar to one described by Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets: Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 130, as lost, although he does not mention that this gem has the name [Σ]αβαωθ in addition to [Α]βραζαξ on the obverse, and he states that the name Αβρασαξ is also on the reverse, which is not the case with the BM gem. Bonner has thus either given a faulty description (and he admits his notes were made in haste), or we have here two separate but very similar gems, one of which is lost. For image see the Campbell Bonner Magical Gem Database (http://classics.mfab.hu/talismans/cbd/539).

115 Inv. Hamburg Skoluda Collection (inv. M040), and published by Simone Michel, *Bunte Steine—Dunkle Bilder. Magische Gemmen* (München: Biering & Brinkmann, 2001), 36 no. 25. For image see the Campbell Bonner Magical Gem Database (http://classics.mfab.hu/talismans/cbd/1662).

Horus-the-Child (Harpocrates) is on the reverse, standing on two crocodiles and grasping two snakes, flanked by the goddesses Isis and Nephthys who each holds an ankh. He has a falcon and an adoring cynocephalus on each shoulder, and from his headpiece there extend large wings enveloping him. Above the wings is the head possibly of the goddess of heaven, Nut (fig. 1).[116] The fourth gem has on the obverse a Pantheos with four wings, a bird tail, and three scepters, surrounded by an ouroboros, and on the reverse is our palindrome (fig. 2).[117]

The gems teach us that ΘΩΖΑΞΑΖΩΘ is related especially to Horus, the Egyptian god with solar connotations, of whom the Pantheos-figure seems to be an elaboration.[118] The common inclusion of a scarab, symbolizing the rising sun, and the ouroboros, symbolizing the eternal circuit of the universe, underlines his character as the cosmic god. These observations confirm the thesis of Michela Zago, that the phrase ΖΩΘΑΞΑΘΩΖ in PGM XIII is related not only to *Disc.8–9*, but also to a spell to gain a leontocephalic Horus as a parhedros in PGM I, where we find the *nomen* ΖΩΝ ΤΑΖΩΤΑΖΩ.[119] In this spell, a falcon is said to drop a stone to the ritualist, and it should be engraved with the figure of the leontocephalic Helios-Horus, described as an aerial spirit, encircled by an ouroboros.

What does this mean for our understanding of the *nomina* in *Disc.8–9*? As part of the invocation Hermes asks God: "Give us, through the spirit, that we might see the shape of the image that has no deficiency."[120] After the invocation and a ritual embrace, he exclaims: "Rejoice over this, for already from them the power which is light has come to us."[121] Immediately after this Hermes or Tat begins to describe the vision. In other words, the vowels and *nomina* are part of an invocation necessary to bring down a pneumatic spirit of light which will enable them to see the Ogdoad and Ennead. The two *nomina barbara* in the

116 Inv. Walter Art Gallery 42.872; Bonner, *Studies*, 294–5 n. 251.

117 Inv. Mich. 26148; Bonner, *Studies*, 296 n. 258. See also the Campbell Bonner Magical Gem Database (http://classics.mfab.hu/talismans/cbd/1437).

118 Bonner, *Studies*, 156.

119 PGM I.135; Michela Zago, "L'emploi des noms divins dans la *Kosmopoiia* (PGM XIII)," in *Religioni in contatto nel Mediterraneo Antico: Modalità di diffusione e processi di interferenza* (ed. Corinne Bonnet, Sergio Ribichini, and Dirk Steuernhagel; Pisa: Fabrizio Serra, 2008), 205–17 at 208–9. A similar name also appears in the *Books of Jeu*, B 26 (64),5: ⲍⲱⲑⲁⲍⲁⲍⲁⲍ. This name occurs in an invocation of the "father of all paternity." Cf. Crégheur, "Édition critique," 253.

120 NHC VI 57,5: ⲏ[ⲁ]ϯ ⲛⲁⲛ ϩⲓⲧⲛ̄ ⲡⲛⲁ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲛⲛⲁⲩ [ⲉ]ⲧⲏⲟⲣϥ ⲛ̄ⲑⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲧⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲓⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲥ ⲱⲧⲁ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲩ.

121 NHC VI 57,28–30: ⲣⲁⲱⲉ ⲉ̅ⲭ̅ⲙ̄ ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲏⲇⲏ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲧⲁⲩⲛⲁⲏⲓⲥ ⲉⲧⲟ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲏⲩ ⲱⲁⲣⲟⲛ.

FIGURE 1 *Magical gem* (*Walters 42.872*)
COURTESY OF THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM, BALTIMORE

FIGURE 2 *Magical gem* (*UMich 26148*)
COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, KELSEY MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY

invocation, and their parallels with *nomina* in PGM I and XIII and the gems, make it likely that this power was associated with Horus, the scarab, and the ouroboros, all symbols of the sun and the cosmos. This observation is strengthened from the fact that chanting the vowels is elsewhere in the magical papyri associated with invoking the cosmic god.

6.3.1.1.3 *The Ritual Practice of Uttering the Vowels*

In a formula found in three different papyri, among them PGM XIII, Ocean is again connected with begetting, furthermore he is identified with Agathos Daimon and the seven-lettered name, and explicitly connected to the seven vowels:[122]

ᾧ οὐρανὸς κεφαλή, αἰθὴρ δὲ σῶμα, γῆ δὲ πόδες, τὸ δὲ περὶ σ⟨ὲ⟩ ὂν[123] ὕδωρ ὁ Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων. σὺ εἶ ὁ **ὠκεανός**, ὁ **γεννῶν** ἀγαθὰ καὶ τροφῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην, σοῦ δὲ τὸ ἀέννaον κωμαστήριον, ἐν ᾧ καθίδρυταί σου τὸ ἐπταγράμματον ὄνομα πρὸς τὴν ἁρμονίαν τῶν ζ′ φθόγγων ἐχόντων φωνὰς πρὸς τὰ κη′ φῶτα τῆς σελήνης.

(You) of whom heaven is head, ether body, earth feet, and water around you, the Agathos Daimon. You are the **Ocean**, **begetter** of good things and **feeder** of the civilized world. Yours is the **ever-flowing processional way** in which your **seven-lettered name** is established for the harmony of the **seven sounds** which utter their voices according to the **twenty-eight** forms of the moon.

PGM XIII.770–777

Ocean and the Agathos Daimon are both here epithets of the cosmic god who pervades the universe, from the outer stars to the earth. The present invocation is part of an appendix to the main spell, called "instruction [for recitation] of the heptagram," the heptagram being the seven vowels that are recited several times in the main spell, for example in an invocation of Sarapis: "I hymn your holy power in a musical hymn, AEÊIOYÔÔÔ. Burn incense, saying 'ÊIOYÔ IOYÔ OYÔ YÔ Ô A EE ÊÊÊ IIII OOOOO YYYYYY ÔÔÔÔÔÔÔ etc."[124] This sentence is important, as it demonstrates the musical, hymnic use of the series of vowels.[125] Later, we are presented with more details as to when and how to utter the vowels:

122 Dieterich, *Abraxas*, 66–67; FR 1:288–89, 296–97, 300–3; Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 172.

123 Daniel, *Two Greek*, xxvi, proposes to read ms. cον as a misspelling of cεν = cε.

124 PGM XIII.628–633: ᾠδικῷ ὕμνῳ ὑμνῶ σου τὸ ἅγιον κρ⟨ά⟩τος· αεηιουωωω. ἐπίθυε λέγων· ηιουω· ιουω· ουω· υω· ω· α εε ηηη· ιιιι οοοοο υυυυυυ ωωωωωωω· ωηωαωαω οοουο ιιιιιαω ιιυυυοαηα·υο.

125 Cf. Charles-Émile Ruelle, "Le chant gnostico-magique des sept voyelles grecques," in *Congrès d'histoire de la musique: Documents, mémoires et vœux* (ed. Jules Combarieu; Paris: Fischbacher, 1901), 15–27; and in the same volume Élie Poirée, "Chant des sept voyelles: analyse musicale," ibid., 28–38.

ὑπόδειξις· εἰπὼν εἰς τὸν ἀπηλιώτην, εἷς τὴν δεξιὰν χεῖρα ἐπὶ τῶν εὐωνύμων καὶ τὴν εὐώνυμον ὁμοίως χεῖρα ἐπὶ τῶν εὐωνύμων, λέγε· α.
⟨ε⟩ἰς τὸ⟨ν⟩ βορρᾶ⟨ν⟩, τὴν μίαν πὺξ προτείνας τῆς δεξιᾶς, λέγε· ε.
εἶτα εἰς τὸν λίβα, ἀμφοτέρας χεῖρας προτείνας, λέγε· η.
⟨ε⟩ἰ⟨ς⟩ τὸ⟨ν⟩ νότον, ἀμφοτέρας ⟨ἔχων⟩ ἐπὶ τοῦ στομάχου, λέγε· ι.
εἰς τὴν γῆν, ἐπικύπτων παραπτόμενος τῶν ἄκρων ποδῶν, λέγε· ο.
⟨εἰς⟩ ἀέρα βλέπων, τὴν χεῖρα ἔχων κατὰ τῆς καρδίας, λέγε· υ.
εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν βλέπων, ἀμφοτέρας τὰς χεῖρας ἔχων ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς, λέγε· ω

The instruction: Speaking to the rising sun, stretching out your right hand to the left and your left hand likewise to the left, say 'A.'
To the north, putting forward only your right fist, say 'E.'
Then to the west, extending both hands in front [of you], say 'Ê.'
To the south, [holding] both on your stomach, say 'I.'
To the earth, bending over, touching the ends of your toes, say 'O.'
Looking into the air, having your hand on your heart, say 'Y.'
Looking towards heaven, having both hands on your head, say 'Ô.'[126]

The ritualist is instructed how to comport himself bodily: he should face each of the cardinal points in turn, then bend down towards the earth, and finally look up into the air and the heavens. The rite should be performed at sunrise, midday or sunset. The hymns of CH XIII and *Ascl.* 41, are both supposed to be sung at sunset, the hymnist facing southward, but Hermes also referred to other hymns sung at sunrise facing east.[127] An accompanying diagram which follows directly after, provides a visual aid to the ritual instructions (fig. 3; PGM XIII.836–841).[128]

Here we can see that the ritualist should start in the top left corner, facing east, and going counterclockwise towards the south, with the number of vowels increasing by increments of one. As with the vowels of *Disc.8–9*, there is some confusion between iotas and etas, but luckily since the instructions informs us that one should say the iota towards the south, we can be sure that the three etas in the top right corner should be four iotas. This gives us cause also to emend the etas into iotas in the first vowel-series of *Disc.8–9*, as mentioned. After each of the four corners representing the cardinal points have

126 PGM XIII.823–835. Trans. Morton Smith, in *PGMT*.

127 CH XIII, 16.

128 Cf. Patricia Cox Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman* (ed. Arthur H. Armstrong; New York: Crossroad, 1986), 481–505 at 498–99.

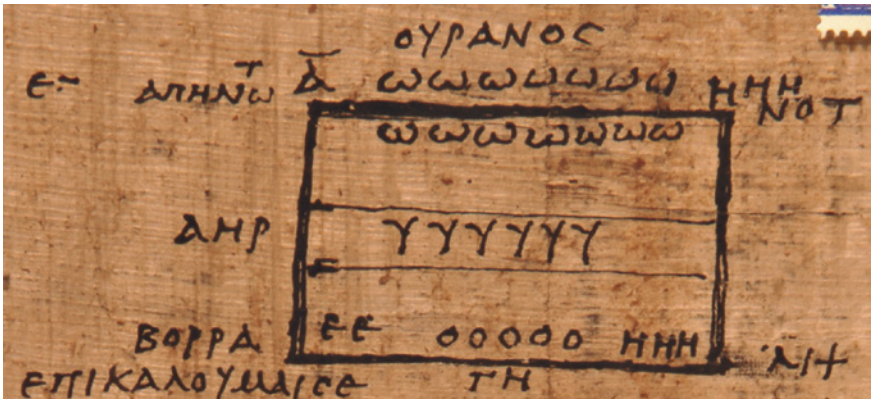
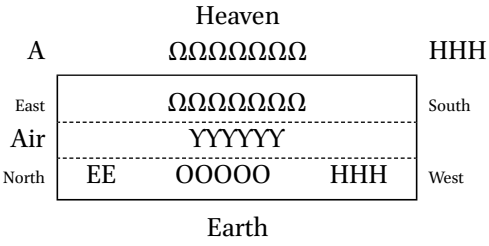


FIGURE 3 *Detail from Leiden papyrus J 395 (now AMS 76 leaf 10)*
COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES, LEIDEN



been covered, the diagram goes from the earth upwards, through the air, and reaches the top where there are two separate lines of omegas, both numbering seven. This duplication of omegas again probably represents Saturn, the outermost planet, and Ocean who envelops the cosmos. Perhaps the rectangle is meant to represent this border, in which case the alpha and etas on the top corners should have been placed within the rectangle, however there was little room here due to the seven omegas. The three divisions within the rectangle then possibly represent the earth, the air, and the planetary ether.[129] Thus, even though the seven vowels represent the seven planets, they are uttered ritually toward the four cardinal directions, and then earth, air and heaven. We notice that there are seven omegas on top of the rectangle, not eight, so it is improbable that they represent the eighth sphere, the "Ogdoas," which is said to be a sacred great name elsewhere in the papyrus.

129 We find the division of the cosmos into four—earth, air, ether, heaven—in SH XXIV and XXV, cf. above, p. 116.

The vowels in *Disc.8–9* thus represent the entirety of the cosmos, from earth to the outer layer of stars where one finds the thirty-six decans. This lends credence to a suggestion of Alberto Camplani: when the orants in *Disc.8–9* ask to receive the spirit to see, quoted above, they also ask that God should receive the imprint (τύπος) of the fullness (πλήρωμα) by means of the hymn of praise (ϲⲙⲟⲩ).[130] Camplani suggested that the imprint of the fullness might be the vowels, which could function as a sort of mystic token to gain access to the Ogdoad and Ennead.[131] Indeed, in the magical papyri, *typos* can mean the shape in which vowels and *nomina* are written (PGM V.306; VII.658), and thus likely refers to the original triangular shape of the vowels. The imprint of the fullness therefore likely refers to the vowels and *nomina barbara*, which together symbolize the cosmic god, the One who is All.[132]

6.3.1.1.4 *Vowels as a Baboonic Divine Language*

This cosmic god is evocatively praised in the hymn to Ocean-Agathodaimon, quoted above, whose seven-lettered name is established in the ever-flowing processional way for the harmony of the seven sounds. The seven-lettered name is Abrasax,[133] which we have also found on one of our gems: the numerical value of this name is 365, and it is thus eminently suited for the name established on "the ever-flowing processional way," which is traversed by the sun in the course of just about 365 days. Abrasax is also well suited to be identified with Ocean, since both deities are anguipedes.[134] It should also be pointed out that the shape of the two serpentine legs of Abrasax are often shaped like a miniscule omega.

PGM XIII furthermore states that the name is in the baboonic language, "in baboonic, Abrasax,"[135] which indicates that it is somehow beyond the capacity of humans to utter: in PGM XIII Abrasax is the god "whose name is hidden

130 NHC VI 57,8–10: ⲛ̄ⲧⲥⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲓⲧⲩⲡⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲗⲏⲣⲱⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲛ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲛ̄ ⲡⲛ̄ϲⲙⲟⲩ. Cf. also Mahé, "Preliminary Remarks," 360, who points out that the Egyptian antecedent for ϲⲙⲟⲩ, *smꜣ*, was the word used for baboons greeting the sun.

131 Camplani, *Scritti*, 144 n. 48.

132 CH V, 9–10; XI, 6, 11, 22; XIII, 17; XVI, 3; *Ascl.* 1, 20.

133 This is confirmed by PGM VIII.46f.: "the second name with the number 7, corresponding to those who rule the world, with the exact number 365, corresponding to the days of the year. Truly: ABRASAX." In this case the name applies to Hermes.

134 Cf. Bonner, *Studies*, 123–39: Abrasax has the head of a cock, which is a solar symbol, and two serpents for feet, which are chthonic in nature, and this fits well with the combined astral-tellurian nature of Ocean: It envelops the earth and receives the stars.

135 PGM XIII.84: κυνοκεφαλιστί· Ἀβρασάξ.

and unspeakable, it cannot be uttered by a human mouth,"[136] a phrase that has a close parallel in a text attributed to Hermes by Lactantius, and is stated of the cosmic god in the Hermetica.[137] The language of baboons is connected with Abrasax also elsewhere in PGM XIII: "Now he who appears on the boat rising together with you is a clever baboon; he greets you in his own language, saying 'You are the number of [the days of] the year, Abrasax.'"[138] Baboonic is thus explicitly connected with the god in baboon shape on the boat in which the Egyptian sun-god traverses heaven, namely Thoth. Patricia Cox Miller reminds us that Plato attributed to this god not only the discovery of language, but in particular the vowels: "He it was who originally discerned the existence, in that unlimited variety, of the vowels—not 'vowel' in the singular but 'vowels' in the plural—and then of other things which though they could not be called articulate sounds, yet were noises of a kind."[139] This is confirmed by Egyptian sources, where the language of baboons is connected to the language of the gods.[140] In the first century CE Demotic *Book of Thoth,* it is said of the god: "The signs revealed their form. He called to them and they answered to him. He

136 PGM XIII.763–764: οὗ ἐστιν τὸ κρυπτὸν ὄνομα καὶ ἄρρητον, ἐν ἀνθρώπου στόματι λαληθῆναι οὐ δύναται. On vowels and baboonic, cf. Theodor Hopfner, *Griechisch-ägyptischen Offenbarungszauber* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Haessel, 1921), 1:200–2 (§§ 778–80); Frankfurter, "Magic of Writing," 204–5.

137 Lact., *Inst.* 4.7.2: οὗ τὸ ὄνομα οὐ δύναται ἀνθρωπίνῳ στόματι λαληθῆναι. Cf. Lact., *Inst.* 4.9.3, where the name is also said to be unspeakable and holy. Cf. Michela Zago, "Le pneuma éloquent: Un parallèle entre le *Papyrus Mimaut* et NHC VI,6," in *Pensée grecque et sagesse d'orient: Hommages à Michel Tardieu* (ed. Mohammad A. Amir-Moezzi et al.; Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 715–34 at 732. Cf. CH V, 10–11; *Ascl.* 20.

138 PGM XIII.153–156: ἔστιν δὲ ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς βάρεως φανεὶς συναναπέλλων κυνοκεφαλοκέρδων. ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ ἀσπάζεταί σε λέγων·σὺ εἶ ὁ ἀριθμὸς τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ· Ἀβρασ(ά)ξ. Trans. Morton Smith, in *PGMT*.

139 Plato, *Phileb.* 18b–c: Ἐπειδὴ φωνὴν ἄπειρον κατενόησεν εἴτε τις θεὸς εἴτε καὶ θεῖος ἄνθρωπος—ὡς λόγος ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Θεῦθ τινα τοῦτον γενέσθαι λέγων, ὃς πρῶτος τὰ φωνήεντα ἐν τῷ ἀπείρῳ κατενόησεν οὐχ ἓν ὄντα ἀλλὰ πλείω, καὶ πάλιν ἕτερα φωνῆς μὲν οὔ, φθόγγου δὲ μετέχοντά τινος. Trans. Reginald Hackforth, *Plato's Examination of Pleasure: A Translation of the Philebus, with Introduction and Commentary* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1945). Cf. Cox Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," 496. Cf. also Iren., *Haer.* 1.8.6, where Marcus Magus allegedly ascribed vowels to the syzygies Man and Church, mutes to Father and Truth, and semivowels to Word and Life.

140 Herman Te Velde, "Some Remarks on the Mysterious Language of Baboons," in *Funerary Symbols and Religion* (ed. Jacques H. Kamstra, Helmut Milde, and Kees Wagtendonk; Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1988), 129–37. The connection also to letters is clear from PGM XIII.315–316, where a hieratic papyrus should be written with myrrh ink and baboon's blood, the latter of which is actually a secret code for blood of a spotted gecko according to PGM XII.415.

knew the form of speech of the baboons and the ibises."[141] Scholars of acoustics have demonstrated that the grunts of baboons sound considerably like human vowels,[142] and the vowels are explicitly identified as "baboonic" in a spell for direct vision of god in the Great Magical Papyrus of Paris, also part of the Thebes-cache: "Enter, appear to me, lord because I call upon you as the three baboons call upon you, who speak your holy name in a symbolic fashion, A EE ÊÊÊ IIII OOOOO YYYYYY ÔÔÔÔÔÔÔ (speak as a baboon)."[143] The Egyptian script did not have vowels, and one of the chief attractions of the Greek language for magicians was its utility for ensuring the correct pronunciations of magical names, as is witnessed by Old Coptic glosses in Demotic manuscripts.[144] The old Egyptian idea of a divine language of baboons could therefore furnish an apt mythological rationale for the appropriation of the Greek vowels.[145]

The divine nature attributed to the grunts of baboons probably has to do with the fact that baboons often scream during sunrise, and therefore were considered to be heralds of the sun. As such, they are often depicted in Egyptian art in groups of eight, in poses of worship to the rising sun. One of the ideas regarding the afterlife was that the blessed deceased should join the baboons in perpetual worship of the sun.[146] The baboon was also an ideal for priests, and a common statuary motif is a scribal priest sitting crouched over a scroll, under the auspices of Thoth as a baboon. Indeed, Horapollo wrote in his late handbook of hieroglyphs that the baboon signifies priests and letters.[147] A work attributed to Demetrius of Phaleron called *On Style*, probably from late

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141 Jasnow and Zauzich, *The Book of Thoth*, 453 (B02 10/7–8). Cf. ibid., 44: "A baboon gave to me a spear of sixty cubits. He says to me: It is their *wt3.t ht*." The latter term is apparently a boat-part.

142 Michael J. Owren, Robert M. Seyfarth, and Dorothy L. Cheney, "The acoustic features of vowel-like grunt calls in chacma baboons (Papio cyncephalus ursinus): Implications for production processes and functions," *JASA* 101 (1997): 2951–63. Cf. William C. McDermott, *The Ape in Antiquity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins press, 1938), 48.

143 PGM IV.1002–1006: εἴσελθε, φάνηθί μοι, κύριε, ὅτι ἐπικαλοῦμαι, ὡς ἐπικαλοῦνταί σε οἱ τρεῖς κυνοκέφαλοι, οἵτινες συμβολικῷ σχήματι ὀνομάζουσίν σου τὸ ἅγιον ὄνομα α εε ηηη ιιιι οοοοο υυυυυυ ωωωωωωω (λέγε ὡς κυνοκέφαλος). Trans. William C. Grese, in *PGMT*. Cf. also PGM V.27: "(say the) e(psilon) as a baboon" (τὸ ε' κυνοκεφαλιστί).

144 Jacco Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100–300 CE)* (RGRW 153; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 27 n. 8, 64–69.

145 Cf. Dieleman, *Priests*, 289, who considers vowels to be international imports into Egyptian magic. Quack, "La magie au temple," 58, refers to an unpublished Demotic spell to obtain a revelation which contains nomina barbara.

146 Podemann Sørensen, "The Secret Hymn," 478–79.

147 Horap., *Hier.* 1.14, who also relate the tale that there is a breed of baboons who write in temples. Cf. Ael., *Nat. an.* 6.10.

Hellenistic or early Imperial times, attributes the singing of vowels to Egyptian priests: "In Egypt the priests, when singing hymns in praise of the gods, employ the seven vowels, which they utter in due succession; and the sound of these letters is so euphonious that men listen to it in preference to flute and lyre."[148] There is thus a conceptual connection between vowels, baboons, and Egyptian mythology in the magical papyri that reflects the use and ownership of the Thebes-papyri by Egyptian priests. That this is the implied Sitz im Leben also of *Disc.8–9* is clear from the epilogue, in which Hermes commands Tat to write down the treatise on stelae to be placed in his temple in Diospolis in Upper Egypt. To be sure, this is a literary trope also found in the magical papyri, but it may also reflect the self-image of the author of *Disc.8–9* as a member of the priestly class and bearer of the tradition of Hermes Trismegistus.

Such a self-image is also reflected in the *Definitions of Asclepius to King Ammon* (CH XVI), in the famous disparagement of the Greek language in favor of Egyptian which may have something to do with magical vowels and *nomina barbara*: "The *logos* that is expressed in our ancestral language keeps the *nous* of the *logoi* clear. For even the very quality of the *phônê* and the ⟨…⟩ of the Egyptian names keep in themselves the energy of what is said."[149] The first sentence here has to do with semantics: Egyptian is the perfect language with direct signification, an idea also utilized by Plotinus.[150] The second sentence has to do with the inherent efficacy of the language. Unlike Greek, Egyptian language does not only point towards the signified, but possesses the power of the signified in the very act of utterance. Interesting here is also the fact that Asclepius seems to differentiate between sounds and names, which could correspond respectively to *voces magicae* and *nomina barbara*. That the "quality of the sound" does not refer simply to logos is clear from the subsequent elaboration of Asclepius: "We do not use (only) words, but sounds full of efficacy."[151] The differentiation between *logos* and *phônê* may reflect the conception of a

148 Demetr., *Eloc.* 71: Ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ δὲ καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς ὑμνοῦσι διὰ τῶν ἑπτὰ φωνηέντων οἱ ἱερεῖς, ἐφεξῆς ἠχοῦντες αὐτά, καὶ ἀντὶ αὐλοῦ καὶ ἀντὶ κιθάρας τῶν γραμμάτων τούτων ὁ ἦχος ἀκούεται ὑπ' εὐφωνίας, ὥστε ὁ ἐξαιρῶν τὴν σύγκρουσιν οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ μέλος ἀτεχνῶς ἐξαιρεῖ τοῦ λόγου καὶ μοῦσαν. Text & trans. W. Rhys Roberts, *Demetrius On Style: The Greek Text of Demetrius De elocutione* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), 104–5, 64 on date. The text is quoted by Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 119, who does not see the link with baboons. Cf. Ruelle, "Le chant des sept voyelles grecques," 38.

149 CH XVI, 2: ὁ δὲ λόγος τῇ πατρῴᾳ διαλέκτῳ ἑρμηνευόμενος ἔχει σαφῆ τὸν τῶν λόγων νοῦν. καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸ τὸ τῆς φωνῆς ποιὸν καὶ ἡ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ⟨…⟩ ὀνομάτων ἐν ἑαυτῇ ἔχει τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῶν λεγομένων. My trans.

150 Plot., *Enn.* V.8 [31].6.

151 CH XVI, 2: ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ λόγοις χρώμεθα. ἀλλὰ φωναῖς μεσταῖς τῶν ἔργων.

divine inarticulate speech, and it can further be pointed out that *phônê* has musical connotations, appropriate for a hymn used to lend power to a ritual of ascent.[152]

The series of vowels in the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* and the magical papyri thus seem to be connected with the Egyptian notion of the mysterious language of baboons. The Egyptologist Jørgen Podemann Sørensen points out that: "The heavenly baboons and sometimes the divinities (*bꜣ.w*) of Pe and Nekhen serve as angelic choirs worshipping the Sun-god. They carry on the worship of the hymn to its addressee, the Sun-god."[153] In *Disc.8–9*, Hermes and his son take part in this cosmic hymn of vowels in the course of their ascent, but their final goal is to break on through to the other side of the heavenly vault and take part in the silent hymnody of the Ogdoad and the Ennead. The vowels are a sort of intermediary between discursive language and the silence that reigns in the Ogdoad and the Ennead. This is a reversal of the creation in the *Poimandres*, where the initial silence of the eternal light is broken by a cry emitted from dark nature, as she breaks free and descends, and this cry is answered by a word emitted from the light that descends and shapes matter so that it becomes a cosmos (CH I, 4–5). Whereas creation is a process from the unity of silence to the plurality of words, the ascent reverses this process, and the visionary leaves behind words and reaches the silent hymnody by means of vowels.[154]

The vowels and magical names clearly point in the direction of ritual performance, namely the singing of hymns, and they were meant to convey the visionary through the seven planetary spheres and the decans separating the material world from the Ogdoad. Furthermore, the parallels with the *Leiden Kosmopoiia* make it likely that the notion of a baboonic heavenly choir may also underlie the vowels in our text, especially in view of the fact that Thoth, the Egyptian counterpart of Hermes Trismegistus, was commonly portrayed

152 Cf. Michèle Broze, "La réinterprétation du modèle hiéroglyphique chez les philosophes de langue grecque," in *Philosophers and Hieroglyphs* (ed. Lucia Morra and Carla Bazzanella; Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2003), 35–49; on muscial *phônê*, cf. Ioanna Papadopoulou-Belmehdi and Zozi D. Papadopoulou, "Culte et musique: Le cas des Déliades," in *Religions Méditerranéennes et orientales de l'antiquité. Actes du colloque des 23–24 avril 1999 à Besançon* (ed. Françoise Labrique; BdE 135; Paris: IFAO, 2009), 155–176 at 174.

153 Podemann Sørensen, "Secret Hymn," 478.

154 The insufficiency of words is seen in how the vision of the Ogdoad and Ennead cannot be wholly expressed: "How can I express this to you?" (57,33: ⲁϣ ⲧⲉ ⲑⲉ ⲉϯⲛⲁϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲕ); "How can I express the all?" (58,3–4: ⲁϣ ⲧⲉ ⲫ[ⲉ ⲉϯⲛⲁϣⲁϫⲉ ⲉ]ⲡⲧⲏⲣⲟ̄); "What shall I say?" (59,25: ⲟⲩ ⲡⲉϯⲛⲁϫⲟⲟⲩ). Cf. Halvgaard, *Linguistic Manifestations*.

as a baboon, in contemporary magical papyri as well as Egyptian temple and tomb decorations.

6.3.1.2 Petitions and Arguments

Having gotten the attention of the deity, the orants now ask that they be given wisdom (σοφία) so as to be able to "sing for ourselves the vision of the Ogdoad and the Ennead."[155] All previous commentators have misunderstood this sentence, I think, when they translate ϫω ⲛⲁⲛ as meaning "say" or "announce."[156] We are in the midst of a hymn, and therefore it makes better sense that the vision should be "sung."[157]

The subsequent argument is interesting, for it provides a justification for why Hermes and Tat should be granted this wisdom: "We have already reached the Hebdomad, since we are reverent and govern ourselves according to your law, and we always fulfill your will, for we have walked in [your way, and we have] renounced [our bodies], so that your [vision] may come."[158] A possible interpretation is that the Hebdomad has been traversed by means of chanting the vowels and *nomina barbara*, which has brought the visionaries to the cusp of the Ogdoad. Chanting is not sufficient in itself however, it is also necessary to be reverent and adhere to the law and will of God.[159] If the conjecture "[our bodies]" is correct,[160] then this could be a reference to the prior rebirth, in which Tat replaced his physical body with a spiritual one, a prerequisite to obtain the power to see God (*theoptikê dynamis*).

Having thus established their credentials, the orants now ask to see the image of truth, and that in return God should receive the imprint (τύπος) of the fullness (πλήρωμα) by means of the hymn of praise (ϲⲙⲟⲩ), and recognize their spirit. As mentioned above, the *typos* may refer to the vowels and *nomina*. Mahé sees in the pleroma a reference to the Gnostic supernal realms, but the

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155 NHC VI 56,25–26: ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲛϫⲱ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉⲱⲣⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲑⲟⲅⲇⲟⲁⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡ̄ ⲑⲉⲛⲛⲁⲥ.

156 Mahé, HHE 1:107, sees ⲛⲁⲛ in "un sens restrictif," i.e. that the vision should not be communicated to anyone else.

157 Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, 755b–756a.

158 NHC VI 56,27–57,3: ⲏⲇⲏ ⲁⲛⲣ̄ⲫⲣ̄ⲡ ⲙ̄ⲡⲱϩ ⲉⲑⲉⲃⲇⲟⲙⲁⲥ ⲉⲛⲟⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲉⲩⲥⲉⲃⲛⲥ ⲉⲛⲣ̄ⲡⲟⲗⲓⲧⲉⲩⲉⲥⲑⲁⲓ ⲫ̄ⲙ̄ ⲡⲉⲕⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲉⲕⲟⲩⲱϣ ⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲱⲕ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓϣ ⲛⲓⲙ· ⲁⲛⲏⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲫ̄ⲙ̄ [ⲧⲉⲕⲫⲓⲏ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲛ]ⲕⲱ ⲛ̄ⲥⲱⲛ [ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲛⲥⲱⲙⲁ] ⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲉⲥϣⲱⲡⲉ [ⲛ̄ⲟⲩ] ⲧⲉⲕ[ⲑⲉⲱ]ⲣⲓⲁ.

159 CH X, 19: ἀγὼν δὲ εὐσεβείας, τὸ γνῶναι τὸ θεῖον καὶ μηδένα ἀνθρώπων ἀδικῆσαι … (regarding human souls not reborn as animals:) θεοῦ γὰρ νόμος οὗτος, φυλάσσειν ψυχὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἀπὸ τῆς τοσαύτης ὕβρεως. Mahé ("L'Ogdoade et l'Ennéade," 962) sees in the mention of Hebdomad a reflection of the Jewish Law to rest on the Sabbath, the seventh day. There is nothing in the text which makes this interpretation likely.

160 Mahé, HHE 1:74, restores [ⲛ̄ⲧⲕⲁⲕⲓⲁ].

word is never used in this way in the Hermetica.[161] This is one more example of how a reading of the Hermetica as "Gnostic" can lead to misreadings. In each and every instance that the word pleroma is used in Hermetic treatises, it is used to describe the plenitude of the cosmos, not the hypercosmic realms.[162] The plenitude must therefore be taken to refer to the cosmos, the One and All.[163] The expression "receive the *typos* of the *pleroma*" would thus be parallel to the phrase in the hymn of CH XIII, 18: "Receive through me the all by means of logos."[164] However, if we grant that both Hermes and Tat have already undergone the rebirth, then they are also in a way themselves representations of the cosmos, since they have "become Aion."

This is perhaps the meaning of the prayer to God to "recognize the spirit that is in us." Spirit is in Hermetism the instrument of God's creation (Cf. *Disc.8–9* 60,1, 63,20). Like the Stoic spirit, it pervades everything and gives it life, but the Hermetic pneuma is in addition an intermediary faculty between the noetic and corporeal: "Pay attention, my son, for you are listening to unspeakable mysteries of heaven and earth, and all the intermediary sacred spirit."[165] In *Disc.8–9*, Hermes receives from above the "spirit to speak" (53,31) and the image of truth through spirit (57,5), and in turn has an indwelling spirit that he presents to God. Since God is asked to recognize the spirit, it seems likely that this spirit is in some way related to the impression of the fullness offered up to God.

Michela Zago has rightly pointed out the close connection between the "spirit to speak" in our text (53,31: ⲡⲡⲛⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁ.ϫⲉ) and the "eloquent spirit" of Papyrus Mimaut (PGM III.588: πνεῦμα λεκτικόν).[166] The eloquent spirit appears in a spell designed to obtain a vision of Helios, which directly precedes the

161 HHE 1:109, referring to CH I, 26, but there is no mention of pleroma in this passage. Also van den Broek, "Religious Practices," 83; Mahé, "A Reading."

162 CH IX, 7; XII, 15–16; XVI, 3; *Ascl.* 29, 32–33.

163 Camplani also gives the alternate suggestion that the pleroma may respond to the group of orants, including the children of Hermes, "come avviene nello gnosticismo, in cui la chiesa è immagine della sfera pleromatica." This is not only "Gnostic" however, cf. Paul, *Eph.* 1.23: ἥτις (sc. the Church) ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου. Cf. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 25 n. 1.

164 CH XIII, 18: δι' ἐμοῦ δέξαι τὸ πᾶν λόγῳ.

165 SH XXV, 11: πρόσεχε, παῖ, ἀρρήτων γὰρ ἐπακούεις μυστηρίων γῆς τε καὶ οὐρανοῦ καὶ παντὸς τοῦ μέσου ἱεροῦ πνεύματος.

166 Zago, "Le pneuma éloquent," 715–33.

Hermetic *Prayer of Thanksgiving*.[167] In this spell, the god of gods and lord of the world is *in* the holy circuit of his holy spirit, and also divides the universe by means of his spirit.[168] This god is petitioned to "inspire us,"[169] that is, to blow his spirit into the orants, who thereafter offer this same "eloquent spirit" back to him as an entreaty and "preliminary spell."[170] Just as the orants in *Disc.8–9* ask for wisdom, which comes as a light-power, in the prayer to Helios they ask to be illuminated by knowledge.

A complex series of reciprocities and identifications are thus set in motion in the hymn, all with the goal of breaking down the barrier separating the orants from the Ogdoad and Ennead, and indeed the barrier separating the subjects singing the hymn from the recipient of the hymn. The orants present themselves as images of the All, the impression of the fullness, which again is an image of God, and the spirit acts as a kind of outpouring connecting the orants below with God above.

The remainder of the hymn once again praises the unbegotten god, from whom both the self-begotten and begotten take their existence—this can be interpreted as a new argument or a *pars epica*—and then goes on to offer a speech-offering to God, who is asked to grant the immortal wisdom. These concepts, though central, have been covered extensively by others, and need not detain us presently.[171]

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167 Camplani, *Scritti ermetici in copto*, 72 n. 12, first noticed the parallel, but did not draw any far-reaching conclusions from it.

168 PGM III.548–551: δεῦρό μοι ἐν τῇ ἁγίᾳ σου περιστροφῇ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, παντὸς κτίστα, θεῶν θεέ, κοίρανε παντός, διαστήσας τὸν κόσμον τῷ σεαυτοῦ πνεύματι θε[ί]ῳ. Cf. Phil. Byb., *Phoen.* 4.815 (Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History*, 246): "the Egyptians … when drawing the world engrave as the circumference an airy and fiery circle and stretched out in the middle a snake in the form of a falcon. The whole figure looks like our [Greek] Theta. Declaring the circle to be the cosmos, [they say] the snake in the middle is Agathos Daimon the connective [bond] of this [cosmos]."

169 PGM III.570–571: ἐνπνε[υ]μάτισον ἡμᾶς. Grese in *PGMT*, 33 n. 113, points out the parallel to CH XIII, 19 (πνευμα⟨τίζε⟩ θέε), *if* one accepts the emendation of Keil; cf. NF 2:208; Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, 182–83.

170 PGM III.586–588: δέομαι, κύριε, πρόσδεξαί μου τήνδ[ε] ἀξίωσιν, ⟨τὴν⟩ λιτανείαν, τὴν προσύσ[τ]-ασιν, τὴν ἀναφορὰν τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ λεκτικοῦ.

171 On the unbegotten, self-begotten and begotten: Mahé, "Générations antédiluviennes"; id., "Mental Faculties"; id., "Paliggenesia"; cf. above, chap. 3.6. On the speech-sacrifice: Podemann Sørensen, "The All as logikê thusia"; Eleanora Tagliaferro, "Ἀναίμακτος θυσία—λογικὴ θυσία: a proposito della critica al sacrificio cruento," in *Sangue e antropologia nella liturgia III* (ed. Francesco Vattioni; Rome: Pia Unione Preziosissimo Sangue, 1984), 1573–95.

6.3.2 *Advent of the Light-Power and Tat's First Vision* (*57,26–58,22*)

The next lines are crucial for Mahé's theory that *Disc.8–9* simply gives another version of the rite of rebirth.[172] Hermes and Tat embrace each other before the power of light descends to them. Mahé claims that the embrace is a sacramental kiss, just as the Valentinian kiss of peace, and that it triggers the coming of the power (57,26–30):

ⲙⲁⲛ̄ⲣ̄ⲁⲥⲡⲁⲍⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲣⲏⲟⲩ ⲱ ⲡⲁϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲉⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲙⲉ· ⲣⲁϣⲉ ⲉⲭ̄ⲙ ⲡⲁⲓ̈· ⲏⲇⲏ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲧⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ ⲉⲧⲟ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲏⲩ ϣⲁⲣⲟⲛ· ⲣ	Let us embrace each other with love, my son. Rejoice over this! For already from them the power that is light is coming to us.

There is no reason to deny that there might be a ritual embrace involved in the visionary ascent. The question is if the Hermetist here regards this embrace as constituting a rebirth, or that it causes the power that is light to appear.

Mahé's thesis rests on three foundations: 1) The translation of ⲙⲁⲛ̄ⲣ̄ⲁⲥⲡⲁⲍⲉ … ⲉⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲙⲉ as "let us embrace each other with a kiss,"[173] 2) the connection of this kiss to the sacramental Valentinan kiss that Schenke identified as the rite of the Bridal Chamber,[174] and 3) that the kiss provokes the coming of the power.

1) The translation of Mahé, that we are dealing with a kiss and not merely a greeting or embrace, is not inherently unlikely, but suffers from the fact that the Valentinian parallels he adduces combine ⲁⲥⲡⲁⲍⲉⲓ with ⲡ(ⲉ)ⲓ, "kiss," instead of ⲙⲉ, "love" (or "truth"), as do all New Testament parallels.[175] The only instance Walter Crum records, in which ⲙⲉ denotes a kiss, is a Bohairic source, which on closer inspection also turns out to use ⲡⲓ.[176] It is therefore more likely that the Greek antecedent would have been ἐν φιλίᾳ or ἐν ἔρωτι, or perhaps φιλικῶς.[177] The difficulty is further compounded by the fact that ⲙⲉ can also

172 Mahé, "Accolade ou baiser?" 557ff., modifying his views in HHE 1:56–57 & 75–166.

173 Mahé, "Accolade ou baiser?" 559: ἀσπασώμεθα, ὦ τέκνον, ἐν φιλήματι.

174 Mahé, "Accolade ou baiser?" 559–60, 564, referring to *Gos. Phil.* (NHC II 59,2–6) and *Tri. Trac.* (NHC I 58,17–29).

175 Louis T. Lefort, *Concordance du Nouveau Testament Sahidique* (3 vols.; Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1950–1959), 1:46.

176 Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, 156; Henri de Vis, *Homélies coptes de la Vaticane* (2 vols.; Louvain: Peeters, 1990), 1:117: ⲛ̄ⲥⲉϯ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲫⲓ ⲉ̄ⲣⲱⲟⲩ ⲉⲉⲛⲟⲩⲙⲉⲓ (*Panegyric of St. Innocents*).

177 Cf. Plut., *Eum.* 10.5: περιβαλόντες ἀλλήλους ἠσπάσαντο φιλικῶς καὶ οἰκείως.

mean "truth," and that one could therefore equally well translate "let us embrace each other in truth/truthfully" (ἀσπασώμεθα ἐν ἀληθείᾳ / ἀληθῶς).

2) Mahé's conception of a kiss of rebirth relies on the Valentinian kiss discussed in the *Gospel of Philip*: "For it is by a kiss that the perfect conceive and give birth. For this reason we also kiss one another. We receive conception from the grace which is in one another."[178] The Valentinians kiss each other in imitation of the perfect beings, as we learn from the *Tripartite Tractate*, where Father and Son embrace each other continuously, and each kiss begets new eons, who in turn beget innumerable other eons through kissing.[179] However, the author of *G. Phil.* clearly differentiates between "us" and the perfect. The perfect conceive and give birth through kisses, while "we receive conception from the grace which is in one another." Only the father can beget children, the son can only get brothers. The rebirth happens in baptism, also called the bridal chamber, in which the female soul of the candidate receives her male counterpart, an angel, and becomes a perfect human. The kiss of *G. Phil.* is therefore not regenerative: it is an exchange of grace between the initiates, in imitation of the spiritual procreation of the eons. The kiss was likely performed in relation with the eucharist, as a greeting between the elect, and was probably not distinct from the ritual kiss performed in most Early Christian Churches, only with a different interpretation.[180] We find no comparable Hermetic conception of kisses performed by divine beings, which the worshipper could emulate.

3) From where does the power which is light come, and what triggers it? The Coptic says only ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ, which most commentators translate as "from them," which begs the question: from whom? Importantly, it is not from Hermes. If the kiss was procreative, then we should expect the power to be transmitted from Hermes to Tat. Mahé notes two possible candidates: either the power comes from the unbegotten, self-begotten and begotten gods, mentioned earlier, or one should emend to ⲙ̄⟨ⲙ⟩ⲙⲟⲟⲩ, and get "from the waters," referring to the spiritual rain discussed earlier.[181] We should note a third possibility. Since there is no immediate referent for "them," it is possible that we

178 NHC II 59,2–6: ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲓⲟⲥ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲓⲧⲙ̄ ⲟⲩⲡⲉⲓ ⲉⲩⲱ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲩⲭⲡⲟ ⲇⲓⲁ ⲧⲟⲩⲧⲟ ⲁⲛⲟⲛ ⲉⲱⲟⲛ ⲧⲙ̄ⲡⲧⲡ ⲉⲣⲙ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲣⲏⲩ ⲉⲛⲭⲓ ⲛ̄ⲡⲱ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲛ̄ ⲧⲭⲁⲣⲓⲥ ⲉⲧⲉⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲣⲏⲩ. Trans. & ed. Bentley Layton (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7, together with XIII,2*, Brit. Lib. Or.4926(1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655* (2 vols.; NHS 20–21; Leiden: Brill, 1989).

179 NHC I, 58,22–26: ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩⲱⲟⲡⲉ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲩ· ⲡⲱⲏⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲛ ⲡⲱⲧ· ⲛ̄ⲡⲣⲏⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲉⲛ̄ⲡⲓ … ⲉⲩϯ ⲡⲓ ⲉⲣⲙ̄ ⲛⲉⲩⲉⲣⲏⲩ.

180 Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 348, 394.

181 HHE 1:111. Camplani, *Scritti ermetici*, 174 n. 33, would in that case prefer ⟨ⲉⲛ̄⟩ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ.

should simply read it impersonally, as translating the Greek ἐκ τούτων: "because of these things," referring to the preceding prayers.

In short, there are too many uncertainties to make this single reference to a "greeting," "embrace," or "kiss" constitute a rite of regeneration. In *On the Rebirth*, there was a clear conception of silent contemplation as representing the womb of rebirth, which permitted us to designate the passage where Tat fell silent as the actual commencement of the rebirth. There is no similar conception of a sacramental kiss. The embrace—whether it is a kiss or not—likely has two functions. On the one hand, it is an apt ritual gesture to conclude the hymn,[182] but on the other hand Mahé is no doubt correct in stating that the embrace must have some relation to the coming of the power of light. In order to understand this relationship, we must consider the subsequent vision, where there is a mind that moves the soul. We will thus postpone our conclusion on the ritual embrace until we have considered its effects.

6.3.2.1 The First Vision

Hermes declares that the power which is light has arrived, which as Mahé pointed out is parallel to the rebirth, when Hermes declares that the first two powers have arrived after the pregnant silence (CH XIII, 8). After this statement, there is a series of exclamations describing the contents of a vision, where it is not always easy to detect whether it is Hermes or Tat who is speaking. Let us consider the first vision and its description (57,31–58,22):

	Tat:	
1.	ϯⲛⲁⲩ ⲅⲁⲣ ϯⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲉⲛⲃⲁⲑⲟⲥ ⲉⲙⲁⲩⲱ̅ⲁ̅ⲭⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ·	I see, yes, I see ineffable depths.
	Hermes:	
2.	ⲁⲱ ⲧⲉ ⲑⲉ ⲉϯⲛⲁⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲱ ⲡⲁⲱⲣⲉ·	How can I explain it to you, my son?
3.	ⲉⲓ̣[……..]ⲑⲁⲓ ⲭⲓⲛ ⲧⲟ[……..] ⲙ̄ⲙⲁ·[183]	[…] from […] place.
4.	ⲁⲱ ⲧⲉ ⲫ̣[ⲉ ……..]ⲡⲧⲏⲣⲩ̄·[184]	How […] everything?
5.	ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲓ̣ⲉ̣ [ⲡⲛⲟ]ⲩ̈[ⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ] ϯ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲕⲉⲛⲟⲩⲥ ⲡⲉⲧⲕ[ⲓⲙ] ⲉⲧϥⲩⲭⲏ·	I am [no]u[s and] I see another nous, the one that moves the soul.

182 Cf. Just., *1 Apol.* 65.2: ἀλλήλους φιλήματι ἀσπαζόμεθα παυσάμενοι τῶν εὐχῶν.

183 HHE 1:76: ⲉⲓ̣[ⲁⲛⲣ̄ⲁⲣⲭⲉⲥ]ⲑⲁⲓ ⲭⲓⲛ ⲧⲟ[ⲧⲉ ⲉⲛⲁⲩ +ca.7] ⲙ̄ⲙⲁ. Mahé in the critical apparatus suggests ⲉⲡⲱⲙⲟⲩⲛ or ⲉⲡⲥⲁⲱϥ before ⲙ̄ⲙⲁ. Camplani, *Scritti ermetici*, 174: ⲉ[ⲉⲓⲛⲁⲣⲁⲓⲛⲉⲓⲥ] ⲑⲁⲓ ⲭⲓⲛ ⲧⲟ[ⲛ ⲉⲡⲙⲁⲣⲱⲙⲟⲩⲛ] ⲙ̄ⲙⲁ.

184 HHE 1:76: [ⲉϯⲛⲁⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲉ]ⲡⲧⲏⲣⲩ̄.

Tat:

6.	ⲧⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲡⲉ[ⲧ]ⲕ̣ⲓⲙ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ̈ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉ̅ⲛ ⲟⲩⲃ̅ⲱⲉ ⲉⲥⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ’	I see the one that moves me from a holy sleep.
7.	ⲕⲧ ⲛⲏⲉⲓ ⲟⲁⲙ·	You give me power.
8.	ⲧⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲉⲓ	I see myself.
9.	ⲧⲟⲩⲱⲱ ⲉⲱⲁϫⲉ·	I want to speak.
10.	ⲟⲩⲛ̅ ⲟⲩⲫⲟⲃⲟⲥ ⲣ̅ⲕⲁⲧⲉϫⲉ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲉⲓ·	Fear restrains me.
11.	ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲁⲉⲓⲟⲩ̅ ⲧⲁⲣϫⲏ ⲛ̅ⲧⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ ⲉⲧⲉ̅ⲓϫⲛ̅ ⲛ̅ⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲧⲉⲧⲉ ⲙ̅ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲥⲁⲣϫⲏ·	I have found the beginning of the power above all the powers, the one that has no beginning.
12.	ⲧⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲩⲡⲏⲅⲏ ⲉⲥⲃ̅ⲣ̅ⲃ̅ⲣ̅ ⲛ̅ⲉⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲉ̅ⲛ ⲟⲩⲱⲛ̅ⲉ̅·	I see a source bubbling with life.

Hermes:

13.	ⲁⲉⲓϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲱ̅ ⲡⲁⲱⲏⲣⲉ ϫⲉ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲥ	I have said, my son, that I am nous.

Tat:

14.	ⲁⲉⲓⲛⲁⲩ	I have seen.

Hermes:

15.	ⲭⲟⲙ̅ⲟⲁⲙ ⲁⲛ ⲛ̅ⲟⲓ ⲡⲱⲁϫⲉ ⲉⲩⲱⲛ̅ⲉ̅ ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ·	It is impossible for the word to reveal this.
16.	ⲑⲟⲅⲇⲟⲁⲥ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲧⲏⲣⲥ̅ ⲱ ⲡⲁⲱⲏⲣⲉ ⲙ̅ⲙ ⲛ̅ⲩⲩⲭⲏ ⲉⲧⲛ̅ⲉⲏⲧ̅ⲥ̅ ⲙ̅ⲙ ⲛ̅ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲥⲉⲣ̅ⲉⲩⲙⲛⲉⲓ ⲉ̅ⲛ ⲟⲩⲕⲁⲣⲱⲩ·	For the entire Ogodad, my son, and the souls that are in it, and the angels sing hymns in silence.
17.	ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲇⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲥ ⲧ̅ⲣ̅ⲛⲟⲉⲓ·	And as for me, the nous, I understand.

Krause and Labib simply assigned the entire section to Hermes, and were followed in this by Brashler, Dirkse, and Parrott, who declared that it was necessary first for the mystagogue to “achieve a sense of unity with universal mind.”[185] Mahé, on the other hand, first assigned most of the sentences to Tat (nos. 1, 6–12, and 14–15), but later changed his mind and assigned the whole passage except for no. 1 to Hermes.[186] I would largely agree with the earlier Mahé, as will be seen in my allocations of the sentences above,[187] though I think sentence 15 makes better sense spoken by Hermes. The only sentences we can clearly assign to Hermes are the ones where he addresses Tat directly, that is, 2,

185 Krause and Labib, *Gnostische und hermetische Schriften*, 177; Brashler, Dirkse, and Parrott, “Discourse,” 343. They were also followed by Meyer, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 416, and Camplani, *Scritti ermetici*, 145–46.

186 NHE 1:75–77; Mahé, “L’Ogdoade et l’Ennéade,” 963–64.

187 As does van den Kerchove, *La voie d’Hermès*, 328 n. 9, and cf. 363–67.

13, and 16. However, sentence 2 implies a longer explanation, which follows in 3–4, and sentence 13 implies that also 5 and 17 are spoken by Hermes. It is sentences 5–6 that in my view clearly indicate a change of speaker: Hermes says that he himself is nous, who sees another nous moving the soul. The next line states that the nous moves *me*, which only makes sense if spoken by Tat, who affirms that he also sees the nous that moves his soul. This concept of "moving the soul" might illuminate the embrace, as we shall see.

6.3.2.2 The Power that Moves Souls

In a Stobaeic excerpt of Hermes, we are told: "the movement which moves ⟨the soul⟩ is affiliated to the love (ἔρωτι) of the noetic essence."[188] The treatise differentiates between corporeal and essential movement, where the former is coercive and the latter autonomous. It is likely that the love mentioned is a reference to the cosmic sympathy, for at the beginning of the fragment we read that the soul is drawn to the *dianoia* of the armature of the spheres: "Moreover, soul is an eternal noetic essence that has its own logos as thought, which by reflecting draws to it the *dianoia* of the harmony (of the spheres), and when it has been delivered from the physical body it remains by itself, belonging to itself in the noetic cosmos."[189] *Dianoia* usually means thought, but it is not immediately clear here what the "thought of the harmony" means. In the same treatise, it is said that the spirit is for the body as the logos is for the soul, acting as the organs of sense, and that only when the spirit is aligned with the *dianoia* can it attain true judgement.[190] This spirit is in fact a lower, material soul, which must be made to harmonize with the cosmos.[191] Thus we have here the notion of a movement of the soul in relation to a cosmic love.

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188 SH XIX, 4: ἡ δὲ ⟨ψυχὴν⟩ κινοῦσα κίνησις τῷ τῆς νοητικῆς οὐσίας ἔρωτι ᾠκείωται. Nock emends νοητ{ικ}ῆς for some reason. Festugière translates this difficult passage thus: "le mouvement qui meut ⟨l'âme⟩ est inséparablement lié à l'amour qui la porte vers la substance intelligible." For οἰκειόω Festugière refers to Plato, *Parm.* 128a4: Ζήνων ὅδε οὐ μόνον τῇ ἄλλῃ σου φιλίᾳ βούλεται ᾠκειῶσθαι. Cf. NF 3:84–85 n. 9. I have translated οἰκειόω in the Stoic sense. The verb with dative can also be astrological, to be in a house, and in fact Eros is the third astrological Lot or Place, though it is hard to see what can be made of this.

189 SH XIX, 1: ψυχὴ τοίνυν ἐστὶν ἀίδιος νοητικὴ οὐσία νόημα ἔχουσα τὸν ἑαυτῆς λόγον, *συννοῦσα* δὲ διάνοιαν τῆς ἁρμονίας ἐπισπᾶται, ἀπαλλαγεῖσα δὲ τοῦ φυσικοῦ σώματος αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτὴν μένει, αὐτὴ ἑαυτῆς οὖσα ἐν τῷ νοητῷ κόσμῳ. I follow the reading of ms. F: συννοῦσα, to be emended συννοοῦσα, rather than that of P: συνοῦσα, which Nock and Festugière prefer, necessitating the emendation ⟨σώματι⟩. Cf. NF 3:82.

190 SH XIX, 5: τοῦτο τὸ πνεῦμα ἀνάλογον γενόμενον διανοίας κρίνει, τὸ αἰσθητικόν, εἰ δὲ μή, φαντάζεται μόνον.

191 NF 3:cxiii. Cf. SH XV, 3–5.

Something similar recurs in *Nous to Hermes* (CH XI), which presents the eternal order of the seven planetary spheres as completing the Aion, since they constitute a plenitude of light: "for the love (φιλία) and mixture of things contrary and unlike became light."[192] As in *Disc.8–9*, love triggers light. In this treatise, Hermes is also told that his soul can fly anywhere it wants, up through the ether and to the circumference of the all, the end of the cosmic body, and it is even possible for it to break through to the other side.[193] Near the end of the treatise we find a sentence that can now be improved, thanks to a parallel in the Oxford Hermetica, which seems to connect the visionary experience with the moving soul: "For nous can be seen while it understands, soul while it moves, and God while he makes and creates."[194] Nous, it seems, imitates the creative activity of God by understanding (νοεῖν), and the soul by moving. Looking back on the first vision of *Disc.8–9*, we find Hermes and Tat performing both activities (nº 5–6 & 17).

This is likely what underlies the ritual embrace. In the hymn, the orants already presented the impression of the fullness, and they stated that they had traversed the hebdomad. By their embrace they emulate the love that binds the cosmos together, and this love gives rise to light as we saw in CH XI, 7. It is therefore preferable to translate the embrace ϩⲛ ⲟⲩⲙⲉ as being made "lovingly," ἐν φιλίᾳ or ἐν ἔρωτι, to reflect the cosmic sympathy.

6.3.2.3 The Holy Sleep

The physical ritual gesture of an embrace might also allude to the moving of Tat's soul. Tat was deep in a "holy sleep," which we must consider a contemplative state akin to meditation, and was roused from this state by the embrace of Hermes.[195] We know this contemplative sleep from two other Hermetic sources, both related to ecstatic vision. In the *Poimandres*, Hermes tells us that

192 CH XI, 7: ἴδε καὶ τοὺς ὑποκειμένους ἑπτὰ κόσμους κεκοσμημένους τάξει αἰωνίῳ καὶ δρόμῳ διαφόρῳ τὸν αἰῶνα ἀναπληροῦντας, φωτὸς δὲ πάντα πλήρη, πῦρ δὲ οὐδαμοῦ· ἡ γὰρ φιλία καὶ ἡ σύγκρασις τῶν ἐναντίων καὶ τῶν ἀνομοίων φῶς γέγονε, καταλαμπόμενον ὑπὸ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνεργείας παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ γεννήτορος καὶ πάσης τάξεως ἄρχοντος καὶ ἡγεμόνος τῶν ἑπτὰ κόσμων. On synkrasis, cf. CH III, 4; NF 3:88–89; Scott 3:458–60.

193 CH XI, 19: ἀλλ' οὐδὲ αὐτῇ οὐδὲν ἐμπόδιον, οὐ τοῦ ἡλίου πῦρ, οὐχ ὁ αἰθήρ, οὐχ ἡ δίνη, οὐχὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἀστέρων σώματα· πάντα δὲ διατεμοῦσα ἀναπτήσεται μέχρι τοῦ ἐσχάτου σώματος. εἰ δὲ βουληθείης καὶ αὐτὸ ὅλον διαρρήξασθαι καὶ τὰ ἐκτός (εἴ γέ τι ἐκτὸς τοῦ κόσμου) θεάσασθαι, ἔξεστί σοι.

194 CH XI, 22: **ὁ γὰρ** νοῦς ὁρᾶται ἐν τῷ νοεῖν, **ἡ ψυχὴ ἐν τῷ κινεῖν,** ὁ **δὲ** θεὸς ἐν τῷ ποιεῖν **καὶ δημιουργεῖν**. The emphasized words are supplied from the parallel version in Clarkianus 11, cf. Paramelle and Mahé, "Extraits hermétiques," 118.

195 Cf. Hanegraaff, "Altered States," 142.

his bodily senses were suppressed, like someone in sleep, while his *ennoia* revolved around true existence, and his *dianoia* soared high. This is actually quite close to SH XIX, 1, quoted above, in which noetic essence is separated from dianoia, and they are both separated from the physical body. It is while Hermes is in this state that the luminous mind Poimandres appears, as "an enormous being completely unbounded in size."[196] After some dialogue, Hermes sees "an unlimited vision, in which everything was light."[197] This is clearly akin to Tat's exclamation that he sees indescribable depths when the power that is light arrives. Poimandres is thus functionally identical to the power which is light, namely the mind that moves the soul of Tat, enabling him to attain the vision. Hermes achieved this on his own in CH I, but here assists his son Tat, a situation which corresponds exactly to what we were told about the *traditio mystica* in the *Korê Kosmou*.[198]

The other instance of a holy sleep is, as mentioned, in *The Key*, where those who attain more of the vision of divine beauty often fall asleep like the ancestors of Hermes and Tat, Ouranus and Cronus. At that point the interlocutors lamented their present lack of power,[199] but as we saw, power was later received in the course of the rebirth, and Tat then became capable of opening "the eyes of the mind" and receive the vision, which is "divine silence and the suppression of the senses."[200] Parts of this description suit both the rebirth and the visionary ascent, such as the silence and inhibition of the corporeal senses, and of course Tat also experienced visions during the rebirth. But this is not surprising, since we are explained that the vision of the good "illuminates to the degree that one who has power is able to receive the influx of noetic brilliance."[201] Tat is able to see progressively more of the vision as he gains power in the rebirth and ascends beyond the cosmos in *Disc.8–9*.

If the luminous power sent down to Hermes and Tat is the answer to their prayer, then this power is identical both to imperishable wisdom and the

196 CH I, 1: ἐννοίας μοί ποτε γενομένης περὶ τῶν ὄντων καὶ μετεωρισθείσης μοι τῆς διανοίας σφόδρα, κατασχεθεισῶν μου τῶν σωματικῶν αἰσθήσεων, καθάπερ οἱ ὕπνῳ βεβαρημένοι ἐκ κόρου τροφῆς ἢ ἐκ κόπου σώματος, ἔδοξά τινα ὑπερμεγέθη μέτρῳ ἀπεριορίστῳ τυγχάνοντα. Trans. Copenhaver.

197 CH I, 4: ὁρῶ θέαν ἀόριστον, φῶς δὲ πάντα γεγενημένα. My trans.

198 SH XXIII, 5–6. See above, chap. 3.1.

199 CH X, 5: νῦν δὲ ἔτι ἀτονοῦμεν πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν.

200 CH X, 5: ἀναπετάσαι ἡμῶν τοὺς τοῦ νοῦ ὀφθαλμούς, καὶ θεάσασθαι τὸ κάλλος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐκείνου τὸ ἄφθαρτον, τὸ ἄληπτον. τότε γὰρ αὐτὸ ὄψει, ὅταν μηδὲν περὶ αὐτοῦ ἔχῃς εἰπεῖν. ἡ γὰρ γνῶσις αὐτοῦ καὶ θεία σιωπή ἐστι καὶ καταργία πασῶν τῶν αἰσθήσεων.

201 CH X, 4: ἐκλάμπει καὶ ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον, ἐφ' ὅσον δύναται ὁ δυνάμενος δέξασθαι τὴν ἐπεισροὴν τῆς νοητῆς λαμπηδόνος. My trans.

image of truth. In *The Mixing Bowl*, the image of God was said to grab a hold of the one who is able to see it sharply, and to draw him up like a magnet draws iron.[202] This is clearly what takes place in the present vision of Tat: the light-power draws him up from the Hebdomad into the Ogdoad. Tat exclaims that he has found "the beginning of the power above all the powers, the one that has no beginning." This should not, I think, be interpreted as the "principle" of the power above all power, but as in CH IV, 9, *archê* is here used to describe the beginning of what can be known. The power has no ontogenetic beginning, since it is probably the unbegotten or self-begotten power, but Tat has grasped the beginning of the vision of the power, which now draws him up.[203]

6.3.2.4 Seeing Oneself

In the rebirth, Tat exclaimed "I see the All and myself in the mind," to which Hermes answered: "This is the rebirth, to no longer be visible to the body, in three dimensions." Mahé claims that the present exclamation of Tat, "I see myself," is therefore also necessarily indicative of a rebirth taking place. But that does not follow. From the response of Hermes we can deduce that it is not to see oneself that constitutes the rebirth, but that Tat now for the first time sees himself composed of the ten divine powers, and thus no longer visible to the body. Visionary experience is conceived of as happening through mind, or the "eyes of the mind," and therefore introspection can be said to be preliminary to other visions. As mind says to Hermes in CH XI: "*Through me* look out on the cosmos."[204] In fact, our passage in *Disc.8–9* is closer to the second visionary experience in the *Poimandres* than to the rebirth, where the narrator relates that he saw in his mind the light consisting of innumerable powers (CH I, 7). In that treatise, as here, there is an ambiguity between the revealing light-mind, which descends to the visionary, and the visionary's own mind, and it seems that the two are in some sense identical or at least sympathetically related.

6.3.3 *Hymn in Silence* (*58,22–59,22*)

Hermes informs Tat that the souls in the Ogdoad sing hymns in silence, but when Tat asks how this is done he is rebuffed: "You have become such that this

202 CH IV, 11: τοῦ θεοῦ εἰκών ἣν ἀκριβῶς εἰ θεάσῃ καὶ νοήσεις τοῖς τῆς καρδίας ὀφθαλμοῖς … τοὺς φθάσαντας θεάσασθαι κατέχει καὶ ἀνέλκει, καθάπερ φασὶν ἡ μαγνῆτις λίθος τὸν σίδηρον.

203 Mahé adduces "the first principle of my principle" in the *Mithras Liturgy* (PGM IV.488) and "the preprinciple of the unlimited principle," of CH I, 8.

204 CH XI, 6: θέασαι δὲ δι' ἐμοῦ τὸν κόσμον ὑποκείμενον τῇ σῇ ὄψει, τό τε κάλλος αὐτοῦ ἀκριβῶς κατανόησον.

cannot be explained to you."[205] This should not be construed as Hermes rebuking Tat for a stupid question, which happens often enough elsewhere in the Hermetica, but rather that Tat has reached a point where discursive reasoning is no longer sufficient to lead his soul any further. Tat is approaching the Ogdoad, and in the final stage he must exercise his own mind to reach it. Tat understands this, and gives an appropriate answer (NHC VI 58,24–30):

ϯⲕⲁⲣⲁⲉⲓⲧ ⲱ ⲡⲁⲉⲓⲱⲧ· ϯⲟⲩⲱⲱ	I am silent, father. I want to sing a
ⲉⲣⲣⲩⲙⲛⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲉⲉⲓⲕⲁⲣⲁⲉⲓⲧ·	hymn to you in silence.
	Hermes:
ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ϫⲟⲟⲩ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲥ·	Then sing it, for I am nous.
	Tat:
ϯⲣ̄ⲛⲟⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲥ ⲫⲉⲣⲙⲏⲥ ⲡⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲉ	I understand the nous, Hermes,
ⲙⲁⲩⲱ ϩ́ⲉⲣⲙⲏⲛⲉⲩⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲁⲣⲉϩ	the one who cannot be interpreted,
ϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧⲟ̄	since he keeps to himself.

Tat finally understands that Hermes is nous, not logos as commonly assumed in Greco-Roman paganism, and that he consequently cannot be interpreted discursively, which is a pun on the name Hermes and *hermeneuein* (ϩⲉⲣⲙⲏⲛⲉⲩⲉ), "to interpret." Hermes, who has so far appeared to be human, is here revealed to be the divine mind itself, and this realization prompts Tat to praise him as provider of life, lord of citizens everywhere, and providential protector, Aion of Aions, and great divine spirit[206] who makes it rain everywhere, as discussed above. Tat asks his father Hermes, who is now seen as the lord of the universe, not to be deprived of the vision of the Ogdoad and Ennead, and is told to resume his silent hymnody. Then, one of only a few rare third person narrations informs us that "when he had finished praising, he exclaimed,"[207] which indicates that a period of silent hymnody is presupposed.

We have already indicated that this type of silence is different from the silence of the rebirth. The latter was a receptive silence, making oneself empty of thoughts and emotions and thus a suitable container for God. The present

205 NHC VI 58,23–24: ⲁⲕⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲩⲛⲁⲱⲱⲁϫⲉ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ.

206 Alberto Camplani, "Note di filologia ermetica," *Augustinianum* 37 (1997): 57–76 at 52–55, ingeniously suggests that rather than ⲡ̄ⲡ̄ⲛ̄ⲁ ⲟ ⲛⲑⲉⲓⲟⲛ (59,7), one should read ὄν(ομα) θεῖον, "divine name," a scribal abbreviation for a string of vowels. This theory would explain the lack of a superlinear stroke over the nu before ⲑⲉⲓⲟⲛ, but a string of vowels would suit poorly here, mid-sentence. The expression recurs in 59,17: ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲉⲧⲁϧⲩⲭⲏ ⲣ̄ⲭⲏⲣⲁ ⲁⲧⲑⲉⲱⲣⲓⲁ ⲟ ⲛⲑⲉⲓⲟⲛ.

207 NHC VI 59,23–24: ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲣⲉϥⲟⲩⲱ ⲉϥⲥⲛⲟⲩ ⲁϥϫⲓ ⲱⲕⲁⲕ.

silence, in contrast, is an active silence, in which the visionary seeks to harmonize with the silent hymnody of the Ogdoad, also reported in the *Poimandres* (CH I, 26). As Pieter W. van der Horst points out, the impulse towards viewing silent prayers as somehow more elevated is connected to the negative theology of later Platonism, since voice is considered material and therefore inappropriate to the immaterial god.[208] The notion of reverence in silence may derive from Pythagoras, who reportedly wrote: "Young men, come and revere in silence all these things."[209] Later Plotinus and Porphyry would voice similar sentiments,[210] and Iamblichus in his Hermetic theogony emphasizes that the first noetic principle is "worshipped by means of silence alone."[211] The Pythagorean-Platonic backdrop is undeniable, yet there are Egyptian antecedents that are highly congruent with it. As mentioned above, the god Thoth attends to the silent man. Silence was an ideal in wisdom literature, where it was most often a pragmatic advice not to speak out of turn. When personal piety becomes more pronounced in Egypt, during the New Kingdom, we find the silent man also as a religious ideal, sometimes called "the truly silent man" (*gr mꜣꜥ*).[212] The Egyptian hidden and unknown god, Amun, is also "lord of the silent one."[213] A silent praise in the divine realm can be found in the *Instructions of Amenemope* (twenty-first dynasty): "But all the silent ones in the temple say: 'Re is great of grace.' Fill yourself with silence, and you will find life, and your body will be hale on earth."[214] Silent prayer to God within the temple is here

208 Pieter W. van der Horst, "Silent Prayer in Antiquity," *Numen* 41 (1994): 1–25 at 9ff. Cf. Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God: Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena* (Louvain: Peeters, 1995), 66–70.

209 Diog. Laert., *Vit.* 8.7: ὦ νέοι, ἀλλὰ σέβεσθε μεθ' ἡσυχίας τάδε πάντα. Trans. Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence I: The Rise and Fall of Logos* (Theophaneia 30; Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1986), 112. Diogenes claims he got the quotation from Heraclides Lembus, not Heraclitus as stated by Mortley.

210 Van der Horst, "Silent Prayer in Antiquity," 10–11, quoting Plot., *Enn.* V.1 [10].6; Porph., *Abst.* 2.34.2; id., *Marc.* 16; id., *Aneb.* 5.

211 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.3: ὅ δὴ καὶ διὰ σιγῆς μόνης θεραπεύεται.

212 Nili Shupak, *Where Can Wisdom Be Found? The Sage's language in the Bible and in Ancient Literature* (OBO 130; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 166–67.

213 Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 285.

214 *Instruction of Amenemope* 5 (VII.8–10): *ir-gr-nb n-ḫw.t-nṯr | st-ḏd-wr-ḥs Rꜥ | i.mḥ.tw n-gr gmꜥk-pꜣ-ꜥnḫ | wḏꜣ-ḥꜥꜥk ḫr-tp-tꜣ*. Vincent P.-H. Laisney, *L'Enseignement d'Aménémopé* (Rome: Pontifico istituto biblico, 2007), 80. English translation in Assmann, *Search for God*, 236. Laisney claims that *i.mḥ.tw* should be construed as "grasp" rather than "fill," even though it has the papyrus-roll determinative appropriate to the latter meaning. He bases this on Joachim F. Quack, "Philologische Miszellen 1," *LingAeg* 2 (1992): 151–53, who connects *i.mḥ.tw* with Coptic ⲁⲙⲁϩⲧⲉ. But this *-tw* > -ⲧⲉ seems to me to be a remnant of

presented as the peak of reverence. We find a similar motif in a hymn to Amun-Re: "And so one moors as one of the honored, in Thebes, district of Truth, precinct of silence. Worthless ones cannot enter there, the Place of Truth; … How delightful it is to moor within her, then shall one become a divine soul like the Ennead."[215] The region of silence is thus transposed in our text from the earthly temple to the supramundane Ogdoad, a utopic tendency that has been found to be typical of the transformations of religious practice in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.[216]

6.3.4 *Vision of the Ogdoad and the Ennead* (*59,23–60,17*)

Our treatise devotes very little space to the description of the vision of the Ogdoad and the Ennead, which is surprising since this vision was the stated goal of Tat all along. Tat only says that he sees the Ogdoad, the souls and angels there singing hymns to the Ennead with its powers, and the one who has all their powers and who creates by means of spirit. Importantly, this corresponds exactly to the visionary ascent of the soul after death, as described by Poimandres:

ϯⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲑⲟⲩⲇⲟⲁⲥ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲛ̄ⲯⲩⲭⲏ ⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲣⲏⲧⲥ̀ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲛ̄ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲉⲩⲣ̄ⲣⲩⲙⲛⲉⲓ ⲉⲑⲉⲛⲛⲁⲥ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲛⲉⲥⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ· ⲁⲩⲱ ϯⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲩⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲥⲱⲛⲧ̄ {ⲛ̄}ⲣ̄ⲙ̄ ⲡⲡⲛⲁ̄·	I see the Ogdoad, and the souls that are in it and the angels singing hymns to the Ennead and its powers. And I see him who has all their power, and who creates by means of the spirit.

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the Late Egyptian verbal suffix (Antonio Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian: A linguistic introduction* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 99), whereas our *tw* is the 2ms personal dependant pronoun (James P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 49). I therefore follow Assmann here. The reading "grasp, adhere," is also found in Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 2:151 and Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 228. Cf. Brunner-Traut, "Weiterleben der ägyptischen Lebenslehren," 212.

215 John L. Foster, *Hymns, Prayers, and Songs: An Anthology of Ancient Egyptian Lyric Poetry* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 79. We should point out the similarity to CH VII, 1–2, cf. above, chap. 4.4.

216 Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is not Territory*, 100–3, 130–42, 147–51, 160–66, 169–71, 185–89, 291–94, 308–9; id., "Native Cults in the Hellenistic Period," 236–49; id., *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 15–16; Lincoln, *Gods and Demons*, 73–82.

καὶ τότε γυμνωθεὶς ἀπὸ τῶν τῆς ἁρμονίας ἐνεργημάτων γίνεται ἐπὶ τὴν ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν, τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν ἔχων, καὶ ὑμνεῖ σὺν τοῖς οὖσι[217] τὸν πατέρα· συγχαίρουσι δὲ οἱ παρόντες τῇ τούτου παρουσίᾳ, καὶ ὁμοιωθεὶς τοῖς συνοῦσιν ἀκούει καί τινων δυνάμεων ὑπὲρ τὴν ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν οὐσῶν φωνῇ τινι ἡδείᾳ ὑμνουσῶν τὸν θεόν·

And then, stripped of the effects of the cosmic framework, the human enters the region of the Ogdoad; he has his own proper power, and along with the blessed he hymns the father. Those present there rejoice together in his presence, and, having become like his companions, he also hears certain powers that exist beyond the Ogdoadic region and hymn God with sweet voice.[218]

Tat thus experiences the same ascent that his soul will undergo after the death of the body. Mahé speculates that the god he sees there is the unbegotten god residing in the Decad,[219] but since he "creates by means of spirit" I think it is more likely that he is the demiurge of the Ogdoad, the "god of fire and spirit" (CH I, 9). Properly speaking then, the vision described is only of the Ogdoad, although hymns are sung there to the Ennead. Most likely this is because in the optic of the author, the Ennead cannot be properly described with words, and indeed Hermes interrupts Tat's description: "From now on it is best that we remain silent. Do not speak rashly about the vision from now on. It is proper to sing a hymn to the father until the day of quitting the body."[220] In other words, Tat should not speak of the Ennead, but instead he should sing silent hymns together with the souls and angels in the Ogdoad, and this hymn he will continue to sing until the day he dies. It is thus an internalized hymn[221] that puts the hymnist in harmony with the Ogdoad. Already in the rebirth, the powers that

217 Cf. FR 3:130: Reitz.: παροῦσι, Scott: ⟨ἐκεῖ⟩ οὖσι.

218 NHC VI 59,29–60,1. My trans.; CH I, 26. Trans. Copenhaver.

219 HHE 1:120.

220 NHC VI 60,1–6: ⲥⲣⲱⲟⲩ ϫⲓⲛ [ϯⲛⲟⲩ] ⲛ̄ⲧⲛ̄ⲕⲁⲣⲱⲛ ⲉ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧ[ⲡⲣⲟ]ⲡⲉⲧⲏⲥ· ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲱⲟϫⲉ ⲁⲧⲑⲉⲱ[ⲣⲓⲁ] ϫⲓⲛ ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩ· ⲱⲟⲉ ⲁⲣ̄ⲭ[ⲙⲛⲉⲓ] ⲁⲡⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲱⲁ ⲫⲟⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲕⲁ [ⲥ]ⲱⲙⲁ. Brashler, Dirkse, and Parrott, "Discourse," propose "keep silence in a reverent posture" for προπετής, but Mahé (HHE 1:120) points out that the term is used negatively in the Hermetica. Camplani, *Scritti ermetici*, 175 n. 53, doubts Mahé's reading for syntactical reasons. However, the punctuation in codex VI cannot be used to divide sentences, and we can easily conjecture a Greek vorlage as προπετῶς μὴ λέγε. Cf. CH XIII, 21: μὴ ἀσκόπως. Camplani, *Scritti ermetici*, 148 n. 73, refers to Epict., *Diatr.* 1.16.15–21, for the motif of continual hymn-singing.

221 NHC VI, 60,8: ϯⲣ̄ⲭⲩⲙⲛⲉⲓ ⲭⲣⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ⲭⲏⲧ.

Tat gained sang hymns, but then they sang hymns directed to the creator in the Ogdoad. Now the hymnist is one of the blessed souls in the Ogdoad who sing hymns to the Ennead. It is through song that "the Ogdoad reveals the Ennead," as Hermes wants the present discourse to be entitled.[222] Hermes concludes: "since you have found rest, keep singing praises; for you have found what you were searching for."[223] It is clear that Tat has again attained a new status: he is now elevated above the realm of astral fatality to the Ogdoad, and is therefore at rest. He cannot be disturbed anymore by fate and the demons that enforce fate. The statement that he has found what he was searching for indicates that this is indeed the completion of the way of immortality.[224] According to the *Korê Kosmou*, the desire to search for and find God was instilled into the hearts of the primordial gods:

καὶ ἕως ὁ τῶν συμπάντων οὐκ ἐβούλετο τεχνίτης ἀγνωσία κατεῖχε τὰ ξύμπαντα· ὅτε δὲ ἔκρινεν αὐτὸν ὅστις ἐστὶ δηλῶσαι, ἔρωτας ἐνεθουσίασε θεοῖς καὶ αὐγὴν ἣν εἶχεν ἐν στέρνοις πλείονα ταῖς τούτων ἐχαρίσατο διανοίαις, ἵνα πρῶτον μὲν ζητεῖν θελήσωσιν, εἶτα ἐπιθυμήσωσιν εὑρεῖν, εἶτα καὶ κατορθῶσαι δυνηθῶσι.

And so long as the craftsman of the Universe wanted, ignorance held on to the Universe. But when he decided to reveal himself as he is, he inspired love into the gods, and he gave the light that he had in his chest to their thoughts, so that they should first want to search for him, then desire to find him, and then also be able to accomplish this.

SH XXIII, 5

This passage again underlines the connection between divine light and love, which is ritually enacted in the embrace, as mentioned above. Hermes was the first to gain this knowledge of God, but he kept quiet about it and hid it on stelae, so that "every *aion* born after him" should search for it.[225] Aion might mean just "generation" here, but it is also possible that it may be a reference to those who "become Aion," (CH XI, 20) and are thus able to ascend above the sensible cosmos and understand God. Hermes anointed these stelae with the ointment

222 NHC VI 61,21–22: ⲉⲕ̄ⲣⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲍⲉ ⲉⲑⲟⲅⲇⲟⲁⲥ ⟨ⲉⲧ⟩ⲟⲩⲱⲛ̄ⲣ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉⲛⲛⲁⲥ.

223 NHC VI 60, 8–11: ⲣⲱⲥ ⲁⲕ̄ⲛⲧⲟⲛ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲕ ⲥⲣ̄ⲭⲉ ⲁⲡⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲁⲕⲥⲓⲛⲉ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲉⲧⲕⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲱⲟ.

224 Cf. CH XIII, 20: ἀπὸ σοῦ Αἰῶνος εὐλογίαν εὗρον καί, ὃ ζητῶ, βουλῇ τῇ σῇ ἀναπέπαυμαι; FH 24: εἰ μὴ πρόνοιά τις ἦν τοῦ πάντων κυρίου ὥστε με τὸν λόγον τοῦτον ἀποκαλύψαι, οὐδὲ ὑμᾶς νῦν ἔρως τοιοῦτος κατεῖχεν ἵνα περὶ τούτου ζητήσητε.

225 SH XXIII, 5: καὶ γὰρ ἃ ἐνόησεν ἐχάραξε καὶ χαράξας ἔκρυψε, τὰ πλεῖστα σιγήσας ἀσφαλῶς ἢ λαλήσας, ἵνα ζητῇ ταῦτα πᾶς αἰὼν ὁ μεταγενέστερος κόσμου.

of immortality, so that they became imperishable and accessible to those who were later worthy of them.[226] Mahé has pointed out the parallel between these imperishable books and the subsequent praise of Tat in *Disc.8–9*, which should also be "inscribed on imperishable books,"[227] though he also points out the notion of inscribing the teaching "within oneself."[228]

Tat has now experienced the same ascent as his soul will ultimately experience after the death of the body. He has thus secured a blessed afterlife for himself, singing silent hymns with the powers of the Ogdoad and the Ennead. It also seems that the visionary ascent is a rite of investiture as spiritual master, as becomes clear from Tat's subsequent hymn of praise.[229]

6.3.5 *Tat's Hymn of Praise* (*60,17–61,17*)

As in CH XIII, Tat is able to sing a hymn by himself after his initiation. The hymn is short, and calls God the "end of the Universe and the beginning of the beginnings, the immortal discovery of the seeking of humans, the begetter of light and truth, sower of logos, and the love of the immortal life."[230] As in the *KK*, the light and love of God is connected with searching and finding. The sowing of logos is interesting, for Hermes was said to sow logoi of wisdom in his followers in the *Poimandres*.[231] There is thus a blurring of the lines between Hermes and God, which is continued when Tat goes on to sing a hymn to Hermes. The shift of recipients of the hymns is only marked by a short dialogue: "—Good, my son!—O grace! After this I give thanks by singing a hymn to you."[232] The closing hymn is therefore a hymn of praise to Hermes, it seems: "For I received life from you, when you made me wise. I praise you. I call your name which is hidden in me. [*voc. mag.*] You are the one who exists with the

226 SH XXIII, 8: ὦ ἱεραὶ βίβλοι, τῶν ἀφθάρτων αἳ τετεύχατέ μου χειρῶν, ἃς τῷ τῆς ἀφθαρσίας φαρμάκῳ χρίσας ἐπικρατῶ, ἀσαπεῖς παντὸς αἰῶνος καὶ ἄφθαρτοι διαμείνατε χρόνους.

227 NHC VI 60,16–17: ⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲥⲁϩⲣⲏ̄ ⲉⲡⲉⲉⲓⲭⲱⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲧⲧⲁⲕⲟ.

228 CH I, 30. Cf. HHE 1:122.

229 *Pace* Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 30, 34, 44f., who sees the *Poimandres* as the rite of investiture. See above, chap. 3.8.

230 NHC VI, 60,18–25: ⲉⲓⲥⲟⲡⲥⲡ̄ ⲛ̄ⲑⲁⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲧⲏⲣⲟ̄· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲁⲣⲭⲏ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲣⲭⲏ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲛⲏⲧⲏⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ· ϥⲉⲩⲣⲉⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧⲙⲟⲩ· ⲡⲣⲉϥⲭⲡⲟ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲧⲁⲗⲏⲑⲉⲓⲁ· ⲡⲣⲉϥⲥⲓⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ ⲧⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ ⲙ̄ⲡⲱⲛϩ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲧⲙⲟⲩ. Mahé (HHE 1:122–23) sees the awkard syntax of ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲛⲏⲧⲏⲙⲁ … ϥⲉⲩⲣⲉⲙⲁ as reflecting τοῦ ζητήματος τὸ εὕρημα.

231 CH I, 29: ἔσπειρα αὐτοῖς τοὺς τῆς σοφίας λόγους. Mahé does not consider this parallel.

232 NHC VI 61,2–5: ⲕⲁⲗⲱⲥ ⲱ ⲡⲁⲱⲏⲣⲉ· ⲱ̄ ⲡϩⲙⲟⲧ [ⲙ]ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲥⲁ ⲛⲁⲓ̈· ϯⲱⲡ̄ϩⲙⲟⲧ [ⲉⲉⲓ]ϧⲩⲙⲛⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ.

spirit. I sing hymns to you in a divine state."[233] The vowels are those in the second group, discussed earlier. Both Hermes and God could be intended by the one who gave Tat life and made him wise, and the question is whose name it is that is hidden in him. Is it the name of Hermes or that of God? I think it is likely Hermes, for he has "uttered" and "named" each of the spiritual brothers of Tat, the books or generations (ϫⲱⲙⲉ).[234] That Tat now has Hermes' name written inside of him must mean that he himself has become Hermes, that is, he has become a spiritual master. One possible explanation for the idea that Tat gains the name of Hermes may be found in the teaching of Hermes as the king of counsel, guide and father of all (SH XXVI, 9). Tat's royal soul would then have ascended and assimilated itself to the divine king, Hermes.

A parallel to the ritual identification with Hermes can be found in an invocation of Hermes in a magical spell: "Come to me, lord Hermes, as fetuses do to the wombs of women."[235] Hermes thus becomes internalized to the invoker, and this also involves gaining his name: "For you are I, and I am you; your name is mine, and mine is yours.[236] For I am your image."[237] The ritualist then goes on to demonstrate his knowledge of the secret names of Hermes, which are hidden in his temple in Hermopolis. One of these names is Abrasax, which we have seen is connected with the baboonic vowel-chant. The aim of this spell is to gain Hermes as a guardian demon, in order to gain prosperity and safety, while the aim of the ascent to the Ogdoad is the beatific vision that gives the visionary a new status as Hermes, i.e. as a spiritual master.[238]

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233 NHC VI 61,5–17: [ⲉⲉⲓ]ⲣ̀ⲣⲩⲙⲛⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ· ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲉⲓϫ[ⲓ] ⲡ̄ⲱⲛⲉ̄ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲕ̄· ⲛ̄ⲧⲁ̣ⲣⲉⲕⲁⲁⲧ ⲛ̄ⲥⲟⲫⲟⲥ· ϯⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ϯⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲕⲣⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲣⲏⲡ ⲣⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲛ̄ⲣⲏⲧ [*voc. mag.*] ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲧⲱⲟⲟⲡ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲛ̄ⲓⲓⲛⲁ̄ ϯⲣ̀ⲣⲩⲙⲛⲓ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲉ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ.

234 NHC VI 53,12–15: ⲡϫⲱⲙⲉ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲡϫⲱⲙⲉ ⲁⲉⲓⲣ̄ ⲡⲣⲟⲥⲫⲱⲛⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲩ· ⲁⲉⲓϯ ⲣⲁⲛ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲉ̣ⲱⲥ ⲉⲩⲱⲟⲟⲡ ⲛ̄ϫⲡⲟ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲉⲓⲱⲙⲣⲉ.

235 PGM VIII.2–3: ἐλ[θ]έ μοι, κύριε Ἑρμῆ, ὡς τὰ βρέφη εἰς τὰ⟨ς⟩ κοιλίας τῶν γυναι[κ]ῶν. Trans. Edward N. O'Neil, in *PGMT*. Cf. Södergård, *The Hermetic Piety of Mind*, 123ff.

236 A similar expression is found in the *Pyramid Text of Unis* 172: "Do not be ignorant of Unis, Thoth, since you know him and he knows you." Cf. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 47.

237 PGM VIII.36–38: σὺ γὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ ἐγὼ σύ, τὸ σὸν ὄνομα ἐμὸν καὶ τὸ ἐμὸν σόν· ἐγὼ γάρ εἰμι τὸ εἴδωλόν σου. Trans Edward N. O'Neil, in *PGMT*.

238 I have further compared the *Disc.8–9* with divinatory practices in the magical papyri in Bull, "Visionary Experience and Ritual Realism."

6.4 Epilogue: Erection of a Votive Stela (61,18–63,32)

Now that the visionary ascent is completed, Hermes commands Tat to erect a commemorative stela of turquoise[239] in his temple in Diospolis, inscribing the treatise in hieroglyphic characters. There should also be a sapphire stone-tablet with "the name" engraved, likely the vocalic name listed right above, or the *nomina barbara* framing the first string of vowels. This is thus the same procedure as the stelae relating Hermes' primordial revelation in the *Korê Kosmou*, which were placed "near the secrets of Osiris" (SH XXIII, 7).[240] Hermes further instructs Tat to place eight guardian statues around the stela, which are somehow connected to the sun.[241] These eight are the Hermopolitan Ogdoad, four male and female syzygies, who are said to rule over the realm of generation and belong to the sun in the Hermetic system of Iamblichus.[242] They are also explicitly invoked as guards of the sun-god in the Leiden Magical Papyrus: "the eight guards who escort him (sc. God), Hê, Hô, Chô, Chouch, Noun, Nauni, Amoun and Amauni."[243] The males are in *Disc.8–9* said to have the faces of frogs, while the females have the faces of cats, instead of the usual snakes.[244]

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239 On the materials utilised for the stelae, cf. van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 166–70.

240 Cf. Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 159, who connects the secrets with Egyptian *sšt*.

241 NHC VI 62,4–6: ϵγⲛ̄ ϣⲛⲟγ[ⲛ ⲛ̄]ϕγⲗⲁⲍ ⲣⲟϵⲓⲥ ϵⲣⲟϥ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ [..].. ⲛ̄ϕⲏⲗⲓⲟⲥ. Mahé reconstructs ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ [ⲡ]ϧⲓϛ, "with the nine of the sun," but from the facsimile edition the last letter does not look like a sigma (there is a cross-bar, probably of a theta or epsilon), and the third-to-last definitely does not look like a psi. Mahé has however studied the papyrus, so his opinion should not lightly be discounted here. Cf. Hans M. Schenke, "Zur Faksimile Ausgabe der Nag Hammadi Schriften, Codex VI," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 69 (1974): 229–43, who reconstructed ⲁ̣ⲧ̣ϥ, followed by Tröger but rejected by Mahé due to the shape of the final letter. Keizer proposes [rays], but does not offer how he reaches this conjecture. Camplani tentatively proposes "rising [ϣⲁⲓϵ] of the sun." Cf. also Laurent Motte, "L'astrologie égyptienne dans quelques traités de Nag Hammadi," in *Études Coptes IV. Quatrième journée d'études, Strasbourg 26–27 mai 1988* (CBC 8; Louvain: Peeters, 1995), 85–102 at 99ff.

242 Iamb., *Myst*. 8.3: ἔστι δὴ οὖν καὶ ἄλλη τις ἡγεμονία παρ' αὐτοῖς τῶν περὶ γένεσιν ὅλων στοιχείων καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς δυνάμεων, τεττάρων μὲν ἀρρενικῶν τεττάρων δὲ θηλυκῶν, ἥντινα ἀπονέμουσιν ἡλίῳ. Cf. above, pp. 135–36.

243 PGM XIII.787–789 & XXI.19–20: ὃν δορυφοροῦσιν οἱ η′ φύλακες Ἡ, Ὠ, Χω, Χουχ, Νουν, Ναυνι, Ἀμοῦν, Ἀμαυνι [XXI: Ιο]. (Eg. *Ḥḥ, Ḥḥw.t, Kk, Kk.t, Nwn, Nwn.t, Imn*, and *Imn.t*). Cf. Sethe, *Amun*, 63ff.; Merkelbach, *Abrasax*, 1:152.

244 Cf. HHE 1:36–37; van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 171–78, who points out the decoration of the Hibis temple in the el-Kharga oasis, where the four males have lion-heads, and the four females have serpent-heads. Cf. Kessler, "Hermopolitanische Götterformen," 212.

The stela is to be consecrated "when I am in the virgin, and the sun is in the middle of the barque (the first decan of Leo), at daytime, and fifteen degrees have passed me by."[245] Hermes refers to himself as the planet Mercury, which demonstrates the fluid borders between the human Hermes, the god, and his planetary counterpart. When Mercury is fifteen degrees in Virgo the planet is both in its house and in its exaltation.[246] Perhaps this designates the time during which visionary ascents should be undertaken, since that is the time when the disciple writes his hymn into the imperishable book. We recall that Hermes also said in *KK* that he would help those who are born (again?) in his signs (SH XXIII, 29).

After explaining to Tat that no one should have access to the book unless they have followed the order of the tradition, step by step, Hermes goes on to relate an oath that should be placed on the stela, protecting it against the uninitiated, and hindering them in using the name for wicked ends and counteract fate.[247] The oath invokes the elements, the seven ousiarch, the demiurgical spirit in them, as well as the unbegotten, self-begotten and begotten gods. As mentioned, the ousiarchs are attested elsewhere only in the *Perfect Discourse*.

The importance of the epilogue is that it clearly demonstrates that we can make no strict demarcation between popular and philosophical, or technical and theoretical Hermetica,[248] nor between the Hermetica and the cult of Hermes. Here, at the very consummation of the spiritual progress of Tat, we find that temples, astrology and magical invocations still play a central part: the technical Hermetica and traditional temple worship thus do not belong to a stage that is to be superseded, as Fowden claims.[249] It is not methodologically sound to *a priori* assume that the reference to the temple in Diospolis is a pseudepigraphic cliché. David Klotz has demonstrated that temple building still went on in Thebes in the Roman period, and though the traditional temples were in decline, it is much debated how fast this process went.[250] At

245 NHC VI 62,16–20: ⲱ ⲡⲁϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲉⲕⲛⲁⲕⲱ ⲙ̄ⲡⲁⲓ ⲉⲓϣⲟⲟⲡ ϩⲛ̄ ⲧⲡⲁⲣⲑⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲡⲣⲏ ϩⲙ̄ ⲡⲥ̄ⲥ ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉϩⲟⲟⲩ· ⲁⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲧⲏ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲓⲣⲁ ⲣ̄ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲅⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲉⲓ. Motte, "L'astrologie égyptienne," 93–97.

246 HHE 1:129–30; Motte, "L'astrologie égyptienne," 89–93, explains the expression ⲡⲥ̄ⲥ ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲉ as "the middle of the barque," the name of the first decan of Leo, the astrological house of the sun. ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲉ is then a transcription of Demotic *wiꜣ*, "barque."

247 Cf. below, chap. 8.1.

248 FR 1:80; Festugière, *Hermétisme et mystique païenne*, 30.

249 Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 150.

250 Klotz, "Kneph," 554, 578: Reduced Amun-cult in 4th c.; 592–93; Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, passim; Mark Smith, "Aspects of the Preservation and Transmission of Indigenous Religious Traditions in Akhmim and its Environs during the Graeco-Roman Period," in *Perspectives on Panpolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab*

any rate, the Thebes-cache shows us that someone in the fourth century with an education in the writing system of the temples—at that time Demotic—used Hermetic texts and related himself to the world of the temples. This is not far away, neither in time nor space, from our manuscript witness of *Disc.8–9*. There is little reason to doubt that there was a relationship between the "philosophical" Hermetica, the technical Hermetica, and the Egyptian temples also before this time. It is this relationship that we shall attempt to elucidate in the following part.

Conquest (ed. Arno Egberts, Brian P. Muhs, and Joep van der Vliet; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 233–47; Roger Bagnall, "Models and Evidence in the Study of Religion in Late Roman Egypt," in *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity* (ed. Johannes Hahn, Stephen Emmel, and Ulrich Gotter; RGRW 163; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 23–41. Further bibliography in Bull, "Hermes between Pagans and Christians."

Conclusion to Part 2

The Way of Hermes does not, it has been argued, go from world-affirming monism to world-denying dualism, as Fowden and Mahé both claimed, but the other way around. The neophyte to the Way of Hermes would first be told that the inner human is divine and that the body should be rejected as a mortal impediment to the immortal essential human. Thereafter the sensible world would be presented as ephemeral and illusory, devoid of truth. The candidate to the Hermetic rebirth should become a stranger to the world, probably achieved through ascetic practices and spiritual exercises. A number of Hermetic treatises have been assigned to these initial stages of the way, and more could probably also be added. Especially the genre of treatises called *Genikoi Logoi* seem to be relevant to the early stages. When the candidate was deemed sufficiently mature, he or she would undergo the initiatory rite of rebirth. In the course of this ritual the candidate is filled with ten divine powers which together restore the primordial human as "a god and son of God," equivalent to the demiurgic mind, also called Aion. The rebirth renders the initiate like God, which is a prerequisite for the visionary ascent to see God. This visionary ascent is represented in the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth*, in which the initiate ascends to the Ogdoad and joins the powers there that sing silent hymns to the Ennead. After this, the initiate has become a spiritual master, and can join the brothers in their hymns. Similar to the mysteries of Mithras, there thus seems to have been outer and inner grades of initiation, corresponding to the level of insight gained. The two outer grades consist of those who have gained insight into the inner human and into the world, whereas the two inner grades consist of those who have become reborn and those who have ascended to the Ogdoad. Nothing suggests the level of organization we see in Mithraic groups, however, as we shall see in the third and last part.

Throughout we have also drawn parallels to Egyptian sources. Especially the notion of a Way of Thoth and the ideal of the reverent silent man resonate with the Way of Hermes. There are also several ritual parallels to the rite of rebirth and the visionary ascent. These parallels should be taken seriously, since Egyptian religion was still being practiced in the Roman period. We do not need to postulate an unbroken chain of tradition going back to a hoary Pharaonic past, as the Hermetic sources themselves do, but rather we can consider the Way of Hermes to be a reinvented tradition, adapting traditional lore and rituals to a new socio-cultural context in which Greek culture and Roman power were hegemonic.

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PART 3

Who Were the Hermetists?—Situating the Way of Hermes

Introduction to Part 3

We have so far sketched the outline of a way of spiritual progress, consisting of teachings concerning the human, cosmos and God, as well as ritual practices of initiation and ascent. What remains to be done is to plausibly situate the Way of Hermes, as it would have been practiced by one or several groups, in its concrete historical milieu. Garth Fowden's *The Egyptian Hermes* is of course the standard work on this particular issue, but although this work masterfully portrays the socio-intellectual background of the world of the Hermetica, Fowden in fact refrains from making any concrete suggestion as to what the Hermetic groups would look like,[1] except that they would be "small, informal circles of the literate but not (usually) learned gathered round a holy teacher and given up to study, asceticism and pious fellowship."[2] These circles he likens to those of the Platonists, the Manichaeans and especially the Gnostics, with a two-tiered structure of initiates and "listeners," while as for the authorship of the treatises, he supposes only "as among the Pythagoreans and Orphics, some sense of a continuity of inspiration."[3]

The activities attested in the texts, such as instruction, initiation, rites of ascent, hymns and banquets, would correspond more to what we normally associate with the mystery cults, or perhaps Gnosticism, than to philosophical schools.[4] However, to some extent the clear-cut distinction between mysteries, philosophy and gnosis is a modern construct,[5] and we should be cautious in imposing our own terms on the data before checking their emic usage. In the Hermetica all three terms, philosophy, gnosis and mystery, are used self-referentially. In addition, terms relating to the fields of magic and traditional cult are to be found. This makes Hermetism an interesting case study into how these terms were used during Late Antiquity and allows us to make informed categorizations among the several different kinds of religious associations and

1 Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues and Rites*, 1, claims in the very opening paragraph of his excellent monograph that the bilingual papyrus he studies stem from the same milieu as the Hermetica, namely that of Egyptian priests, with a general reference to Fowden's work. Fowden, as we have seen, was more cautious in his assessment.

2 Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 193.

3 Ibid., 186–95.

4 Of course, Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* shows that hymns could also find their use in philosophy.

5 E.g. Fowden, who claims that mystery derives from traditional cult practices, and gnosis from philosophy.

practices. In the following chapters I will therefore consider the concepts of philosophy, magic, and finally traditional temple-cult in the Hermetica, in order to clearer delineate the phenomenon of Hermetism.[6]

6 I forego in the following to compare Hermetism with Gnosticism and the mysteries. For the mysteries and the Hermetica, cf. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*, 33ff.; Tröger, *Mysterienglaube und Gnosis*, 9–81; Sfameni Gasparro, "La gnosi ermetica come iniziazione e mistero"; Bull, "The Notion of Mysteries." For comparisons between Hermetism and Gnosticism, cf. Tröger, ibid., 82–170; Roelof Van den Broek, "Gnosticism and Hermetism in Antiquity: Two Roads to Salvation," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity* (NHMS 39; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 3–21; id., "Sexuality and Sexual Symbolism in Hermetic and Gnostic Thought and Practice (Second-Fourth Centuries)," in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism* (ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal; Aries 7; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 1–21; Jean-Pierre Mahé, "Gnostic and Hermetic Ethics," in *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (ed. Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff; New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 21–36; id., "Le sens des symboles sexuels dans quelques textes hermétiques et gnostiques," in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi: Colloque du Centre d'Histoire des Religions* (*Strasbourg, 23–25 Octobre 1974*) (ed. Jacques E. Ménard; NHS 7; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 123–45; HHE 441–45.

CHAPTER 7

The True Philosophy of Hermes

7.1 The Way of Hermes as a Philosophical School

John Dillon in his seminal work, *The Middle Platonists*, grouped Hermetism with what he called "the Platonic Underworld," together with Valentinianism and the *Chaldean Oracles*. This term is apt insofar that it reflects the fact that the Hermetica make use of Platonic motifs, although they are not orthodox in referring back to Plato as the ultimate authority for these teachings.[1] As Dillon points out: "when one speaks of a 'school' in this context, one means no more than what is conveyed by the Greek expression 'those about' (*hoi peri*) X."[2] It was thus on the reputation of the teacher that a school was founded. As we see in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* and in Porphyry's intellectual biography of Plotinus, a seeker could stop by several such teachers and sample their wares before finding someone suitable, just as Justin at last found an anonymous Christian and Plotinus found Ammonius Saccas.[3] The different schools would all have their protreptic treatises, designed to attract potential recruits who had not yet chosen their way of life. It was not uncommon for pupils, once converted, then to live together with their teachers,[4] as Plotinus reportedly did with Ammonius Saccas. The schools could be formal or informal, and the latter type of school would generally collapse once the teacher became infirm or died. In more formal schools, the scholarch or the circle could choose his successor.[5]

In his classic account of conversion in antiquity, Arthur Darby Nock distinguished philosophical groups from religious voluntary associations in that they were characterized by reason rather than emotion, morality rather than ritual, instruction rather than experience, adherence to divinity *tout court*

1 Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 389–92. Cf. Athanassiadi, *La lutte pour l'orthodoxie*.

2 Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 231.

3 Porph., *Vit. Plot.* 3; Just., *Dial.* 2–8. Cf. Frederic M. Schroeder, "Ammonius Saccas," *ANRW* 36.1:493–526. On the Neoplatonic schools, cf. Dominic O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 13–26.

4 Mason, "Philosophiai," 39.

5 Tiziano Dorandi, "Organization and structure of the philosophical schools," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (ed. Keimpe Algra; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 55–62 at 58, 61.

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rather than individual deities, professional rather than shared leadership, and absolute commitment rather than casual allegiance.[6] In most of these areas, our sketch of the Hermetic community would resemble the philosophical school more than the voluntary association, although it must be pointed out that here instruction leads to personal experience, and the two cannot be opposed to each other.[7] Nock further points out that during the first century CE, the boundaries become blurred, and philosophical schools come to resemble religious associations to a larger degree. John Scheid has recently pointed out the tautology of the term "religious association," since all associations would somehow revolve around cult, presumably also philosophical groups.[8] Again, this tallies nicely with the Hermetic community. It is likely that the practice of Hermetism foreshadows the development of theurgical Platonism. As Justin testifies, in the early second century CE, the Platonic school would hold out for the student a promise to be able to see God[9] through contemplation of the eternal ideas.[10] The Hermetist would agree that contemplation and a pure way of life are necessary to achieve such a vision, but not sufficient. The power to see God (θεοπτικὴ δύναμις) is called down ritually from above by a master, who assumes the role of the paradigmatic spiritual guide, Hermes Trismegistus, and is then conducted into the pupil, causing him to be born again. Equipped with this power, the pupil can then be guided by the master to see the Ogdoad and Ennead, and again an anagogic light-nous is ritually invoked from above to secure the vision. These initiatory and visionary rites would naturally be performed infrequently, and the regular practice of the community would be instruction and exhortations, similar to the philosophical schools. Anna van den Kerchove has recently pointed out the ritual framework also of Hermetic

6 Nock, *Conversion*, paraphrased by Wilson, "Philosophiai," 6.

7 Cf. also Harvey Whitehouse, "Modes of Religiosity: Towards a Cognitive Explanation of the Sociopolitical Dynamics of Religion," *Method & Theory* 14 (2002): 293–315 at 295–96, on doctrinal and imagistic religiosity.

8 John Scheid, "Communauté et communauté. Réflexions sur quelques ambiguïtés d'après l'exemple des thiases de l'Égypte romaine," in *Les communautés religieuses dans le monde Gréco-Romain* (ed. Nicole Belayche and Simon C. Mimouni; Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 61–74.

9 Just., *Dial.* 2.6: ὑπὸ βλακείας ἤλπιζον αὐτίκα κατόψεσθαι τὸν θεόν· τοῦτο γὰρ τέλος τῆς Πλάτωνος φιλοσοφίας.

10 A century later, as is well known, Porphyry says that Plotinus achieved union with God four times during the time he spent with him, following the methods prescribed in the *Symposium*. At the age of sixty-eight, Porphyry himself had experienced it only once. Porph., *Vit. Plot.* 23: ἔτυχε δὲ τετράκις που, ὅτε αὐτῷ συνήμην, τοῦ σκοποῦ τούτου ἐνεργείᾳ ἀρρήτῳ [καὶ οὐ δυνάμει].

instruction.[11] Furthermore, the several preserved hymns point in the direction of communal singing, and there are also references to common meals, consisting of "pure food without blood" (*Ascl.* 41 = NHC VI 65,2–7). Hymns and communal banquets point more in the direction of voluntary associations, as does the language of spiritual brothers instructed by a father.[12] Associations tend to be formalized, with charters and rituals, and are thus normally more organized than philosophical schools. A trait Hermetism has in common with Valentinianism and the *Chaldean Oracles*, as opposed to philosophical schools (and Platonism before Iamblichus), is the need for initiatory rituals in order to give the adept access to the full range of teachings. Such ritualism is one way to ensure the survival of the group, since it ensures a corporate identity. Unfortunately, we are totally in the dark regarding the degree of organization in the Hermetic groups. If one "father"—playing the role of Hermes—died, we simply cannot tell if the group would dissolve, or if one of the most advanced students would step up and become the new master. The latter would likely be the case if the group was tightly organized and registered as a voluntary religious association binding its members together with mutual oaths, such as the *Sarapiastai*.[13] This is in my view not unlikely, since the paradigmatic role of Hermes Trismegistus as a spiritual master is meant to transcend the vicissitudes of individual lives. Any Hermetist would in principle be able to play the part of Hermes, as long as he (or she?) had been born again, and ascended to the Ogdoad and the Ennead. So long as the master had secured a successor, the latter would likely be able to assume the mantle of father at the death of the previous master, and thus ensure the survival of the group. The ritual framework for a succession of fathers therefore seems to be present. Of course, in practice such a succession might be contested, and a group could gradually dissolve if the new master did not live up to his predecessor. But we have no sources for such historical contingencies, and can only make an educated guess on the background of comparable social formations.

It is thus not unlikely that Hermetic groups would be constituted as voluntary religious associations. Their practices would have more in common with

11 Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 19–180.

12 Philip A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians: Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 63–96.

13 Angelos Chaniotis et al., "Rhamnous. Decree of the Sarapiastai in honor of Apollodoros, end of the 3rd cent. B.C." *SEG* 51 (2001): 51–133; Ilias Arnaoutoglou, "Groups and Individuals in *IRhamnous* 59 (*SEG* 49.161)," in *Individus, Groupes et politique à Athènes de Solon à Mithridate* (ed. Jean-Christophe Couvenhes; Tours: Presses Universitaires François Rabelais, 2007), 315–38.

philosophical schools than with other associations, but like the latter there might have been a ritually guaranteed system of succession and cohesion, in principle independent of the personal charisma of the spiritual master. The next question to consider is how the term philosophy is considered within the Hermetica. The term does not appear often, but when it does it is clear that the texts claim to represent a purer and truer philosophy than that of the other Greek schools. This they have in common with Christianity, which used the self-designation "true philosophy,"[14] meaning that a claim was made to have access to higher truths than the established philosophical schools. As we have seen, in both cases the claim is bolstered by reference to primordial wisdom, since it was important not to be considered a novelty, the hallmark of a *superstitio*. The Christians could refer to the pre-existent Logos, while the Hermetists referred to their own logos or nous, namely the Egyptian Hermes.[15]

7.2 Philosophy as a Hermetic Self-Designation

In a Hermetic fragment from John of Stobi (SH II B), Hermes advices Tat to practice reverence in order to eventually reach the truth, which is unavailable down here on earth: "He who is reverent to the utmost practices philosophy. For without philosophy, it is impossible to be reverent to the utmost."[16] As we have seen, to practice philosophy in this treatise entails waging battle with oneself, and to practice leaving one's body behind in preparation for death.[17] The term philosophy is thus used to describe the peak of religious reverence, and it is possible that the Hermetist can also conceive of reverent non-philosophers, that is, people who are devoted to the creator god, and perhaps also to the traditional gods, but do not follow the way of Hermes. That is at least the impression one gains from the Hermetic dialogues between Isis and Horus, where only the most refined souls will be reborn as "genuine philosophers."[18] Philosophy is in the aretalogy of Isis and Osiris said to be an art that nourishes the soul, together with magic, while medicine saves the body.[19] The divine king

14 Emily J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The Case of Tatian* (London: Routledge, 2003), 61f.

15 Cf. Moreschini, *Hermes Christianus*.

16 SH II B, 2: ὁ δὲ εὐσεβῶν ἄκρως φιλοσοφήσει· χωρὶς γὰρ φιλοσοφίας ἄκρως εὐσεβῆσαι ἀδύνατον.

17 Cf. above, chap. 4.6.3.

18 SH XXIII, 42: φιλόσοφοι γνήσιοι. Cf. FH 20.

19 SH XXIII, 68: ἵνα φιλοσοφία μὲν καὶ μαγεία ψυχὴν τρέφῃ, σῴζῃ δ' ὅταν τι πάσχῃ ἰατρικὴ σῶμα.

of philosophy is said to be Harnebeschênis, the Horus of Letopolis.[20] Clearly, a philosopher in these texts does not mean the same as it does for us, but has assumed the characteristics of Egyptian prophet and "doctor of occult sciences," as Franz Cumont put it.[21]

A similar situation obtains in the *Definitions of Asclepius to King Ammon* (CH XVI), where the philosophy of the Greeks is derided as a noise of words.[22] This is because of the emptiness of the Greek language, which is effective only in pointing things out (ἀπόδειξις), as opposed to the stately language of the Egyptians, which consists of signifiers containing the power of the signified.[23] Much has already been written on the paradoxical opening statement of Asclepius, which undermines the very language in which it is written.[24] What concerns us here, however, is the use of the term "philosophy." In this treatise, there is no term that is placed in opposition to philosophy, but implicitly it seems that the philosophy of the Greeks is contrasted with the philosophy of the Egyptians, the latter being preferred. The invective against the Greeks may thus be seen as a counter-discursive response, an example of indigenous elites "writing back" against the dominant discourse of philosophy.[25] Even though the treatise thematically and stylistically plays by the discursive rules laid down by Greek philosophy, it tries to present itself as a conveyor of more profound truths, unavailable to its competitors in the genre. While contemporary philosophical treatises are disqualified as empty chatter and futile plays of words, the *Definitions* claim to contain a hidden meaning for the one with the correct hermeneutical key, even if the text has supposedly been debased by the forbidden translation into Greek. It seems likely that the *Definitions* were written as a response to Plato's myth of Theuth. Like Theuth, Asclepius addresses the king Ammon.[26] While Ammon criticizes Theuth for his invention of letters, since they are a *pharmakeia* serving only for recalling, not remembering, Asclepius

20 SH XXVI, 9: ἡγεμών … φιλοσοφίας δὲ Ἀρνεβεσχῆνις.

21 Cumont, *L'Égypte des astrologues*, 122: "docteur ès sciences occultes."

22 CH XVI, 2: καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν Ἑλλήνων φιλοσοφία, λόγων ψόφος.

23 Cf. Jørgen Podemann Sørensen, "Ancient Egyptian Religious Thought and the XVIth Hermetic Tractate," in *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians: Cognitive Structures and Popular Expressions* (ed. Gertie Englund; Boreas 20; Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1989), 41–57; above, p. 349.

24 Cf. van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 117–28.

25 Cf. Moyer, *Egypt*, 103 & 113.

26 If the emendation of Scheidweller or Postgate is accepted, cf. above, p. 38 n. 27.

defends the Egyptian letters as being full of nous and power.[27] In other words, Plato's critique of writing applies only to Greek writing according to Asclepius.

This normative inversion between the wisdom of the dominant Greek culture and the traditions of the Egyptian indigenous elite is even more pronounced in the *Perfect Discourse*. Here, two kinds of philosophy are placed in opposition to each other. One is a pure philosophy, a simplicity of mind: "Speaking as a prophet, I will tell you that after us will remain none of that simple regard for philosophy found only in the continuing reflection and holy reverence by which one must recognize divinity."[28] Philosophy here consists of reflection and reverence, probably described as θεωρία and εὐσέβεια in the Greek original, and the religious importance of this activity can be seen from the fact that Hermes prophesizes its future disappearance. If the Latin *praedivino* translates προφητεύω, as is likely,[29] this is likely an allusion to the Egyptian prophet, who we will recall was given philosophy by Isis and Osiris in the *KK*. This pure philosophy will become muddled, according to Trismegistus, by the futile speculations of the sophists who are to come later: "The many make philosophy obscure in the multiplicity of their reasoning … by confusing it through ingenious argument with various branches of study that are not comprehensible (to them)—*arithmêtikê* and music and geometry."[30] I add the clause "to them," because in the text that follows it turns out that the pure philosophy also makes use of these arts (*disciplinas*), and so the fault must lie with those who use the arts for "ingenious argument," the staple of the sophists, who are indeed given the blame later on in the treatise. Interestingly, the sophists are called "the many" here: in the exclusivist mind-set of the Hermetist, the true Bacchoi are indeed few, even among the philosophically educated elite. It is clear that the dialogue between Hermes and his disciples is here set in the past, predicting the cultural dominance of Greek philosophy in the present of the author. The frustration over the demands made in the philosophical school

27 CH XVI, 2: ὁ δὲ λόγος τῇ πατρῴᾳ διαλέκτῳ ἑρμηνευόμενος ἔχει σαφῆ τὸν τῶν λόγων νοῦν. καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸ τὸ τῆς φωνῆς ποιὸν καὶ ἡ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ⟨…⟩ ὀνομάτων ἐν ἑαυτῇ ἔχει τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῶν λεγομένων.

28 *Ascl.* 12: *ego enim tibi quasi praediuinans dixero nullum post nos habiturum dilectum simplicem, qui est philosophiae, quae sola est in cognoscenda diuinitate frequens obtutus et sancta religio*. Trans. Copenhaver.

29 An alternative is προμαντεύομαι.

30 *Ascl.* 12–13: *multi etenim et eam multifaria ratione confundunt … in uarias disciplinas nec conprehensibiles eam callida commentatione miscentes*, ἀριθμητικὴν *et musicen et geometriam*. Translation slightly modified from Copenhaver.

of the Pythagoreans to learn the "hard sciences" of music, geometry and astronomy is also noted by Justin Martyr.[31]

7.3 The Hermetic Science of the Stars

The arts listed by Hermes—arithmetic, music and geometry—are often grouped together and attributed to the Egyptians, and sometimes to the Egyptian Hermes, by both Christian and Pagan authors.[32] They comprise three-fourths of the later medieval quadrivium, already outlined by Plato in book seven of the *Republic*,[33] and the fourth—astronomy—is mentioned subsequently, as the art that the other three serve as auxiliaries to. The three lesser arts should mainly be used in connection with astronomy, since the heavens are the privileged display of the skill and benevolence of the creator:

puram autem philosophiam eamque diuina tantum religione pendentem tantum intendere in reliquas oportebit, ut apocatastasis astrorum, stationes praefinitas cursumque commutationis numeris constare miretur;
terrae uero dimensiones, qualitates, quantitates, maris profunda, ignis uim et horum omnium effectus naturamque cognoscens miretur, adoret atque conlaudet artem mentemque diuinam.

Pure philosophy that depends only on reverence for God should attend to these other matters [i.e. arithmetic, music and geometry] only to wonder at the recurrence of the stars, how their measure stays constant in prescribed stations and in the orbit of their turning; it should learn the dimensions, qualities and quantities of the land, the depths of the sea, the power of fire and the nature and effects of all such things in order to commend, worship and wonder at the skill and mind of God.[34]

Thus, precise measurements of the heavens, land, sea and fire, which rely on both arithmetic and geometry, is to be performed solely in order to admire

31 Just., *Dial.* 2.4.

32 E.g., Chaer. fr. 10 (Porph., *Abst.* 4.8): Priests spend time on geometry & arithmetic; Isocr., *Bus.* 21; Orig., *Princ.* 3.3.2 on the "Wisdom of this world,"; ibid. 29–32 on the "Wisdom of the princes of this world"; Cyr. Alex., *C. Jul.* 1.41.

33 Though in *Prot.* the quadrivium is attributed to Hippias. Cf. FR 2:528f., where the first explicit mention of the quadrivium is traced to Philo.

34 *Ascl.* 13. Trans. Copenhaver.

the skill of the creator and worship him. The true philosophy of Hermes distinguishes itself, with its sense of wonder, admiration, and worship of the divine creation, from the "ingenuity of the sophists," which is characterised as idle curiosity.[35] The passage makes observing the stars the prime *raison d'être* of the exact sciences, and then subordinates all the arts under the heading of religion. We should consider if there is any real concern with the sciences in the Hermetica, or if their mention here is only a pious nod to the mythological role of Hermes as inventor of the arts. With regards to arithmetic, music and geometry we can be brief: there is nothing that indicates that these sciences were developed in any significant sense in the Hermetica. Mystical numerology and the composition of hymns is the closest we come. On the other hand, the pseudo-science of astrology owes much to the technical Hermetica, a topic which has yet to receive a comprehensive analysis.[36] A full treatment of the astrological Hermetica lies beyond the scope of the present thesis, but we must consider briefly what role astrological calculations may have played within Hermetism.[37]

The question of the origins of astronomy cannot be dealt with here; suffice it to say that the present consensus is that systematic observation of the heavenly bodies originated in Mesopotamia, whereas the original contributions of Egypt were the solar year of 365 days of 24 hours, and the teaching of the decans, originating in the idea that Egyptian deities presided over the individual days of the year.[38] By the time the Greeks started to grapple with astronomy, however, the Egyptians had advanced claims of their own to be the birthplace of the science. Naturally the Egyptian god of learning, Thoth, was credited with the discovery. We have already discussed the myths of Thoth as the first inventor of the art, and now move on to consider what role astronomy and astrology might have played in the way of Hermes.

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35 *Ascl.* 14.

36 Cf. Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque*, passim; Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 10–27; Beck, *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology*, 18–19, 44; Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 25–31.

37 Cf. recently Nicola Denzey Lewis, "Middle Platonism, *Heimarmene*, and the *Corpus Hermeticum*," in *Cosmology and Fate in Gnosticism and Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (NHMS 81; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 103–26, which however adds little new.

38 Cf. Otto Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 80–82; László Kákosy, "Decans in Late-Egyptian Religion," *Oikumene* 3 (1982): 163–91; Quack, "Dekane und Gliedervergotterung," 97–122; Alexandra van Lieven, "Die dritte Reihe der Dekane oder Tradition und Innovation der spätägyptischen Religion," *ARG* 2 (2000): 21–36; Briant Bohleke, "In Terms of Fate: A Survey of the Indigenous Egyptian Contribution to Ancient Astrology in Light of Papyrus CtYBR inv. 1132(B)," *SAK* 23 (1996): 11–46; Quack, "Beiträge zu den ägyptischen Dekanen."

Even though the division between astrology and astronomy was known in antiquity, the two were not really separate. An authority such as Ptolemy dealt with both disciplines, seeing them as two facets of the same art, astronomy, where the first "both in order and effectiveness" apprehends the movement of the stars, while the second concerns their effects on earth (*Tetr.* 1.1). As Roger Beck has pointed out, ancient astrology consisted of both observation and prognostication, the former being empirical while the latter was wholly dependent on idiosyncratic techniques of interpretation.[39] We can distinguish between three main attitudes in the systematic study of the planets and stars in antiquity, all of which rely to some degree on observation and calculation of celestial phenomena. We can call these three attitudes (1) scientific astronomy, which professes to study the stars as a part of the study of nature; (2) prognostic astronomy, or astrology, whose main interest in the stars is as a way of prognosticating the future; and finally (3) devotional astronomy, which considers the observation of the stars to be a necessary part of religious life. These attitudes can overlap, as in the astrological manual of Firmicus Maternus, which is mainly prognostic but also exhorts the practitioner to piety, or the scientific works of Ptolemy, which also contain prognostic speculations.

The oldest literature in Greek attributed to Hermes Trismegistus is the prognostic astrological treatises. The treatise known as the *Liber Hermetis*—or sometimes as the *De triginta sex decanis*[40]—according to Gundel goes back to the Ptolemaic era, to the second century BCE, although its final redaction was not made before the fourth or fifth century.[41] Franz Cumont wrote an outstanding social history of the Ptolemaic kingdom based on this dating, and located its Sitz-im-Leben in the activities of the Egyptian priesthood.[42] However, David Pingree has been sceptical to the dating, claiming instead that the Greek original could not have been compiled before the sixth century,[43] and that

39 Beck, *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology*, 1–8.

40 Gundel, *Neue astrologische Texte*; Simonetta Feraboli, *Hermetis Trismegisti De triginta sex decanis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994); Scarpi, *La rivelazione segreta di Ermete Trismegisto*, 169–471. The text is now only extant in Latin.

41 Gundel, *Neue astrologische Texte*, 10, 121, 146, 180; Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity*, 68–69; FR 1:112–23.

42 Cumont, *L'Égypte des astrologues*. But cf. Hübner, "Manilius als Astrologe und Dichter," 37; Louis Robert, *Études épigraphiques et philologiques* (Paris: Champion, 1938), 76–108, points out that many of the social classes of the astrological texts adduced by Cumont must have been updated from the supposed Hellenistic Vorlage.

43 David E. Pingree, "The Indian Iconography of the Decans and Horâs," *JWCI* 26 (1963): 223–54 at 227 n. 31.

only book one, on the decans, is "Hermetic."[44] However, Pingree does not really give evidence for his radically different date, except by pointing out the strong parallels—sometimes direct quotations—to Vettius Valens, Rhetorius, Paul of Alexandria, and Firmicus Maternus, parallels that Cumont explained as borrowings *from* the *Liber Hermetis*.[45] It seems difficult to resolve this matter conclusively at present, although the proliferation of Hermetic astronomic treatises before the imperial era—as witnessed by Manilius, Thrasyllus, and Dorotheus—and the frequent deference shown to Hermes by most of the authors cited by Pingree, must certainly be considered weighty arguments in favor of the position of Gundel and Cumont. At any rate, we can be fairly certain that at least the first book of *Liber Hermetis* is Ptolemaic, and this treatise stems from a tradition held in common with another treatise on the decans, the *Holy book of Hermes to Asclepius*.[46]

The *Liber Hermetis* lists the names of the 36 decans, three for each sign of the zodiac, their iconography, their planetary "visage" (*facies*), and which climate they govern. However, none of the decanic names can be identified with the parallel decans of other lists, such as the *Holy book*, Firmicus Maternus, Hephaestion, and the astrological tablets of Grand, all of which overlap considerably.[47] The iconography and effects of the decans are much the same as in these other lists, however, a fact which led Gundel to postulate that a later compiler modified the Hermetic list of decans, replacing the by then nonsensical Egyptian names with somewhat more intelligible names, such as Sabaoth and Jaus (= Iao).[48] Gundel further argued that the source of these lists should

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44 Pingree, "Antiochus and Rhetorius," 219.

45 David E. Pingree, *The Yavanajātaka of Sphujidhvaja* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 2:432–33: That *Liber Hermetis*, chap. 4, is a translation of Vettius Valens V, 1 is according to Pingree "proved by the retention in the Latin of his (sc. Valens') highly personal interjections." He claims that the similarities with Firmicus Maternus are due to common sources, while *LH* is ostensibly direct translation of Valens, Paulus Alexandrinus and Rhetorius "as a close examination of the text will reveal." No further proof is offered. Pingree agrees with the assessment of Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity*, 68–69, that chapter 3 of *LH* date from ca. 130–60 BCE. He also changes his original dating of the final redaction of the whole text to the seventh century CE.

46 Charles-Émile Ruelle, "Hermès Trismégiste: Livre sacré sur les décans," *RP* 32 (1908): 247–77.

47 Cf. the table of Josèphe-Henriette Abry, "Les diptyques de Grand, noms et images des Décans," in *Les tablettes astrologiques de Grand* (*Vosges*) *et l'astrologie en Gaule romaine* (ed. Josèphe-Henriette Abry; Paris: Boccard, 1993), 75–112 at 112. Cf. also Quack, "Beiträge zu den ägyptischen Dekanen," 372–75.

48 Gundel, *Neue astrologische Texte*, 118.

be identified with the enigmatic Hermetic book, the *Salmeschoiniaka*, known only from the much later references made to it by Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Hephaestion of Thebes.[49] Porphyry apparently confronted Anebo, the stated recipient of his letter, with the Egyptian philosophers such as Chaeremon, who claimed that:

> there were no other gods of the Egyptians except for those which are called planets, those which make up the zodiac, and their Paranatellonta,[50] and furthermore the divisions in decans and the Horoscopes and those that are called Mighty Rulers, whose names are contained in the *Salmeschoiniaka*, along with the treatment of passions, risings and settings, and omens of the future.[51]

This makes it seem as though Chaeremon himself referred to the *Salmeschoiniaka*, which would date the work to before the first half of the first century CE.[52] In his reply to Porphyry, Iamblichus claims that the principles of the cosmos from the *Salmeschoiniaka*, expounded by Chaeremon and other Egyptians, only comprise the lowest portion of the Hermetic system.[53] This

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49 Porph., *Aneb.* 36 (*apud* Euseb., *Praep. ev.* 3.4); Iamb., *Myst.* 8.4; Heph., *Apotel.* 2.18 Pingree (*CCAG* 8.2:86–87). Cf. Pingree, "The Indian Iconography of the Decans and Horâs," 228 n. 32–33; id., *The Yavanajātaka of Sphujidhvaja*, 430–31; Grenfell & Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 3:126–37 (P. Oxy. 465); Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 139–40; Quack, "Beiträge zu den ägyptischen Dekanen," 433–45. Quack argues against the identification of the second century P. Oxyrhynchus 465 as part of the Salmeschoiniaka.

50 On this term cf. Joachim F. Quack, "Frühe ägyptische Vorläufer der Paranatellonta?" *Sudhoffs Archiv* 83 (1999): 212–23.

51 Porph., *Aneb.* 36: Χαιρήμων μὲν γὰρ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι οὐδ' ἄλλο τι πρὸ τῶν ὁρωμένων κόσμων ἡγοῦνται, ἐν ἀρχῆς λόγῳ τιθέμενοι τοὺς Αἰγυπτίων, οὐδ' ἄλλους θεοὺς πλὴν τῶν πλανητῶν λεγομένων καὶ τῶν συμπληρούντων τὸν ζῳδιακὸν καὶ ὅσοι τούτοις παρανατέλλουσιν, τάς τε εἰς τοὺς δεκανοὺς τομὰς καὶ τοὺς ὡροσκόπους καὶ τοὺς λεγομένους κραταιοὺς ἡγεμόνας, ὧν καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα ἐν τοῖς Ἀλμενιχιακοῖς (sic) φέρεται καὶ θεραπεῖαι παθῶν καὶ ἀνατολαὶ καὶ δύσεις καὶ μελλόντων σημειώσεις. Cf. Pieter W. van der Horst, *Chaeremon: Egyptian Priest and Stoic Philosopher. The Fragments Collected and Translated with Explanatory Notes* (EPRO 101; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 55 n. 8.

52 Quack, "Beiträge zu den ägyptischen Dekanen," 436.

53 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.4: Χαιρήμων δὲ καὶ οἵτινες ἄλλοι τῶν περὶ τὸν κόσμον ἅπτονται πρώτων αἰτίων, τὰς τελευταίας ἀρχὰς ἐξηγοῦνται· ὅσοι τε τοὺς πλανήτας καὶ τὸν ζωδιακὸν τούς τε δεκανοὺς καὶ ὡροσκόπους καὶ τοὺς λεγομένους κραταιοὺς καὶ ἡγεμόνας παραδιδόασι, τὰς μεριστὰς τῶν ἀρχῶν διανομὰς ἀναφαίνουσιν. τά τε ἐν τοῖς σαλμεσχινιακοῖς μέρος τι βραχύτατον περιέχει τῶν ἑρμαϊκῶν διατάξεων· The first part is obviously a paraphrase of Porphyry, and nothing necessitates that Iamblichus himself has read the *Salmeschoiniaka*.

tells us little of the *Salmeschoiniaka*, however. Iamblichus is merely out to refute Chaeremon's Stoic interpretation of Egyptian protology, which identifies the different gods with planets and stars, in favour of his own Neoplatonic interpretation. The last reference to the work may be found in the *Apotelesmata* of Hephaestion of Thebes, who says that Nechepsos referred to it in his discussion of the decans in the different astrological places.[54] If Nechepsos indeed referred to the *Salmeschoinaka*, this would most likely place it in the second century BCE at the latest, which is when the Nechepsos–Petosiris literature originates. The meaning of the title *Salmeschoiniaka* is contested, and suggestions include "Wandering of the Influences," "Book of Influences," and "Book of Demons."[55] The early Hermetic astrological treatises are thus preoccupied with the main Egyptian contribution to astrology, the decans, and this preoccupation can also be found in the theoretical Hermetica that deal with astrology.

We have already discussed the excerpt from a treatise of Hermes to Tat (SH VI) which deals with the decans and other celestial phenomena, and presents itself as the crowning discourse of the *Genikoi*. Here Hermes claims to have taught Tat earlier "about the circle of the zodiac, the five planets, the sun and moon, and each of their cycle."[56] This means that other astrological treatises were also considered part of the *Genikoi*, and thus teachings preliminary to the rebirth and the heavenly ascent. We should further note that George Syncellus (36.14; 57.16) claims to know *Genikoi* of Hermes containing astrological lore on the cosmic revolution in Sothic cycles. If the astrological topics listed in SH VI

54 Heph., *Apotel.* 2.18 Pingree (*CCAG* 8.2:86–7). Cf. Stephan Heilen, "Problems in translating ancient Greek astrological texts," in *Writings of Early Scholars in the Ancient Near East, Egypt, Rome, and Greece* (ed. Anette Imhausen and Tanja Pommerening; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 299–332 at 300f. for the difficulty of using Hephaestion and other astrological writers as sources.

55 Heinz-Josef Thissen, "Zur Namen Σαλμεσχινιακα," in Christian Leitz, *Altägyptische Sternenuhren* (OLA 62; Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 51–55 at 55: *srm-nꜣ-sḫny.w* = πλάνησις τῶν ἀποτελεσμάτων: "Wanderung der Einflüsse (Konstellationen)." For earlier suggestions for the title, cf. Franz Boll, *Sphaera: neue griechische Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Sternbilder* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903; repr. 1967), 376ff. Quack, "Beiträge zu den ägyptischen Dekanen," 436, argues that Thissen's suggestion should have had the definite article *pꜣ* in front of *srm*, and claims that the negative connotations of *srm* as "error" (as with πλάνησις) makes it an unlikely title. But if the work reflects Hermetic astral theories, then the influences are indeed mostly negative, to be overcome by the sage. Quack suggests instead *ḏ(r)mꜥ nꜣ sḫn.w*, "book of influences," or *ḏ(r)mꜥ nꜣ ỉḫ.w*, "book of demons."

56 SH VI, 2: ἔφαμέν σοι περὶ τοῦ ζῳδιακοῦ κύκλου, τοῦ καὶ ζῳοφόρου, καὶ τῶν πέντε πλανητῶν καὶ ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης καὶ τοῦ ἑκάστου τούτων κύκλου… οὕτως βούλομαί σε νοεῖν καὶ περὶ τῶν τριάκοντα ἓξ δεκανῶν μεμνημένον ἐκείνων, ἵν' εὔγνωστός σοι καὶ ὁ περὶ τούτων λόγος γένοιτο. Cf. also *Ascl.* 24, 25, 37.

refer to individual treatises, then CH XVI would be a strong candidate for the treatise dealing with the sun, especially in view of the similar function of the demons, who are said to be forces of the decans in SH VI, 10, while they are arrayed under the sun in CH XVI. In both treatises, the demons are said to have great influence on earth, and several of their effects are parallel, such as social turmoil, revolts in the cities, famine, plague, and earthquakes:

SH VI, 8:	CH XVI, 14:
οὕτως, ὦ τέκνον,	οὗτοι πάντες
τῶν καθολικῶς πάντων συμβαινόντων	τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς πραγμάτων
ἡ ἐνέργεια ἀπὸ τούτων ἐστιν·	τὴν ἐξουσίαν κεκληρωμένοι εἰσὶ
οἷον … βασιλέων μετατροπαί,	καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς θορύβων,
	καὶ ποικίλην ταραχὴν ἐργάζονται καὶ κοινῇ
πόλεων ἐπαναστάσεις,	ταῖς **πόλεσι** καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσι καὶ ἰδίᾳ ἑκάστῳ·
	10: τὰ δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν ἐπιταττόμενα
	ἐνεργοῦσι θυέλλαις καὶ καταιγίσι καὶ
λιμοί. λοιμοί, ἀμπώτεις θαλάσσης,	πρηστῆρσι καὶ μεταβολαῖς πυρὸς καὶ
γῆς **σεισμοί**	**σεισμοῖς**, ἔτι δὲ **λιμοῖς** καὶ πολέμοις.

Like SH VI, CH XVI is also said to be a crowning discourse,[57] although it is delivered by Asclepius, not Hermes. The demons in SH VI emanate from the decans, descend through the planets, and end up on earth, where they cause events great and small to pass. Such events can be predicted by a Hermetic astrologer: "If in truth you add the conjunction with Mars, or an aspect with the sun as it travels through the midheaven or the point opposite to it, or the descendant, the kingdom or power will be undermined by rivalries, wars and dangers."[58]

As we have seen, the theoretical Hermetica place the emphasis on the devotional observation of the stars, which is commensurate with the general proposition that God can be perceived through his creation.[59] Indeed, the devotional attitude is in *PD* put in opposition to the astronomical attitude, which is considered to be idle curiosity. The question is whether the astrological Hermetica are compatible with this devotional attitude of the philosophical

57 CH XVI, 1: πάντων τῶν ἄλλων ὥσπερ κορυφὴν καὶ ὑπόμνημα.

58 *Lib. Herm.* 26.6: *Si uero Mars aderit uel in medio caeli contigerit aut in opposito eius siue in occidente et aspexerit, cum inuidiis et proeliis et periculis regna uel praelationes habebunt*. My trans.

59 Jean-Pierre Mahé, "Le rôle de l'élément astrologique dans les écrits philosophiques d'Hermès Trismégiste," in *Les tablettes astrologiques de Grand* (Josèphe-Henriette Abry; Paris: Boccard, 1993), 161–71.

Hermetica. Much points to an affirmative answer to this question. In the *KK*, Hermes makes reference to "those humans who are born under my signs,"[60] that is, Virgo and Gemini. The stars in charge of each person is calculated from the moment of birth, when the astrologer would compute which zodiacal sign was in the ascendant and the positions of the planets. In a fragment of Stobaeus (XXIX), humans are said to have a portion from the "ethereal spirit," namely the astral soul, and for this reason we draw to us the attributes of the planets, so that each planet is within us: sorrow from Saturn, procreation from Jupiter, logos from Mercury, wrath from Mars, sleep from the moon, craving from Venus and joy from the sun.[61] Similar lists, though differing in the specific characteristics associated with each planet, can be found in SH XXIII, 28 and CH I, 24–25, while the passions are distributed among the zodiacal signs according to CH XIII, 7. Positive and negative characteristics would depend on the horoscope, that is, which zodiacal sign is in the ascendant, and the positions of the planets in relation to each other, the astrological "places," and the zodiac.[62] That the Hermetists were expected to be able to make such calculations can also be seen from the epilogue to the *Disc.8–9*, where Tat is told to erect the commemorative stela when Mercury is 15 degrees in Virgo, meaning that the planet is in the ascendant of its own house. This would of course be a simple calculation for anyone with some measure of astronomical knowledge and access to for example Ptolemy's *Handy Tables*, but such knowledge and access were far from universal.

Hermes promises to be of assistance to those people who are born under his signs, and especially "when the movement of the stars, which is in charge of them, is in harmony with the natural energy of each one."[63] This passage virtually guarantees that the author would have a strong interest in natal astrology, so that he could make his "natural energy" harmonize with the stars that govern his horoscope. This could be a reference to a iatromathematical treatment of the passions, perhaps by means of amulets, as for example a magico-astrological

60 SH XXIII, 29: τῶν ὑπὸ ζῳδίων τῶν ἐμῶν γινομένων ἀνθρώπων.

61 SH XXIX, 1: τοὔνεκ' ἀπ' αἰθερίου μεμερίσμεθα πνεύματος ἕλκειν δάκρυ, γέλωτα, χόλον, γένεσιν, λόγον, ὕπνον, ὄρεξιν. δάκρυ μέν ἐστι Κρόνος, Ζεὺς ⟨δ'⟩ ἡ γένεσις, λόγος Ἑρμῆς, θυμὸς Ἄρης, Μήνη δ' ἄρ' ὕπνος, Κυθέρεια δ' ὄρεξις, Ἡέλιός τε γέλως.

62 On places, cf. Franz Cumont, "Écrits hermétiques, I. Sur les douze lieux de la sphère," *RP* 42 (1918): 63–79.

63 SH XXIII, 29: ὅταν καὶ ⟨ἡ⟩ ἐπικειμένη αὐτοῖς τῶν ἀστέρων κίνησις σύμφωνον ἔχῃ τὴν ἑνὸς ἑκάστου φυσικὴν ἐνέργειαν.

recipe of Hermes, for the treatment of peony, is said to repel demons.[64] As we have seen, Porphyry informed us that the *Salmeschoiniaka* contained information regarding the purification of corporeal passions. This means that the text would likely give information on how the knowledge of astral demons could be used to counter their effects on bodily functions, as in the introduction to the Hermetic medicinal astrology known as the *Iatromathematika*:[65]

ΙΑΤΡΟΜΑΘΗΜΑΤΙΚΑ ΕΡΜΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΙΣΜΕΓΙΣΤΟΥ ΠΡΟΣ ΑΜΜΩΝΑ ΑΙΓΥΠΤΙΟΝ.

(1.1.) τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ὦ Ἄμμων, κόσμον φασὶν οἱ σοφοί, ἐπειδὴ ἀφομοιοῦται τῇ τοῦ κόσμου φύσει.

(2.) ἐν γὰρ τῇ καταβολῇ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου σπέρματος ἐκ τῶν ζ′ στοιχείων ἀκτῖνες ἐπιπλέκονται ἐφ' ἕκαστον μέρος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

(3.) ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ἐκτροπῆς κατὰ τὴν τῶν ιβ′ ζῳδίων θέσιν.

(4.) ὁ μὲν γὰρ ♈ λέγεται κεφαλή, τὰ δὲ τῆς κεφαλῆς αἰσθητήρια εἰς τοὺς ζ′ ἀστέρας ἀπομεμέρισται.

(5.) ὁ μὲν γὰρ δεξιὸς ὀφθαλμὸς ἀπονενέμηται τῷ ☉, ὁ δὲ εὐώνυμος τῇ ☾, αἱ ἀκοαὶ τῷ ♄, ὁ ἐγκέφαλος τῷ ♃, ἡ γλῶσσα καὶ ὁ γαργαρεὼν τῷ ☿, ἡ ὄσφρησις καὶ ἡ γεῦσις τῇ ♀, ὅσα δὲ ἔναιμα τῷ σχήματι.

(6.) ἐάν τις οὖν κακῶς τύχῃ ἐπὶ τῆς σπορᾶς ἢ τῆς γεννήσεως κείμενος, ἐπὶ τοῦ προσῳκειωμένου αὐτῷ μέλους πήρωσις γίνεταί τις.

The Iatromathematika of Hermes Trismegistus to Ammon the Egyptian

1.1. The human, O Ammon, is said by the wise to be a cosmos, since it is made similar to the nature of the cosmos.

2. For during the sowing of human sperm, rays from the seven planets intermingle with each part of the human.

3. Something similar happens at the moment of birth, according to the disposition of the zodiac.

4. For the Ram is said to be the head, and the sensory organs of the head are assigned to the seven planets.

5. For the right eye is assigned to the Sun, and the left to Moon, the ears to Saturn, the brain to Jupiter, the tongue and the uvula to Mercury, the sense of smell and taste to Venus, and the bloodvessels has to do with the aspect.

6. Now if some evil influence should happen to dominate the conception or birth, then some kind of disability befalls the limb associated with it.

64 Festugière, "Un opuscule hermétique sur la pivoine," 248–51.

65 Cf. FR 1:123ff.

(7.) τέσσαρα δὲ καθολικὰ μέρη εἰσὶν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, κεφαλή, θώραξ, χεῖρες καὶ πόδες· ἕκαστον δὲ τούτων κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς σπορᾶς ἢ τῆς γεννήσεως κατά τι ἠσθένηκε, τοῦ δεσπόζοντος αὐτοῦ ἀστέρος κακωθέντος, οἷον ὀφθαλμὸν ἢ καὶ ἄμφω οἱ ὀφθαλμοί, ἢ ἡ μία ἀκοή, ἢ καὶ αἱ δύο, ἢ οἱ ὀδόντες ἔπαθόν τι, ἢ καὶ ἡ λαλιὰ ἐναποδίσθη.

(8.) δῆλον γὰρ ὡς ἀκτὶς κακοποιοῦ ἐπιβαλοῦσα τούτων τινὶ φθείρει καὶ λυμαίνεται, ὁμοίως καὶ ἐπὶ θώρακος, ἢ ὁ πνεύμων ἔπαθεν ἢ τὸ ἧπαρ ἢ ὁ σπλὴν ἢ ἡ καρδία ἤ τι τῶν περὶ τὰ ἔντερα.

(9.) καὶ ἐπὶ χειρῶν ὁμοίως καὶ ἐπὶ ποδῶν. ἢ γὰρ οἱ δάκτυλοι ἢ οἱ ὄνυχες ἤ τι τῶν τοιούτων μορίων οἰκείως ἔπαθεν.

(10.) ἐγὼ οὖν πρῶτος ἀνεῦρον ταύτην τὴν ἐπιστήμην καὶ προσέταξα αὐτὴν καλεῖσθαι ὑπηρέτιν τῆς φύσεως. ἀνάγκη γὰρ ταύτην συγκροτεῖν τῇ φύσει, ὅθεν καὶ τὰ βοηθήματα ταύτῃ προσγίνεται.

7. And there are four general parts in a human: head, torso, hands and feet. Each of them is weakened according to the time of conception or birth, when the star which rules over it is unpropitious, as for instance an eye or both eyes, or an ear or both, or the teeth suffer something, or the capacity to speak is lost.

8. Indeed it is clear that just as a ray from a maleficent star hurts and defiles any of these when it sets upon them, so also the lungs, liver, spleen, heart, or guts suffer when it sets upon the torso.

9. And likewise when it sets upon the hands and feet, either the fingers or the nails or any such members suffer something suitable to it.

10. Therefore I am the first to have discovered this science, and I ordered it to be called a handmaiden of nature. For it is necessary to apply this science to nature, whence the science will gain additional remedies.[66]

Pingree has argued that this Hermetic planetary melothesia, the teaching that planets directly influence parts of the body, can be dated to the second century BCE, and was used in the third century CE by Pancharius.[67] The Anonymous Astrologer of 379 also refers to a iatromathematic book of Hermes in which he refers to maleficient influences and passions (πάθη) sent by the decans to the

66 Text in Julius L. Ideler, *Physici et medici Graeci minores* (2 vols.; Berlin: Reimer, 1841; repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1963), 1: 387–88 (different manuscript of same text edited on pp. 430ff.). My trans. A French translation can be found in FR 1:130–31. I read the final ταύτῃ as referring to science; if it refers to nature instead, the final sentence could mean that the remedies become allies of nature when applied. Cf. Malcolm Wilson and Demetra George, "Anonymi, De Decubitu: Contexts of Rationality," *Mouseion* 3/6 (2006): 439–452, who argue that the Hermetic introduction is extraneous to the main text on the zodiac, which it shares with the later De Decubitu. The only reason given that the core section is "pilfered" from another source is that the introduction contains material "irrelevant to the zodiaca" (p. 441).

67 Pingree, *The Yavanajātaka of Sphujidhvaja*, 2:430.

body parts they rule over,[68] in other words a decanic melothesia.[69] Likewise, *The Holy book of Hermes to Asclepius* gives recipes for amulets to be used against decanic influences on different body parts.[70] We have in the Hermetica seen that the planetary influences might be sent either from the sun, as in CH XVI, or the decans, as in SH VI. Likewise, the list of vices is related to the seven planets in the *Poimandres* (CH I, 26) and the twelve zodiacal signs in CH XIII, 7. But also astrological texts vary between using planets, zodiacal signs and decans in their prognostications. In the *Perfect Discourse* it seems that different kinds of fatality are predicated when Hermes explains that the ousiarch of the thirty-six Horoscopes is the one called Pantomorphos, while the ousiarch of the seven planets is fate, Heimarmene or Fortuna:

XXXVI, quorum uocabulum est Horoscopi, id est eodem loco semper defixorum siderum, horum οὐσιάρχης *uel princeps est, quem* Παντόμορφον *uel Omniformem uocant, qui diuersis speciebus diuersas formas facit. septem sphaerae quae uocantur habent* οὐσιάρχας, *id est sui principes, quam Fortunam dicunt aut* Εἱμαρμένην, *quibus inmutantur omnia lege naturae stabilitateque firmissima, sempiterna agitatione uariata.*

The thirty-six, whose designation is Horoscopes, namely the stars that are always fixed in the same place, have as their head or ousiarch the one called Pantomorphos or Omniform, who makes various forms within various classes. The so-called seven spheres have the ousiarchs or heads called Fortune and Heimarmene, whereby all things change according to nature's law and a steadfast stability that stirs in everlasting variation.[71]

Hermes later (§ 39) explains that Heimarmene is always followed by necessity, and thus she controls everything that happens in the universe.[72] Order follows

68 Astr. Anon. 379, *Frag. Apot.* (*CCAG* 5.1), 209: … καθὼς περιέχει καὶ ἡ τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ βίβλος ἐν ᾗ ἰατρομαθηματικὰ πλεῖστα ἔγραψεν, ἐπειδὴ οἱ κακοποιοὶ ἐπικείμενοι αὐτοῖς τοῖς δεκανοῖς τοιαῦτα καὶ τὰ πάθη ἢ τὰ σίνη ἐπιπέμπουσι καὶ περὶ ἐκεῖνα τὰ μέλη ὧνπερ ἕκαστος ⟨τῶν⟩ δεκανῶν κυριεύει…

69 For decanic and planetary melothesiae, cf. Pingree, *The Yavanajātaka of Sphujidhvaja*, 2:325–26.

70 Ruelle, "Hermès Trismégiste: Le livre sacré sur les Décans"; Gundel, *Dekane und Dekansternbilder,* 43; Quack, "Beiträge zu den ägyptischen Dekanen," 358–65.

71 *Ascl.* 19. Trans. Copenhaver, slightly modified.

72 Cf. SH XII, 2: "For the stars are the instrument of fate, for it is according to fate that they bring everything to completion in nature and among humans" (ὅπλον γὰρ εἱμαρμένης οἱ ἀστέρες, κατὰ γὰρ ταύτην πάντα ἀποτελοῦσι τῇ φύσει καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις). Fate and Necessity are in this text the powers of Providence, though unlike the *Perfect Discourse*, Fate is also the servant of Necessity.

Heimarmene and Necessity.[73] However, as an aside he adds that also "coincidence or fortune" (*euentus autem uel fors*) is mixed into everything, which corresponds to Fortune (*fors* = *fortuna*).[74] The seven planets thus effectuate both unyielding necessity and blind luck. The decans, on the other hand, are responsible for the imprinting of form on matter, mediating between the realm of ideas above and the changing world below. As the ones who impose forms also on humans, they are clearly influential when something ails the human form, which would make them useful in a melothesia. It is thus quite likely that astrological Hermetica would be used in the Hermetic therapy of desire.

7.4 Priestly Philosophers

As we have already seen, there was a tradition going back to at least the pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis* and to Aristoxenus that the Egyptians were the first to discover astrology and arithmetic, although the Chaldeans contested this claim.[75] Diodorus Siculus states that the education of priests consists of two systems of letters—sacred and demotic—as well as geometry and arithmetic, which serve as the foundation for astrology, the most important art: "If the positions and movements of the stars are subject to careful observation also among certain other nations, they are especially so among the Egyptians."[76] Curiously, he goes on to state that craftsmen do not learn wrestling and music, and the latter was even considered harmful, "since it makes the soul of the listeners effeminate."[77] This is contradicted in an earlier passage, where it is said that Hermes "became the first observer of the positions of the stars and the harmony and nature of the sounds,"[78] and that Osiris was fond of music

73 This is perhaps an allusion to the three fates, cf. NF 2:397 n. 336. Cf. also Stephen Gersh, "Theological Doctrines of the Latin Asclepius," in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism* (ed. Richard T. Wallis; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 129–66 at 144–46.

74 Cf. Gersh, "Theological Doctrines," 144ff.; Denzey Lewis, *Cosmology and Fate*, 117–18. Both neglect to mention that chance plays any role.

75 See above, chap. 2.2.1 & 2.2.2.

76 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.81.4: ἐπιμελοῦς γὰρ, εἰ καὶ παρά τισιν ἄλλοις, καὶ παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις παρατηρήσεως τυγχάνουσιν αἱ τῶν ἄστρων τάξεις τε καὶ κινήσεις. My trans. Cf. Burton, *Diodorus Siculus: Book I*, 236–38.

77 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.81.7: τὴν δὲ μουσικὴν νομίζουσιν οὐ μόνον ἄχρηστον ὑπάρχειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ βλαβεράν, ὡς [ἂν] ἐκθηλύνουσαν τὰς τῶν ἀκουόντων ψυχάς. My trans.

78 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.16.1: περί τε τῆς τῶν ἄστρων τάξεως καὶ περὶ τῆς τῶν φθόγγων ἁρμονίας καὶ φύσεως τοῦτον πρῶτον γενέσθαι παρατηρητήν. My trans. Cf. Burton, *Diodorus Siculus: Book I*, 78–79.

and always attended by the nine Muses, whose Musegete was Apollo.[79] Either Diodorus must have used contradictory sources, or he intended to distinguish between sacred music, invented by Hermes and represented by the Muses, and the profane music of craftsmen and the like, which he disapproves of. If that were the case, we would have a similar distinction as in the *Perfect Discourse* (8–9), between arts that are in harmony with celestial principles, and profane arts that are considered frivolous pastimes.

Such a distinction can also be found in the portrayal of the Egyptian priests by one of its members, namely Chaeremon, the sacred scribe and Stoic philosopher. Chaeremon is of paramount importance for understanding the position of the Hermetica, since he was both a representative of his native country's literate elite and someone who tried to use this status to make a career in the hegemonic Greco-Roman culture. Garth Fowden points out that Chaeremon makes the Egyptian priests look like Pythagoreans,[80] and this is perhaps not that surprising, as Pythagoras was widely considered to have derived his philosophy from Egyptian priests in the past. David Frankfurter sees the activities of Chaeremon in the light of 'stereotype appropriation,' namely "the manifold ways indigenous cultures embrace and act out the stereotypes woven by a colonizing or otherwise dominant alien culture."[81] The point is well taken, but care should be taken not to present this self-projection of the priests as somehow inauthentic, as a mere exoticizing mirage.[82] Religious tradition is never static, but changes in tune with its surroundings, and so it is only to be expected that the carriers of the Great Tradition of the Egyptian temples should adapt to the new situation of being part of the Roman Empire. When Chaeremon thus portrays the Egyptian priesthood, of which he himself was a part, in terms reminiscent of the Pythagorean sect—which by this time had itself become semi-legendary—we should expect the portrayal to be idealizing, but not without roots in reality.

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79 Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.18.4–5: εἶναι γὰρ τὸν Ὄσιριν φιλογέλωτά τε καὶ χαίροντα μουσικῇ καὶ χοροῖς· διὸ καὶ περιάγεσθαι πλῆθος μουσουργῶν, ἐν οἷς παρθένους ἐννέα δυναμένας ᾄδειν καὶ κατὰ τὰ ἄλλα πεπαιδευμένας, τὰς παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ὀνομαζομένας Μούσας· τούτων δ' ἡγεῖσθαι τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα λέγουσιν, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ Μουσηγέτην αὐτὸν ὠνομάσθαι. The muses are also presented as a divine gift in *Ascl.* 9: *nec inmerito in hominum coetum Musarum chorus est a summa diuinitate demissus, scilicet ne terrenus mundus uideretur incultior si modorum dulcedine caruisset, sed potius ut musicatis hominum cantilenis concelebraretur laudibus, qui solus omnia aut pater est omnium, atque ita caelestibus laudibus nec in terris harmoniae suauitas defuisset.*

80 Cf. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 54–56.

81 Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 225.

82 Cf. Richard Gordon, "Shaping the Text: Innovation and Authority in Graeco-Egyptian Malign Magic," in *Kykeon: Studies in Honour of H.S. Versnel* (ed. Herman F.J. Horstmanshoff et al.; RGRW 142; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 69–111 at 71–76.

In the lengthy excerpt from Chaeremon preserved in Porphyry's *On Abstinence*, being a priest is portrayed as a contemplative way of life, characterized by ascetic practice, ritual purity, and proximity to the divine. But learning also plays a central role:

διῄρουν δὲ νύκτα μὲν εἰς ἐπιτήρησιν οὐρανίων, ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ ἁγιστείαν, ἡμέραν δὲ εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν θεῶν, καθ' ἣν ἢ τρὶς ἢ τετράκις, κατὰ τὴν ἕω καὶ τὴν ἑσπέραν μεσουρανοῦντά τε τὸν ἥλιον καὶ πρὸς δύσιν καταφερόμενον, τούτους ὑμνοῦντες· τὸν δὲ ἄλλον χρόνον πρὸς θεωρήμασιν ἦσαν ἀριθμητικοῖς τε καὶ γεωμετρικοῖς, ἐκπονοῦντες ἀεί τι, καὶ προσεξευρίσκοντες, συνόλως τε περὶ τὴν ἐμπειρίαν καταγιγνόμενοι.

They divided the night for the observation of the heavenly bodies, and sometimes for ritual, and the day for worship of the gods in which they sang hymns to them three or four times, in the morning [and the evening], when the sun is on the meridian, and when it is descending to the west. The rest of the time they spent with arithmetical and geometrical speculations, always trying to search out something and to make discoveries, and in general always busy with the pursuit of learning.[83]

Celestial observation, hymns, arithmetic and geometry: just like the *Perfect Discourse*, we see the Egyptian priests portrayed as experts of the quadrivium as part of their worship of divinity, and just like in the *Perfect Discourse* this is near the end of the excerpt called "the true philosophizing" (τὸ μὲν κατ' ἀλήθειαν φιλοσοφοῦν), no doubt as opposed to the profane philosophy of the Greeks.[84] This true philosophy is explicitly attributed by Chaeremon to the upper echelons of the Egyptian priesthood—the prophets, stolists, sacred scribes and astrologers—while the remaining priests, image-bearers, and servants practiced less demanding versions of the same regimen.

Similarly, when Clement of Alexandria attempts to demonstrate that the Greeks had plagiarized many tenets from the Egyptians, and especially the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, he claims that the Egyptian priests have a philosophy of their own, and that this philosophy is best demonstrated by their priestly processions.[85] The totality of the Egyptian philosophy is according to

83 Porph., *Abst.* 4.8 = Chaer., fr. 10 van der Horst. Trans. van der Horst, *Chaeremon.* Cf. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 54–56.

84 Cf. van der Horst, *Chaeremon*, 57 n. 2.

85 Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 6.4.35: μετίασι γὰρ οἰκείαν τινὰ φιλοσοφίαν Αἰγύπτιοι· αὐτίκα τοῦτο ἐμφαίνει μάλιστα ἡ ἱεροπρεπὴς αὐτῶν θρησκεία. For a translation of the whole passage, cf. Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies* (trans. Rodney Livingstone; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 74.

Clement summed up in the thirty-six books of Hermes, which are carried in procession by the priests, the same priests as those mentioned by Chaeremon with the addition of a musician.[86] From Clement's description, these books do not correspond to our Hermetica, but have as their subject matter such things as hymns and ritual, astronomy, law and geography, topics which are paralleled in a list of books in the Ptolemaic temple of Horus in Edfu.[87] The number thirty-six is no doubt meant to denote the totality of thirty-six decans, who together make up the year. Another six books of Hermes are then added, concerning medicine, for a new total of forty-two. This number corresponds to the number of nomes in Upper- and Lower Egypt, as well as to the limbs of Osiris.[88] Jan Assmann has described the procession of priests as expressing a textual community, which carries the core literature deemed authoritative.[89] The division of books into a greater library containing the philosophy and rituals of the Egyptians, and a lesser one containing medicine, furthermore reminds us of the Egyptian prophet who in *Korê Kosmou* is given philosophy to nourish the soul and medicine to save the ailing bodies (SH XXIII, 68). The passage also states that magic nourishes the soul. In the following chapter, we shall consider the role of magic in the Hermetica, but we will return to the idealized priests of Chaeremon in the last chapter.

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86 A Roman era Hieratic and Demotic handbook, awaiting publication, relates to the architecture of temples and regulations for priests, including the books to be learned by priests: Joachim F. Quack, "Ein ägyptisches Handbuch der Tempels und seine griechische Übersetzung," *ZPE* 119 (1997): 297–300; id., "Le manuel du temple: Une nouvelle source sur la vie des prêtres égyptiens," *Égypte, Afrique et Orient* 29 (2003): 11–18; id., "Die Überlieferungsstruktur des Buches vom Tempel," in *Tebtynis und Soknopaiu Nesos: Leben in römerzeitlichen Fajum* (ed. Sandre L. Lippert and Maren Schentuleit; Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2005), 105–15; id., "Ämtererblichkeit und Abstammungsvorschriften bei Priestern nach dem Buch vom Tempel," in *Genealogie-Realität und Fiktion von Identität* (ed. Martin Fitzenreiter; Internet-Beiträge zur Ägyptologie und Sudanarchäologie 5; London: Golden House, 2005), 97–102.

87 Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 57–59. Cf. further on Egyptian temple libraries Kim Ryholt, "On the Contents and Nature of the Tebtunis Temple Library: A Status Report," in *Tebtynis und Soknopaiu Nesos: Leben in römerzeitlichen Fajum* (ed. Sandra L. Lippert and Maren Schentuleit; Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2005), 141–70; id., "Libraries in Ancient Egypt," in *Ancient Libraries* (ed. Jason König, Katerina Okonomopoulou, and Greg Woolf; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 23–37.

88 Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 75; Jasnow and Zauzich, *Conversations*, 172.

89 Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 73, 135–36.

CHAPTER 8

The Magician and the Temple

When Tat descended back to earth after his visionary ascent to the Ogdoad and the Ennead, Hermes commanded him to erect a votive stela in his temple in Diospolis, under a specific astronomical conjunction, and he was further told to place a protective spell on the stela, in order to shield it from the gaze of the uninitiated. At the very least, this tells us that such ritual practices were not necessarily frowned upon among Hermetists, even at the very completion of their initiation. There is no reason to assume that the spell is mere décor, an exotic motif to give the text an Egyptian flavor. The treatise has much in common with spells to attain revelations found in the magical papyri, which were certainly meant to be performed. The main difference is the amount of specific instructions for ritual action in the magical papyri, where there is also in general more mythological information. Another difference, which is often enough highlighted in discussions of the term 'magic,' is the pragmatic ends of magic, versus the more "lofty" or "spiritual" aspirations of gnosis, mysticism, philosophy, religion, and other terms regularly opposed to magic. It is true enough that some of the spells in our collection of magical papyri viewed with modern lenses could be considered prosaic, such as the spell to keep bugs out of the house (PGM VII.149–154), or morally reprehensible, such as the spell which involves drowning a cat (PGM III.1–164). But our aim is not to exert normative judgement, and there is nothing inherently more debased about the spells to attain visions than visionary practices in comparable religions. In the following, we will investigate closer the link between the Hermetica and the magical papyri, with a special view as to who might be the empirical authors behind the treatises.

8.1 On the Term 'Magic'

In a recent work, Bernd-Christian Otto advised getting rid of the term 'magic' entirely, since the term has a polemic usage and is seldom found as a self-designation in the material labelled magic.[1] In his brief treatment of the

1 Bernd-Christian Otto, *Magie: Rezeptions- und diskursgeschichtliche Analysen von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011); id., "Towards Historicizing 'Magic' in Antiquity," *Numen* 60 (2013): 308–47.

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Hermetica, he concludes that there is no use of the term magic, and that the treatises are therefore largely irrelevant to the topic at hand. This conclusion is in my view too hasty. As with the terms 'Gnosticism' and 'Mystery-cults,' there is a danger that the terms occlude our field of vision, and serve as lazy shorthands in place of genuine scholarly reflection. However, there are in my view two reasons not to dispense with such terms altogether: First, attempts to eradicate ambiguous terms are seldom very successful. Witness the flora of books on Gnosticism, now decades after the well-received and influential deconstructive works of Michael Williams and Karen King.[2] Second, dispensing with words does not add to our conceptual tool-kit. All scholarly endeavours are reductionist, in the sense that they present a limited portion of the phenomena submitted to analysis, which the scholar feels is representative. Humanistic scholarship depends on metaphor and metonymy: The scholar can present his material in terms of something else, more well-known (metaphor), and pick out a representative sample to stand for the whole (*pars pro toto*; metonymy). The situation for 'magic' is in my view the same as that which Jonathan Z. Smith describes for 'religion':

> … while there is a staggering amount of data, of phenomena, of human experiences and expressions that might be characterized in one culture or another, by one criterion or another, as religious—*there is no data for religion*. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy.[3]

In the following, the term magic will appear in two ways. One is as the translation of Greek μαγεῖα, or Egyptian *ḥk*(*ꜣ*) (Copt. ϩⲓⲕ), that is, the emic concept of magic. The other is as an etic concept, which we can heuristically define as *ritual acts and objects that are thought to manipulate imperceptible powers, in order to achieve empirical effects not otherwise attainable*.[4] It is to be emphasized that this definition does not postulate that magic is something other than

2 Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*; King, *What is Gnosticism?*

3 Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 1982), xi.

4 This definition is not too far from the one Apuleius attributes to vulgar opinion in *Apol.* 26: *Sin uero more uulgari eum isti proprie magum existimant, qui communione loquendi cum deis immortalibus ad omnia quae uelit incredibili quadam ui cantaminum polleat, opido miror cur accusare non timuerint quem posse tantum fatentur.*

religion.[5] If we follow the definition of Melford Spiro, that religion is "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings,"[6] then magic should be considered a subgroup of religion, since it consists of a specific form of interaction with the culturally postulated beings. If religion is "institution," then magic is specific rituals performed within or—perhaps more commonly—on the fringes of said institution. In the following we will accordingly consider magic as a subgroup of religion, instead of postulating a false distinction between the two.[7] In relation to this we should also consider two relevant terms often associated with magic in the scholarly literature of ancient religions, namely mysticism and theurgy. I would consider mysticism as a contemplative practice aiming to attain unity with the object contemplated, so as to break down the subject-object barrier. It should be emphasized that I do not see the distinction between mysticism and magic as a necessary one. Mysticism is religious if it includes in its practice some form of communication with superhuman beings, and magic if it depends on acts or objects that manipulate some power that is thought to be needed in order to achieve the unity. Conversely, a magic rite can also be considered to fall under mysticism if it involves contemplative practice and the idea that the practitioner or his client should become one with the being invoked. Theurgy I see no great use for as an analytical concept, and I see it used in a much more bewildering way than the term magic. To me it seems that the term is an apologetic one, serving to protect certain Neoplatonist philosophers from the damaging charge of magic. I likewise imagine that this is the reason that the term has made good headway in studies of Jewish mysticism.[8] To label a rite theurgic, is

5 In this I follow the basic premise of the contributions in Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg (eds.), *Envisioning Magic* (SHR 75; Leiden: Brill, 1997), xi.

6 Spiro, "Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation," 96.

7 Otherwise balanced works such as Ian S. Moyer, "The Initiation of the Magician," in *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals: New Critical Perspectives* (ed. David B. Dodd and Christopher A. Faraone; London: Routledge, 2003), 219–38 at 224–25, still adhere to such a distinction.

8 Cf. for example Ithamar Gruenwald, "When Magical Techniques and Mystical Practices Become Neighbors: Methodological Considerations," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition* (ed. Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Saul Shaked; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 159–86. Although the author explicitly denies that his aims are apologetic, one can easily find the old bias present in sentences such as these (p. 170): "Unlike miracles which pertain to be divine interventions showing the unique qualities of divinely inspired persons, magical acts belong in the sphere of the professional performers who maintain coercive contacts with angelic and demonic beings." I would only consider miracle a potentially useful analytical tool in the case of supernatural events that are reported to happen without any human agency. If there is a miracle-performer, it would analytically be magic.

to imply that it is more admirable than magic rites: the former aims at union with God, the latter delves in erotic fixations and fishing-spells. Of course, such differences in goals are important analytically, but a quick read-through of the magical papyri will show that spells to achieve erotic encounters and spells to contact supernal gods have similar ritual procedures. Consequently, I will only refer to theurgy when the sources do so.

As Robert K. Ritner has pointed out, it is fully in line with Egyptian conceptions that magic is placed within the temple, that is, within the sphere of official Egyptian religion.[9] There are no negative connotations of the words μαγεῖα or *ḥkꜣ* in Egyptian sources until the Christian era. Of course, things were different for the Greek and Roman elites, who generally viewed untraditional magical practices with disdain. In Roman law, *magia* would come to be categorized as a *veneficium*, a forbidden practice falling under Sulla's *lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis*.[10] This is perhaps the reason that there are not more references to magic in the Hermetica, since they were likely aimed at an elite Greco-Roman audience. However, despite the Cornelian law we sometimes find magic extolled also among the educated elite. In the first or second century CE, we find Thessalos brazenly dedicating to the Emperor a book in which he claims that he asked the priests of Thebes about their magic arts, in order to gain a revelation of iatromathematical knowledge.[11] Apuleius, as is well known, defended himself against charges of magic, but yet averred that magic was on par with philosophy.[12]

In the Hermetica the term magic is found only once, in the aretalogy of Isis and Osiris at the end of the *Korê Kosmou*: "It is they who, recognizing that the bodies are perishable, devised the perfection of the prophets in all regards, since the prophet destined to lay his hands upon gods never should be ignorant of anything that exists, so that philosophy and magic should nourish the soul, and medicine heal the body when anything ails it."[13] As noted above, the passage places philosophy, magic and medicine under the purview of the prophet, the one who enters the naos of the god every morning and places his

9 Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*. Cf. also Quack, "La magie au temple."

10 Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2003), 142ff.; Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 46–56.

11 Thess., *Virt. herb.* 1. prol. 12.

12 Apul., *Apol.* 26.

13 SH 68: οὗτοι τὸ φθόριμον τῶν σωμάτων ἐπιγνόντες τὸ ἐν ἅπασι τέλειον τῶν προφητῶν ἐτεχνάσαντο, ὡς μήποτε ὁ μέλλων θεοῖς προσάγειν χεῖρας προφήτης ἀγνοῇ τι τῶν ὄντων, ἵνα φιλοσοφία μὲν καὶ μαγεία ψυχὴν τρέφῃ, σῴζῃ δ' ὅταν τι πάσχῃ ἰατρικὴ σῶμα.

hands upon the image of the gods. It is notable that magic is considered a remedy for the soul, like philosophy, rather than for the body.[14] Perhaps this is because of the Egyptian idea that magic "wards off the blows of fate,"[15] and that Hellenistic philosophy was likewise concerned with the constraints of fate.

However, Zosimus of Panopolis gives us a lengthy quote from an unknown work of Hermes, in which he attacks magic. Unlike Zoroaster, we are told, Hermes inveighed against magic stating that "it is not fitting for the spiritual man, who knows himself, to correct anything by magic, even if it should be deemed good, nor to use force against fate."[16] The notion of a spiritual man (πνευματικὸς ἄνθρωπος) is suspect, and reminds one more of, e.g., Valentinian terminology than Hermetic.[17] The spiritual is generally not a salvific quality in the Hermetica, but rather more akin to the Stoic conception. We are told in SH XIX that spiritual vision and hearing belong to the sensible realm, and should be made analogous to the cosmic harmony.[18] This accords with the *Poimandres*, in which the spiritual logos is what moves earth and water in the cosmogony, and logos is also what sees and hears in humans.[19]

The impression of a Christian influence in the fragment is increased by the subsequent reference to an unspeakable divine triad.[20] Although the Unbegotten, Self-Begotten and Begotten gods are three, they are nowhere else referred to as a triad. Howard Jackson suggested the triad Father, Cosmos and Human (CH VIII, 2–3,5; XIII, 18; *Ascl.* 10), but as Mertens points out, this triad is not "unnamable."[21] The closest parallel, so far not mentioned, is CH X, 14:

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14 On magic and philosophy, cf. Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery and Magic: Empedocles and the Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

15 Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, 17; cf. *Instructions of Merikare* 139–140, where magic is a gift from God to ward off fate (Simpson, *Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 165).

16 Zos. Pan., *Mém. auth.* 1.8 Mertens: ὁ μέντοι Ἑρμῆς ἐν τῷ περὶ ἐναυλίας διαβάλλει καὶ τὴν μαγείαν λέγων ὅτι οὐ δεῖ τὸν πνευματικὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν ἐπιγνόντα ἑαυτὸν οὔτε διὰ μαγείας κατορθοῦν τι, ἐὰν καὶ καλὸν νομίζηται, μηδὲ βιάζεσθαι τὴν ἀνάγκην, ἀλλ' ἐᾶν ὡς ἔχει φύσεως καὶ κρίσεως, πορεύεσθαι δὲ διὰ μόνου τοῦ ζητεῖν ἑαυτόν, καὶ θεὸν ἐπιγνόντα κρατεῖν τὴν ἀκατονόμαστον τριάδα καὶ ἐᾶν τὴν εἱμαρμένην ὃ θέλει ποιεῖν τῷ ἑαυτῆς πηλῷ, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῷ σώματι.

17 Mertens, *Zosime de Panopolis*, 75.

18 SH XIX, 5: διῄρηται δὲ εἰς τὰς ὀργανικὰς αἰσθήσεις καὶ ἔστι τι μέρος αὐτοῦ πνευματικὴ ὅρασις καὶ πνεῦμα ἀκουστικὸν καὶ ὀσφρητικὸν καὶ γευστικὸν καὶ ἁπτικόν.

19 CH I, 5–6: γῆ δὲ καὶ ὕδωρ … κινούμενα δὲ ἦν διὰ τὸν ἐπιφερόμενον πνευματικὸν λόγον εἰς ἀκοήν … τὸ ἐν σοὶ βλέπον καὶ ἀκοῦον, λόγος κυρίου, ὁ δὲ νοῦς πατὴρ θεός.

20 Compare Greg. Nyss., *C. Eun.* 2.3: ἔπειτα τὴν τοῦ ἀκατονομάστου τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος ὀνόματος; Procl., *In Tim.* 3.183: ἡ μὲν γὰρ τριὰς τὸ ἐν ταύτῃ πέρας ἐστίν, ὁ δὲ ἀριθμὸς ὁ ἀκατονόμαστος τὸ ἐν ταύτῃ ἄπειρον.

21 Jackson, *Zosimos*, 44–45.

"There are these three, then: God the father and the good; the cosmos; and the human."[22] Actually, two triads are mentioned here: God–Father–Good, and God–Cosmos–Human. Only the first could be said to be unnamable. A lengthy passage in the *Perfect Discourse* dwells on the impossibility to name God: "God, father, master of All … I cannot hope to name the maker of all majesty, the father and master of everything, with a single name, even a name composed of many names; he is nameless or rather he is all-named since he is one and all."[23] Here the Good of CH X is exchanged with the designation "Master of All," but we are still dealing with an unnameable and triadic conception of the One God who is All.

Finally, the "son of God" is given a more salvific role in the Hermetic fragment of Zosimus than is otherwise attested in the Hermetica. The son raises souls up from the realm of fate, enlightens the mind of everyone, and brings them up to where they were before they were born into corporeal bodies.[24] Michèle Mertens proposes three different scenarios to account for the "Gnostic" traits of the Hermetic fragment: 1) The Hermetic source of Zosimus has undergone Christian Gnostic interpolations; 2) Zosimus, citing by memory, has mixed Gnostic and Hermetic theories; 3) Later copyists have mangled the text, and much of the Hermetic material is actually due to Zosimus, who elsewhere demonstrates a preparedness to mix Hellenic, Jewish and Hermetic myths.[25] Either of these scenarios is possible, though I would perhaps prefer the second: We have earlier mentioned Nicotheus, "the hidden" or the "inscrutable." When Zosimus discusses Thoth, who is identifiable with the fleshly Adam, he states that there are two names for "his spiritual inner man" (ὁ δὲ ἔσω αὐτοῦ ἄνθρωπος): the common name (προσηγορικόν) is Light, while only Nicotheus knows the authoritative name (κύριον). It is impossible to know if Nicotheus wrote about Thoth, or if this is the interpolation of Zosimus, but at any rate it seems likely that Zosimus conflates the Hermetic terminology of the inner

22 CH X, 14: καὶ τρία τοίνυν ταῦτα, ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ καὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος, καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος. Trans. Copenhaver.

23 *Ascl.* 20: *deus etenim uel pater uel dominus omnium … non enim spero totius maiestatis effectorem omniumque rerum patrem uel dominum uno posse quamuis e multis conposito nuncupari nomine, hunc uero innominem uel potius omninominem siquidem is sit unus et omnia*. Trans. Copenhaver. Cf. also CH V, 1, 9–10 on the unnamable god.

24 Zos. Pan., *Mém. auth.* 1.8: θεάσῃ τὸν θεοῦ υἱὸν πάντα γινόμενον τῶν ὁσίων ψυχῶν ἕνεκεν, ἵνα αὐτὴν ἐκσπάσῃ ἐκ τοῦ χώρου τῆς εἱμαρμένης ἐπὶ τὸν ἀσώματον…. διὰ παντὸς σώματος διήκων, φωτίζων τὸν ἑκάστης νοῦν, εἰς τὸν εὐδαίμονα χῶρον ἀνώρμησεν ὅπουπερ ἦν καὶ πρὸ τοῦ τὸ σωματικὸν γενέσθαι, αὐτῷ ἀκολουθοῦντα καὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ὀρεγόμενον καὶ ὁδηγούμενον εἰς ἐκεῖνο τὸ φῶς.

25 Mertens, *Zosime*, 80.

man with the one he found in Nicotheus. There is nothing in the Hermetic fragment of Zosimus that is glaringly "unhermetic," but the overall impression is that the presentation of the Hermetic material has been made to correspond more closely to Christian terms.

Accordingly, it is hard to decide how representative Hermes' invective against magic is for the Hermetic tradition. It could be a Christian interpolation, but it could equally well derive from the Hermetic source.[26] We notice that Hermes, in the fragment of Zosimus, assumes that magic counteracts the work of fate on the body—which is precisely the Egyptian view of magic—while Isis in the *Korê Kosmou* clearly states that magic is a remedy for the soul.[27] It is possible that the two texts derive from two Hermetic circles with quite different views of magic, where the circle behind Zosimus' fragment would distance itself from magic. But we do not know just what kind of practices Hermes meant by magic, only that it should not counteract fate. If we compare with *Disc.8–9*, we see there that the protective curse on the votive stela is to be included exactly in order to prevent the uninitiated from transgressing against fate: "write an oath in the the book, so that those who read the book will not bring the name into wicked acts, nor fight against the acts of fate."[28] The protective oath itself is apparently not considered to oppose the works of fate, or perhaps the injunction not to use the name is only meant for those who have not yet been elevated above fate, to the Ogdoad and Ennead. In other words, using the name in practices such as divination and protective curses would be reserved for the initiated. This would be in keeping with the otherwise quite elitistic tone of the Hermetica: "all things are good to such a person, even things that others find evil."[29] At the very least, the passage in *Disc.8–9* demonstrates that the Hermetist is aware that the name could be used to counteract fate, probably in the context of a magic rite such as those we possess in the PGM, and that therefore no one else than those who are initiated should have access to it.

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26 A third option would be that the Hermetists would distance themselves from the *word* magic, the practice of which was after all illegal, while classifying such acts as the animation of statues in the *Perfect Discourse* and *Disc.8–9* as unrelated to magic.

27 It is worth pointing out that the aretalogy might be an independent textual unit, perhaps borrowed from the cult of Isis, cf. Festugière, "L'arétalogie isiaque."

28 NHC VI 62,22–28: ϲϱⲁⲓ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲁⲛⲁϣ ⲉⲡϫⲱⲙⲉ ⲙⲏⲡⲱⲥ ⲧⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲛ̄ⲧ̀ⲥ ⲉϱⲟⲩⲛ ϱ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩⲕⲁⲕⲟⲩⲣⲅⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲑⲓ ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲁϣϣ ⲛ̄ⲡϫⲱⲱⲙⲉ· ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲧ ⲟⲩⲃⲉ ⲛ̄ϱⲃⲏⲟⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ϫⲓⲙⲁⲣⲙⲉⲛⲏ. My trans. Mahé points out the relevance of Zosimus for this passage: HHE 1:130–31.

29 CH IX, 4: πάντα γὰρ τῷ τοιούτῳ, κἂν τοῖς ἄλλοις τὰ κακά, ἀγαθά ἐστι. Trans. Copenhaver.

8.2 The Thebes-Cache

A large portion of the most important magical papyri in our corpus were bought by diverse buyers from Giovanni Anastasi, an Armenian merchant and honorary consul of Sweden-Norway.[30] The dearth of records for the purchase of these papyri makes any assumption about their provenance insecure, but most of the papyri have been placed in Thebes, and probably derive from the same find. This so-called Thebes-cache has been conjectured to have contained PGM I–VIII, XIa–XIV, XXXVI, LXI, as well as PDM Suppl., and the alchemical papyri Leiden X (I 397) and Stockholm (Holmiensis).[31] More recently, Korshi Dosoo argues for a more conservative list, including PGM I, II, IV, V, P.Holm (+ PGM Va), PDM xii/PGM XII, PGM XIII, PDM xiv/PGM XIV, PDM Suppl, and P.Leid. I 397, altogether ten manuscripts. The papyri vary in format (scroll/codex), date (2nd/3rd c.–4th/5th c. CE), and language (Demotic, Old Coptic, Greek). The term *mageia* and its cognates are used sparingly, but always in a positive sense.[32]

Great strides have been made in recent years in our understanding of who were the users of the rites in the texts. While some scholars persist in writing about "Greco-Roman magicians," with no clearly defined social role corresponding to such figures, the evidence point increasingly towards the Egyptian priesthood as the likely users and originators of the documents.[33] The language situation alone is enough to demonstrate this: Four of the papyri contain

30 Warren R. Dawson, "Anastasi, Sallier, and Harris and their Papyri," *JEA* 35 (1949): 158–66.

31 Gordon, "Shaping the Text," 69 n. 4; Michela Zago, *Tebe magica e alchemica: L'idea di biblioteca nell'Egitto romano: la Collezione Anastasi* (Padova: libreriauniversitaria.it edizioni, 2010), 92–93; Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 169; Bagnall, *Early Christian Books in Egypt*, 84; Dosoo, "A History of the Theban Magical Library." The more conservative and recent estimation of the group is that of Dosoo.

32 Hans D. Betz, "The Formation of Authoritative Tradition in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Jewish and Christian Self Definition III. Self-Definition in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. Ben F. Meyer and Ed P. Sanders; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 161–70 at 162–63.

33 Examples from the exensive literature include David Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians,'" in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer; RGRW 129; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 159–78; id., *Religion in Roman Egypt*; id., "Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category 'Magician,'" *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium* (ed. Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg; SHR 75; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 115–35; id., "The Consequences of Hellenism in Late Antique Egypt," 162–94; id., "Narrating Power," 457–76; Gordon, "Shaping the Text"; Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues and Rites*; Zago, *Tebe magica e alchemica*.

spells in Demotic, four contain Old Coptic,[34] and there are even Hieratic elements. Only those who had undergone scribal training would be able to make any sense of these spells. Furthermore, Robert K. Ritner has demonstrated the continuum between the spells in our collection and traditional Egyptian magical practice, as it had been practiced by priests for centuries before.[35] Several scholars persist in insisting on the culturally Greek derivation of many of the spells.[36] There is indeed no use in denying a mélange of cultural influences on the spells in the papyri, as the deities invoked are Greek, Jewish and Mesopotamian as well as Egyptian. Individual spells and ritual techniques could naturally also have been influenced from other cultures. But the fact remains, that the individuals who possessed the actual papyri must have been Egyptian priests, simply because they were the only ones likely to be adequately familiar with Demotic, Hieratic, and Old Coptic. Several of the procedures described in the papyri may have been imported from or exported to magical handbooks elsewhere in the Roman Empire, but this must be argued on an individual basis. The climate of Egypt has made it so that we for the most part have magical handbooks from Egypt, and we cannot take for granted that they are representative of those in use elsewhere, such as those reportedly put to the fire in Ephesus (*Acts* 19.19).

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34 Bagnall, *Early Christian Books in Egypt*, in his table wrongly states that PGM III and IV contain Coptic spells, and not Old Coptic, as is the case. See Janet H. Johnson, "The Dialect of the Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden," in *Studies in the Honour of George R. Hughes* (ed. Janet H. Johnson and Edward F. Wente; SAOC 39; Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1976), 105–32. Cf. recently Edward O.D. Love, *Code-Switching with the Gods: The Bilingual (Old Coptic-Greek) Spells of PGM IV and their Linguistic, Religious, and Socio-Cultural Context in Late Roman Egypt* (ZÄS Beihefte 4; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), who argues that although the original scribes of the manuscripts containing Demotic spells had a traditional priestly education, the final owner of the Thebes-cache, in the early fourth century, did not understand the Demotic spells in his/her possession. For our argument it suffices that the owners of the early papyri in the corpus were priestly, but cf. Bull, "Hermes between Pagans and Christians" for a brief critique of Love's argument.

35 Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*; id., "The Religious, Social, and Legal Parameters of Traditional Egyptian Magic," 43–60.

36 Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*; Christopher Faraone, "The Ethnic Origins of a Roman-Era Philtrokatadesmos (PGM IV 296–434)," in Mirecki and Meyer, *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, 319–43; id., "The Mystodokos and the Dark-Eyed Maiden: Multicultural Influences on a Late-Hellenistic Incantation," in Meyer and Mirecki, *Ancient Magic and Ritual*, 297–333; id., *Ancient Greek Love Magic*. Some of the claims of Faraone are countered by Quack, "From Ritual to Magic," 76–79.

8.3 Hermetism in the Thebes-Cache?

Hermes and Thoth are two of the most commonly used names among a wide range of divine names invoked in the magical papyri.[37] This, of course, does not prove that the papyri are "Hermetic," any more than they are Jewish because they invoke Iao and Sabaoth. There have been a large variety of stances towards the relationship between the Hermetica and the magical papyri. As we have seen, Richard Reitzenstein used the papyri to bolster his claim that the Hermetica stemmed from a "Poimandresgemeinde" with a background in the Egyptian temples,[38] while A.-J. Festugière famously considered the magical use of Hermes to be part of Egyptian, "popular" Hermetism, with little connection to the Greek, "savant" brand.[39] William C. Grese would later claim that similar visionary techniques could mean that there was some "borrowing" between Hermetism and magic,[40] but this view still presumes two discrete traditions that could mutually influence each other. Recently, J. Peter Södergård has asserted that both the magical rites and the Hermetic visionary experiences derive from traditional Egyptian practices, but claimed that magic is a "domestication" of the ritual union formerly taking place in the temples, while Hermetism is an adaption to Platonic mysticism.[41] The main problem with Södergård's approach is that he postulates a division between magic and mysticism,[42] and basically sees the Hermetic treatises as *Lesemysterien*, where the reading itself is intended to trigger visionary experiences in the reader. The question is if the persons behind the Hermetica were fundamentally different from those behind the magical papyri, i.e. Egyptian priests. In his monograph on the London-Leiden bilingual papyrus (PDM xiv/PGM XIV), Jacco Dieleman presupposes that the milieu from which it derived was the same as that from which the Hermetica derived, namely the Egyptian priesthood of the Roman era.[43] Dieleman sums up the rhetorical strategy, going back to older Egyptian magic, which is used in the Greek advertisement for the magical papyri:

37 Cf. the overview in FR 1:287–96.

38 Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 146, 248, 266 n. 2.

39 FR 1:283–308.

40 William C. Grese, "Magic in Hellenistic Hermeticism," in *Hermeticism and the Renaissance* (ed. Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus; Washington: Folger Books, 1988), 45–58.

41 Södergård, *The Hermetic Piety of Mind*, 121ff.

42 Ibid., 141: "the ritual union only becomes a mystical one when Platonism has enriched it." This only begs the question.

43 Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues and Rites*, 2 n. 4.

1. The Egyptian priest is a miracle worker
2. Efficacious magical texts are written by Thoth-Hermes and hidden from laity inside an Egyptian temple
3. The royal court is the receiving partner in the exchange of knowledge on magic[44]

As we have seen, all these rhetorical devices are also present in the Hermetica, if we replace "magic" and "miracle" with "philosophy" or "wisdom."

8.4 Thessalos and Thebes

In order to consider the connection between the Hermetica and the Thebes-cache, a good point of departure would be the narrative preface to Thessalos of Tralles' work on the healing power of plants. Briefly stated, this preface describes Thessalos' journey to Thebes, where a high-priest (ἀρχιερεύς) ritually produces a face-to-face meeting with Asclepius, who tells Thessalos about the astrologically correct time (καιρός) to gather medicinal plants. The ritual itself is not detailed at any great length, but the narrative tells us much about the context in which the Thebes-cache must be seen. The relevance of the tale for Hermetism was noted early on by Franz Cumont,[45] and then A.-J. Festugière.[46] Jonathan Z. Smith later wrote an influential article using the text to exemplify the shift from a locative to utopian mode of religiosity, impelled by the demise of native kingship.[47] More recently the text has been treated in articles by Philip Harland and Ian Moyer.[48] There are four issues raised by the

44 Ibid., 282. Dieleman further argues that the Demotic spell London-Leiden derives from Greek prototypes, though written by Egyptian priests, reworked into Demotic for internal consumption. The Greek perpetuates stereotype-appropriation.

45 Franz Cumont, "Écrits hermétiques II: Le médecin Thessalus et les plantes astrales d'Hermès Trismégiste," *RP* 42 (1918): 85–108.

46 André-Jean Festugière, "L'expérience religieuse du médecin Thessalos," *RP* 42 (1918): 85–108; repr. *Hermétisme et mystique païenne*, 141–80; FR 1:56–59.

47 Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Temple and the Magician," in *Map is not Territory*, 172–89.

48 Philip A. Harland, "Journeys in Pursuit of Divine Wisdom: Thessalos and Other Seekers," in *Travel and Religion in Antiquity* (ed. Philip A. Harland; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 123–40; Ian S. Moyer, "Thessalos of Tralles and Cultural Exchange," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (ed. Scott B. Noegel, Joel T. Walker, and Brannon M. Wheeler; University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 39–56; id., "The Initiation of the Magician," 219–38; id., *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism*, 208–73.

Thessalos-narrative that are highly pertinent for our discussion of the Thebes-cache and the Hermetica: the visionary experience, the question of graded knowledge and initiation, the relationship between native priests and inquisitive foreigners, and the role of the temple in this relationship. We shall consider each of these issues in turn, with the latter two being addressed in the next chapter.

First, however, we should briefly summarize the details we are given of the ritual proceedings. We are first told that Thessalos inquired of the Theban priests "if something remains of the magical operation,"[49] but was rebuffed.[50] Finally he befriended a certain high-priest, who identified himself as an expert on vessel-divination,[51] and agreed to provide Thessalos with a divine revelation. Before the divination, Thessalos was told to keep himself pure for three days, without further specification of the nature of this purity. Probably sexual abstinence as well as fasting and lustrations are intended. At dawn on the third day, the high-priest "had prepared a pure room and the other things (necessary) for the inquiry."[52] The only object present that we are told about is a throne, on which the god is about to sit. The priest asked if Thessalos wanted to see a god or a ghost, to which he replied that he wanted to meet Asclepius face to face. For some reason this dismayed the priest, who perhaps had envisioned an easier vessel-divination, but he agreed anyway. As Thessalos sat down, the

49 Thess., *Virt. herb.* 13: εἴ τι τῆς μαγικῆς ἐνεργείας σῴζεται (Latin parallel: *aliquod opus divinandi*). Not "whether any magical power saves a person from illness" as in Harland, "Journeys in Pursuit of Divine Wisdom," 124–26 (also available online: http://www.philipharland.com/travel/Thessalos.htm). The following translations are my own, as I disagree with Harland on many points, as will be made clear. The Greek text is from Hans-Veit Friedrich, *Thessalos von Tralles* (Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1968). Cf. also the better suggestion of Moyer, "Thessalos of Tralles and Cultural Exchange," 42, 46 n. 27: "if some sort of magical operation was still preserved." I follow Festugière, "L'expérience," 158–59.

50 On the reaction of the priests to Thessalos' inquiry, cf. Moyer, "Thessalos of Tralles and Cultural Exchange," 46–51: The reserve of the priests is not due to lack of belief in magic (Smith) or legal sanctions (Graux, Cumont, Festugière, Ritner), but to the audacity of Thessalos, who in effect asks for access to cultic secrets. Ritner, "The religious, social, and legal parameters of traditional Egyptian magic," 43–60 at 58, claims that the reticience is due to Thessalus being an untrustworthy foreigner. Gordon, "Reporting the Marvellous," 76 n. 55 sees the refusal as emphasizing the rarity of Thessalos' knowledge. I would agree with Ritner, Gordon and Moyer, who have basically similar scenarios: The refusal is due to the *phthonos* demonstrated towards the uninitiated outsider, which increases the prestige of the graded knowledge.

51 Thess., *Virt. herb.* 14: ἐπηγγείλατο δὲ οὗτος αὐτοπτικὴν ἔχειν λεκάνης ἐνέργειαν.

52 Thess., *Virt. herb.* 21: εὐτρέπιστο δὲ αὐτῷ οἶκος καθαρὸς καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τὰ πρὸς τὴν ἐπίσκεψιν.

high-priest "brought forth the god through unspeakable names,"[53] and then left the room. Now alone with the god, Thessalos relates his experience: "As I was sitting down, and was released from the body and the soul by the strangeness of the vision—for neither the facial features nor the beauty of the surrounding cosmos can be clearly explained by human logos—⟨Asclepius appeared to me⟩. Then, reaching out his right hand, he began to speak."[54] What follows is a iatromathematical exposition, meant to complete the recipes of Nechepsos. The narrative epilogue is only preserved in quite corrupt Latin translations.

8.5 Vision and Divination

As already noted, the priest presented himself as an expert of lecanomancy, that is, divination in a bowl containing some sort of liquid like water, oil, or milk, or a combination of these. Vessel inquiries are abundantly attested in the corpus of magical papyri,[55] where the operator of the spell most often makes use of a boy-medium, who sees the reflection of the gods in a bowl filled with water.[56] The Egyptian term for the spell is "vessel inquiry" (*šn hn*). However, a vessel is not specifically mentioned during the actual divination, which has led Ian Moyer to postulate that the spell in question must in fact be another sort of ritual, a "god's arrival" (*ḥ nṯr*; the Greek equivalent is σύστασις or αὔτοπτος),[57] in which the ritualist encounters the deity face to face. The term "god's arrival" is attested in the New Kingdom for public consultations with the god, in oracular

53 Thess., *Virt. herb.* 23: προαγαγὼν διὰ τῶν ἀπορρήτων ὀνομάτων τὸν θεὸν. Not "he led me through the god's secret names," as in Harland, "Journeys in Pursuit of Divine Wisdom," 126.

54 24: καθεζομένου δέ μου καὶ ἐκλυομένου τοῦ σώματος καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς διὰ τὸ παράδοξον τῆς θέας (οὔτε γὰρ τοὺς τῆς ὄψεως χαρακτῆρας οὔτε τὴν τοῦ περικειμένου κόσμου καλλονὴν ἀνθρώπου λόγος διασαφῆσαι δύναιτ' ⟨ἄν⟩) ⟨ἐπεφάνη μοι ὁ Ἀσκληπιος (my conjecture)⟩· ἀνατείνας οὖν τὴν δεξιὰν ἤρξατο λέγειν. There is no finite verb in the first sentence, so a lacuna must be postulated (unnoticed by Harland). Cf. similar vocabulary in Diod. Sic., *Bib.* 1.91.7: ἔτι δὲ τοὺς τῆς ὄψεως χαρακτῆρας ὁρωμένους παράδοξον ψυχαγωγίαν παρέχεσθαι καθάπερ συμβεβιωκότας τοῖς θεωμένοις (on mummies of relatives kept in houses of Egyptians).

55 PGM IV.154–285; V.1–53; PDM XIV.1–92.

56 Cf. Apul., *Apol.* 42–43. Cf. below, p. 413, on the use of boy-mediums.

57 Johnson, "Louvre E3229," 90–91; Robert K. Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and their Religious Context," *ANRW* 18.5:3356–57. Cf. PDM XIV.93–114, 117–149, 169–176, 232–238; LXI.63–78; PDM *Suppl.* 130–138 and 149–162. The Greek spells for an αὔτοπτος are PGM III.282–409, 633–731; IV.930–1114, V.54–69; Va.1–3; VII.319–334, 335–347, 727–739; VIII.64–110 (IV.154–285 uses the term in connection with lecanomancy). Spells for σύστασις: PGM II.1–64; XIII.1–343.

processions, but our Greek and Demotic spells are for private consultations.[58] It should be noted that the distinction between the "god's arrival" and "vessel divination" is not strict, and we sometimes find ritual procedures that can be used for both kinds of divine encounter.[59] The question, then, is what kind of ritual Thessalos experienced, and more importantly, what these rituals might tell us of the Hermetic visionary procedures.

The god's arrival is generally solitary, and often takes the form of an incubation-rite,[60] in which the spell was performed at evening to make the god appear during the night. Let us take, as an example, a spell for direct vision from the Great Paris Magical Papyrus (PGM IV).[61] Here the operator must first prepare a phylactery, a piece of linen cloth from a temple-statue of Harpokrates, with *nomina* written with myrrh. Then, a glazed lamp must be provided, which is placed on a mat made of wormwood, kept elevated by four cords of papyrus-plant tied to each corner of the room. The operator must keep himself purified for three days, before greeting the sunrise "in the garb of a prophet, shod with fibers of the doum palm, and your head crowned with a spray from an olive tree."[62] A pebble numbered 3663, representing the numerical value of the *nomen* βαινχωωωχ, the Greek transliteration of Egyptian "soul of darkness,"[63] should be held towards the chest. When the invocation is finished this pebble is to be dropped, so as to dismiss the deity summoned.

A hymn is to be sung to the sunrise, in which the god to be summoned is called a serpent and a lion, possibly a reference to the decan Chnouphis,[64] and

58 Jacco Dieleman, "Scribal Practices in the Production of Magic Handbooks in Egypt," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition* (ed. Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Saul Shaked; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 85–117 at 108–9, listing the Demotic spells: PDM lxi.63–78; xiv.22–38, 295–308, 627–635, 695–700, and 1078–1089; PDM *Suppl.* 130–138 and 149–162.

59 E.g., PDM xiv.150–231, which can be used both for a lamp-divination using a boy-medium, and a god's arrival. Cf. also PGM IV.154–285 which uses the terms αὔτοπτος and σύστασις in connection with lecanomancy.

60 PGM II.1–64.

61 PGM IV.930–1114, labelled Αὔτοπτος. σύστασις.

62 PGM IV.930–935: σύστασις, ἣν πρῶτον λέγεις πρὸς ἀνατολὴν ἡλίου, εἶτα ἐπὶ τοῦ λύχνου ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος λεγόμενος πρῶτος, ὅταν μαντεύῃ, ἠμφιεσμένος προφητικῷ σχήματι, κούκινα ὑποδεδεμένος καὶ ἐστεμμένος τὴν κεφαλήν σου κλωνὶ ἐλαίας.

63 Dem. *bꜣ n-kky*; not *bꜣn kkw* as in Fauth, *Helios Megistos*, 56, who also mistakes *Ḥḥ* ("expansiveness") with *Kk* ("darkness"), who are transliterated respectively and H/Ω and Χω/Χουχ (as male and female couplets; PGM XIII.788). Cf. Sethe, *Amun und die Acht Urgötter von Hermopolis*, 65; William Brashear, "βαινχωωωχ = 3663—No Palindrome," *ZPE* 78 (1989): 123–24.

64 Mastrocinque, *From Jewish Magic to Gnosticism*, 61; Fauth, *Helios Megistos*, 108.

also a scarab that drives the sun, self-begotten (943: αὐτογένεθλε), and first appearing (944: πρωτοφανὴς). This hymn is also to be repeated inside, before the lamp.[65] Then a light-bringing spell (955: φωταγωγία)[66] is recited seven times before the lamp, with closed eyes. Several nomina are invoked, chief among them Ptah and "soul of darkness" (βαινχωωωχ). This spell is meant to make the god "enter into this fire" (965: εἴσελθε ἐν τῷ πυρὶ τούτῳ), and is uttered together with a "light-retaining spell" meant to prevent the fire from going out. We can easily imagine that the operator is now entering an altered state of consciousness, having fasted for three days and now standing for a long time chanting with his eyes closed, the light of the lamp no doubt shining through his closed eyelids. The eyes are then opened, and the "god-bringing spell" (985: θεαγωγὸς) is spoken three times. Again, several *nomina* are invoked, chief among them Horus and Harpokrates. The operator now also assumes a divine role, first uttering the seven vowels as a baboon, that is Thoth,[67] and then claiming that "my name is 'soul of darkness,' I am the one who is born from heaven."[68] The divine status of the operator is meant to persuade the god to appear.

It would seem that the light-bringing is meant to make the god enter into the fire, thus bringing the divinity down from above, while the god-bringing makes him appear and speak to the operator. A supplementary "spell of compulsion" (1035: ἐπάναγκος) is added in case the god tarries and does not duly appear after the previous spells. This adds to the "realism" of the spell: the author can easily envision that an operator does not achieve the desired effect after the first spells, and therefore has added this extra invocation as a precaution.[69] Another supplementary instruction is given at the end of the spell: if, when one opens the eyes after the light-bringing spell, the light appears "as a vault" (1105: καμαροειδὲς), probably meaning that it is closed like an arched gate, then one should close the eyes again and utter the light-bringing three more times. Then the light will open up, and the god will appear "seated on a lotus, decorated with rays, his right hand raised in greeting and left [holding] a flail, while being carried in the hands of 2 angels with 12 rays around them."[70] When the

65 On lamp divination, cf. John Gee, "The Structure of Lamp Divination," in *Acts of the Seventh International Conference of Demotic Studies* (ed. Kim Ryholt; Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002), 207–18.

66 Cf. Vett. Val., *Anthol.* 8.5, whose opponents curse him διὰ τὴν τῶν μυστικῶν καὶ ἀποκρύφων φωταγωγίαν.

67 Cf. above, chap. 6.3.1.2.

68 PGM IV.1017–1018: ὄνομά μοι Βαϊνχωωωχ· ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ πεφυκὼς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. My trans.

69 Cf. Gordon, "The Religious Anthropology"; Bull, "Visionary Experience."

70 PGM IV.1109–1114: τὸν δὲ θεὸν ὄψῃ ἐπὶ κιβωρίου καθήμενον, ἀκτινωτόν, τὴν δεξιὰν ἀνατεταμένην ἀσπαζόμενον, τῇ δὲ ἀριστερᾷ ⟨κρατοῦντα⟩ σκῦτος, βασταζόμενον ὑπὸ β′ ἀγγέλων ταῖς χερσὶν καὶ κύκλῳ αὐτῶν ἀκτῖνας ιβ. Trans. William C. Grese, in *PGMT*.

god does appar, one should give him a salutary greeting, then step on his toe so as to stop him from disappearing, and only then ask him about whatever one wishes to know (1033: περὶ τοῦ δεῖνα πράγματος).

Like the vision of Thessalos, this spell requires a period of purification, and is performed inside a room (1088: χώρημα). However, the procedures seem to differ, in that Thessalos has a throne as a ritual focus, while a lamp is vital to secure the vision in our spell. More importantly, in the spell it is the ritualist who receives the vision himself, and there is no mention of how to produce the vision in others, as the priest does to Thessalos. This is also true for the two god's arrivals of Imhotep in the Demotic texts, which Moyer adduced as paradigms for the experience of Thessalos.[71] If the visionary *experience* of Thessalos resembles that of the *autoptos*, then the procedure is certainly not the same.

As has been noted, although the priest of Thessalos was an expert of lecanomancy, we find no mention of a bowl being used in our description of the ritual. This does not make it certain that such a bowl was not used, given the conciseness of the account. We are simply told that all the things necessary were prepared in the room, and it is possible that a vessel is implied. The reason we should also consider this possibility, is that the vessel-divinations mostly involve the operator causing an assistant to experience the vision. Unlike the case of Thessalos, the medium is most often a young boy, presumably because children are thought to be purer and thus more susceptible to divine influences.[72] It is sometimes specified that the boy must not yet have had any sexual experience, which suggests that the notion of purity is operative. In one of the spells, also in the Great Paris Magical Papyrus, it is specified that it also works on adults, in which case they must abstain from sex for three days before the vision.[73] Since this spell directly precedes the previously described *autoptos*, we can take it as an example. Unlike most of the spells using boy mediums, there is in this spell no mention of a vessel, which is the most common instrument, nor a lamp.

The ritual takes place some time during the day, since the operator at one point is instructed to raise his hands up towards the rays of the sun. The location is "up to an open place," probably a rooftop, and the medium is instructed to be seated on unbaked bricks. The medium is to be dressed up by the operator, but we are not told in what garb, except that he should have "an anubian head of wheat" and a "falconweed plant." The operator should be girded

71 Moyer, "Thessalos of Tralles and Cultural Exchange," 49; PDM xiv.93–114; Suppl. 168–184. The first of these is an incubation rite, utilising a wooden stool.

72 Sarah I. Johnston, "Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination," *Arethusa* 34 (2001): 97–117.

73 PGM IV.850–929.

with palm fibers from a male date palm. The operator utters the formula seven times towards the sun, with the arms elevated like an orant. The formula consists mostly of *nomina barbara*, but it emerges that the one instructed to come and enter into the medium is Osiris, "the one who has become Hesies and was carried away by a river,"[74] referring to the myth of Osiris' drowning. As is standard practice for such invocations, the operator demonstrates his knowledge of magic names: "I utter your names which Hermes Trismegistus wrote in Heliopolis with hieroglyphic letters: … Hôrêsiou Ousiri, Pniamousiri, Phrêousiri, Hôriousiri, Naeiôrousiri etc."[75] When the formula has been uttered seven times, the operator burns male frankincense and makes a libation of wine, beer, honey or milk from a black cow onto grapevine wood. After the offerings, the operator again utters the formula seven times, but this time into the ear of the medium, who will immediately collapse and can then be asked about anything the operator wishes to know from the god. The medium is now in a trance (850: κατάπτωσις), a word also used for epileptic seizures. Supplementary spells are given to dismiss the deity and to awaken the medium.[76]

This spell is closer to the procedure of Thessalos, in which the priest speaks the names over the head of the medium to induce the vision. The main difference is that the present rite is performed in open air, while that of Thessalos took place in the darkness of a chamber. There is no mention of a throne used in this spell, though in the dismissal the god is told to go away to his own thrones.[77] Also, if Thessalos was able to write down everything the god told him, he could hardly have been experiencing the kind of seizures presupposed in this spell. Thessalos never claims to be inhabited by the god, as the medium is here. However, some kind of ecstatic experience seems to be presupposed from Thessalos' statement that he was "released from body and soul." Curiously, in his typology of visionary experiences, Festugière claims that Thessalos did *not* take leave of the body, interpreting ἐκλύω instead as meaning

74 PGM IV.875–877: ἐλθέ μοι, ὁ γενάμενος Ἔσιης καὶ ποταμοφόρητος, ἔμπνευσον τῷ δεῖνα ἀνθρώπῳ ἢ παιδί, περὶ οὗ σου πυνθάνομαι. My trans.

75 PGM IV.885–891: σου λέγω τὰ ὀνόματα, ἃ ἔγραψεν ἐν Ἡλιουπόλει ὁ τρισμέγιστος Ἑρμῆς ἱερογλυφικοῖς γράμμασι· … Ωρησιου· Οὔσιρι· Πνιαμούσιρι· Φρηούσιρι· Ὡριούσιρι· Ναειωρούσιρι κτλ. My trans.

76 In the latter spell, the *vox magica* αμουνηει was explained by Ritner as *imn ỉy* "Amon comes" (*PGMT*, 56 n. 124). However, since this spell is meant to wake the medium from his trance, and not to invoke another god, I find it more likely to be *imꜣ nꜣy* (Coptic: ⲁⲙⲟⲩ ⲛⲏⲉⲓ): "come to me," directed to the medium.

77 PGM IV.920–922: χώρει, κύριε, εἰς τοὺς οἰκείους σου θρόνους καὶ διαφύλαξον τὸν δεῖνα ἀπὸ πάσης κακίας.

that the body and soul were destroyed.[78] Festugière followed Hopfner's division of divinatory magic (*Offenbarungszauber*) into three different kinds, which he called the theurgic, being either ecstatic or autoptic; magic, using either instruments, such as vessels and lamps, or mediums; and goetic, which is all about animating statues.[79] This is clearly a normative typology, as can be deduced from the names alone, and is meant to differentiate between 'high' and admirable divine encounters, and 'low,' despicable sorcery. A similar, but less normative scheme is found in Richard Gordon's division between divination by dreams, vessels, lamps—the latter two both with an optional medium—and direct vision, with ascending degrees of prestige.[80] Gordon rightly emphasizes that there was no strict division between these forms, but that their fusion was meant "to create a continuous sequence of revelatory possibilities from the dream to the personal vision."[81] Thus, even though Thessalos' vision is autoptic, unlike most of this kind of spells it was induced into him by someone else, which is more characteristic of the mediumistic vessel and lamp divinations. In many ways Thessalos acts more like the medium, except that it is not the operator, the priest, who asks the god the questions, but rather the medium himself. Perhaps this is the explanation why the priest was visibly upset by Thessalos' request for a direct, face to face vision of the god: the priest was used to being present, to direct the encounter between the medium and the god, but was here asked to leave. A direct vision was apparently also harder to produce.[82] Another explanation would be that the vision was in fact a dream-vision, an incubation rite, but Thessalos does not mention falling asleep, and there is no discernible reason why the priest should be upset at so commonplace a request.

Now, what relevance do these vision-inducing spells have for our understanding of the Hermetica? First off, it must be emphasized that the situation of a priest inducing visions into a boy, perhaps his son, is quite close to the situation described in our two initiatory Hermetica, *On the Rebirth* and *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth*. In the former, Tat as the boy-medium exclaims that

78 Festugière, "L'expérience religieuse du médecin Thessalos," 162: "anéanti de corps et de âme". In my view, the subject of ἐκλυομένου is μου, not τοῦ σώματος καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς that are rather genitives of partition.

79 Festugière, "L'expérience religieuse du médecin Thessalos," 175–76; Hopfner, *Offenbarungszauber*, 2:§70–75. Cf. also David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 45, who separates between magical divination and oracular magic.

80 Gordon, "Reporting the Marvellous," 81–84.

81 Ibid., 84.

82 Ibid.

he is brought into *mania*, that is, an ecstatic state. Although the magical operator induces this state by means of formulas and sensory stimuli, while Hermes does it through silence and philosophical exposition, the result is quite similar: divine powers descend and become visible to the boy-medium. However, the goal of *On the Rebirth* is that the visionary becomes initiated, not diviniation, and we shall treat this idea at more length in the subsequent chapter, on magical initiation.

Disc.8–9 is closer still to the procedures of the magical papyri, using vowels and *nomina barbara* to induce the vision. Although we hear little about any ritual preparations for the vision, the epilogue concerning the erection of a stela could be taken straight out of the advertisements of the magical papyri. One spell that bridges the gap between Hermetism and the magical divinations is the so-called Mithras-Liturgy (henceforth ML).

8.6 Rebirth and Ascent: The Mithras or Pšai-Aion Liturgy

The resemblance between the ML and the initiatory Hermetica was pointed out by Fowden,[83] but he saw the magical corpus as late vulgarization of the earlier, more "spiritual" Hermetica.[84] In a recent monograph on the ML, Hans Dieter Betz pointed out its Hermetic affiliations, and went so far as to claim that "the Mithras Liturgy seems to reflect an early or nascent Hermeticism of the first and second century CE."[85] Betz does not seem to realize the full scope of his assertion. Since he also affirms that the author of the ML was a learned Egyptian priest, the conclusion would reaffirm the old hypothesis of Richard Reitzenstein, that Hermetism stemmed from a *Poimandresgemeinde* in which Egyptian priests played some mystagogic role.[86] The dating to the first to second centuries CE seems to rest on the fact that the spell relies on Stoic, and not Neoplatonic philosophy, which is strictly speaking not a strong argument. The other presupposition is equally dubious: that the ML represents an early stage

83 Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 82–84, 171. For bibliography prior to 1994, see William M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri, an Introduction and Survey: Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)," *ANRW* 18.5:3519–20.

84 Gordon, "Reporting the Marvellous," 86–87.

85 Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy,"* 37.

86 Reitzenstein himself did not use the ML in his monograph *Poimandres* (1904), but would later embrace the seminal work of Albrecht Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1910), to bolster his newfound belief that Iranian sources were behind the Hermetica.

of "spiritualization" within Hermetism, which would eventually lead to our "philosophical" corpus. A third element adduced by Betz is that ML supposedly replaces Egyptian divinities with philosophical concepts. First, however, it is unclear how this would suggest a dating to the first centuries CE. The rationalization of traditional mythology is perhaps more a hallmark of Hellenistic philosophy. Second, the notion that traditional Egyptian deities are absent was rightly critiqued by John Gee—albeit in an unnecessarily harsh tone—since Egyptian theonyms are abundantly present in what Betz read as *nomina barbara*.[87]

There is no need to posit a fundamental division between the ML and the other divinatory rites. Like these, it is simply a spell to obtain divine epiphanies. The spell as written is designed to be performed by a single operator, like the "god's arrival" spells, but it also contains instructions for how to make a co-initiate (732–733: συμμύστης) see the vision. As in the other spells, we find instructions for preliminary purity, for the creation of phylacteries and also for a special ointment made from a scarab. We are not informed about when and where the rite should be performed, though the preliminary preparation and ingestion of the *kentritis*-plant should take place at sunrise, after three days of purification. Perhaps this is also the time the divination should take place, since it is stated that the sun-god at that time "will listen attentively."[88]

No divinatory instrument is expressly mentioned, though I would suggest that it is in fact a form of lychnomancy. As in the lamp-divination described above, the operator is instructed in turns to open and close the eyes, at which point the sun disk will expand and open, so that the operator will see the heavenly gods. It is possible that such an effect could be obtained by the dangerous proposition to stare into the middle of the sun, as the operator is in fact instructed to do (ln. 634), but since we are not informed of a spate of blind magicians in Egypt, it is more likely that the operator is in fact using a less dangerous substitute for the sun. Such a substitute is expressly mentioned in the introductory prayer: "so that I may marvel at the sacred fire Kyphi, so that I may gaze upon the abyss, the frightful water of the dawn."[89] Betz treats Kyphi (κυφε) as a *vox magica*, barely even mentioning the relation with the Egyptian

87 John Gee, review of H.D. Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy"*, *RBL* 2/2005 (http://www.bookreviews.org). The harsh tone of the review first published was later toned down at the request of the editors of the journal.

88 PGM IV.786.

89 PGM IV.511–513: ἵνα θαυμάσω τὸ ἱερὸν πῦρ κυφε, ἵνα θεάσωμαι τὸ ἄβυσσον τῆς ἀνατολῆς φρικτὸν ὕδωρ. My trans. Betz translates ἄβυσσον as "unfathomable."

sacred incense described by several Greek and Egyptian sources.[90] Plutarch relates a recipe for the incense he got from none other than Manetho, and further informs us that the Egyptians burned kyphi at nightfall, and that its exhalations relaxes the body and brings on sleep, while it "polishes and purifies like a mirror the faculty which is imaginative and receptive to dreams, just like the notes of the lyre which the Pythagoreans used before sleep, to charm and heal the emotive and irrational part of the soul."[91] A Demotic tale of Petese relates how kyphi was thrown into fire and immediately the sun-god Re appeared.[92] In short, it would be ideally suited to bring on the altered state of consciousness necessary to experience visions. The sacred fire would thus be the altar flame on which the kyphi was burned. The water of the abyss refers to the primordial water, Nun, which was symbolized by the artificial temple lake in Egyptian temple-compounds. In a closed chamber, in which we should probably imagine the vision to unfold, in order for the fumes of kyphi to be effective, Nun could perhaps be symbolized by a vessel for the operator or his medium to gaze at. If we are to believe the advertisement of the spell—"many times have I used the spell, and have wondered greatly"[93]—then we must presume that some techniques like this were used to bring about the desired effects.

Let us consider the procedure to be followed if the operator has a co-initiate he wishes to show the vision. The operator must "judge whether his worth as a man is secure, handling the occasion as though in the immortalization ritual you yourself were being judged in his place."[94] The sentence is obscure, but probably does not refer to "the moral standard of fairness, or even to the Golden Rule," as Betz suggests.[95] The operator must vouch for the medium, since he will be judged on his behalf. This refers to a judgement taking place as part of the preliminary initiation. As has been noted, both the operator and the

90 Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy,"* 118 n. 182.

91 Plut., *Is. Os.* 80 (383F–384A): καὶ τὸ φανταστικὸν καὶ δεκτικὸν ὀνείρων μόριον ὥσπερ κάτοπτρον ἀπολεαίνει καὶ ποιεῖ καθαρώτερον οὐδὲν ἧττον ἢ τὰ κρούματα τῆς λύρας, οἷς ἐχρῶντο πρὸ τῶν ὕπνων οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι, τὸ ἐμπαθὲς καὶ ἄλογον τῆς ψυχῆς ἐξεπᾴδοντες οὕτω καὶ θεραπεύοντες. Trans. Gwyn Griffith, *Plutarch: De Iside et Osiride*, 80. Cf. ibid., 569–71 for commentary.

92 Cf. Lisa Manniche, *Sacred Luxuries: Fragrance, Aromatherapy, and Cosmetics in Ancient Egypt* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 53, 47–60 for several recipes.

93 PGM IV.790–792: πολλάκις δὲ τῇ πραγματείᾳ χρησάμενος ὑπερεθαύμασα. Cf. Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy,"* 218.

94 PGM IV.739–742: ἐὰν δὲ καὶ δεῖξαι αὐτῷ θέλῃς, κρίνας, εἰ ἄξιός ἐστιν ἀσφαλῶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος, χρησάμενος τῷ τόπῳ, ὡς ⟨σὺ⟩ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ κρινόμενος ἐν τῷ ἀπαθαν⟨ατ⟩ισμῷ. Diet. & Preis. τ⟨ρ⟩όπῳ; Mart. & Betz ⟨σὺ⟩. Trans. Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy".*

95 Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy,"* 202.

medium are supposed to be *mystai* by the time they perform the ritual. What kind of initiatory tradition he should be a *mystes* of remains unsaid, though the reference to a judgment brings the thoughts to the *Book of the Dead* spell 125, where the deceased must protest his innocence before divine judges, a scenario that most Egyptologists now believe reflects priestly initiation.[96] Even though the *Book of the Dead* antedates the ML by over a millennium, chapter 125 was still known in Roman times and bears similarities with a priestly oath found on a second century Greek papyrus fragment from Oxyrhynchus.[97] Another possibility is that the judgment refers to the moment when the visionary first ascends, and sees gods who rush at him. These gods must be assuaged by exclaiming: "Silence, silence, silence, symbol of the living imperishable god, guard me silence!"[98] This uttering of a secret password or showing of a token (σύμβολον) is clearly reminiscent of the practice of mystery cults, and could possibly be seen as a judgment of a person's worthiness of admission.[99] Whether the judgment is preliminary to the spell of revelation or contained in it, we are clearly dealing with a situation similar to *On the Rebirth* and *Disc.8–9*, where the master must measure his disciple's worthiness before allowing him the revelation. But in the ML there is nothing that necessitates a lengthy period of instruction and spiritual exercises, as in the way of Hermes. Perhaps the procedure was as straightforward as the one prescribed in a Demotic vessel-divination, where the operator utters a prayer softly over the head of the medium, who is lying on his stomach: "If his two ears speak, he is very good; if it is his right ear, he is good; if it is his left ear, he is bad."[100]

Before the divination both operator and medium must be purified for a number of days, abstaining from meat and bath, and probably sexual intercourse.[101] As noted, this is standard procedure for spells of revelation. The operator is then instructed to recite the first prayer of the spell for the medium.

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96 Merkelbach, "Ein ägyptischer Priestereid"; Jan Assmann, "Death and Initiation in the Funerary Religion of Ancient Egypt," in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt* (ed. J.P. Allen et al.; YES 3; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 135–59.

97 Verne B. Schuman, "A Second-Century Treatise on Egyptian Priests and Temples," *HTR* 53 (1960): 159–70; Merkelbach, "Ein ägyptischer Priestereid" 13–14, 20–26.

98 PGM IV.558–560: σιγή, σιγή, σιγή, σύμβολον θεοῦ ζῶντος ἀφθάρτου· φύλαξόν με, σιγή. Trans. Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy"*.

99 Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.* 18: *Habent enim propria signa* (= σύμβολα) *propria responsa.*

100 PDM xiv.75–77 (col. III.18–20): *eʿr-kʿš ny a ḫry ḫn zz-f šʿ sp VII eʿr-kʿw ny ḫr mt.t ne-f msz.w e-ḫp nte pe-f msz II mt.t* (*ne*)*nfr-f m šs sp-sn e-f ḫp e pe-f msz n wnm pe* (*ne*)*nfr-f e-f ḫp e p … pe ne-bn-f.* Trans. & ed. Griffith and Thompson, *Demotic Magical Papyrus.*

101 PGM IV.735–736. Betz follows Dieterich in emending to seven days, but in the preparation of the plant *kentritis* a period of three days is mentioned.

The main gist of this prayer is to be born again as immortal, in order to be able to ascend:

501: μεταπαραδῶναί με τῇ ἀθανάτῳ γενέσει.	… transfer me to the immortal birth.
508–509: ἵνα νοήματι μεταγεν⟨ν⟩ηθῶ.	… in order that I may be born again in thought.
516–518: ἐπεὶ μέλλω κατοπτεύειν σήμερον τοῖς ἀθανάτοις ὄμμασι, θνητὸς γεννηθεὶς ἐκ θνητῆς ὑστέρας, βεβελτιωμένος.	For today I am going to envision with immortal eyes—I, a mortal born from a mortal womb, but improved …
529–533: ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἔστιν μοι ἐφικτὸν θνητὸν γεγῶτα συνα⟨ν⟩ιέναι ταῖς χρυσοειδέσιν μαρμαρυγαῖς τῆς ἀθανάτου λαμπηδόνος ωηυ αεω ηυα εωη υαε ωιαε, ἔσταθι, φθαρτὴ βροτῶν φύσι, καὶ αὐτίκα ⟨ἀνάλαβέ⟩ με ὑγιῆ μετὰ τὴν ἀπαραίτητον καὶ κατεπε[ί]γουσαν χρείαν.	Since for me, being mortal, it is out of reach to ascend together with the golden radiances of the immortal brilliance [vowels] stand, O perishable nature of mortals, and at once ⟨take me back⟩ safe after the inexorable and pressing need.[102]

As in the Hermetica, to be reborn in an immortal birth, as opposed to the biological birth, is a presupposition for ascent. To be reborn means to gain a new sensory faculty, here "immortal eyes," and in the Hermetica the "eyes of mind" or the "power to see God." Unlike the Hermetica, however, the rebirth here seems to be temporary, and the mortal nature is asked to receive the visionary back safe and sound after the revelation, if the emendation is correct.

After the initial prayer is recited, the operator is to "say the successive things as an initiate, over his head, in a soft voice, so that he may not hear, as you are anointing his face with the mystery."[103] Presumably, the operator will guide the medium through the ascent, instructing him on the breathing techniques utilized and the passwords to utter to the gods encountered during the ascent. The mystery ointment to be smeared around the eyes of the medium is prepared using a scarab and the plant *kentritis*, among other ingredients. The medium will after the initial prayer take three deep breaths, probably inhaling the fumes of kyphi, and will then feel himself to be lifted up into midair, where

102 Trans. Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy"*.

103 PGM IV.745–747: τὰ δὲ ἑξῆς ὡς μύστης λέγε αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἀτόνῳ φθόγγῳ, ἵνα μὴ ἀκούσῃ, χρίων αὐτοῦ τὴν ὄψιν τῷ μυστηρίῳ. Trans. Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy"*.

he will see the divine constellations rising and setting that day and hour.[104] As in *On the Rebirth* and *Disc.8–9*, the visionary experience thus commences with a release from the body, where the visionary perceives himself to be in mid-air. As we have seen, this is where the encosmic rebirth and vision of *On the Rebirth* probably takes place, while the visionary of *Disc.8–9* proceeds further upwards. We have also seen that Thessalos felt himself to be freed of both body and soul during his vision, in a way similar to the Hermetic "holy sleep," and that he was moved by the vision itself (cf. CH IV, 11; X, 5–6).

Having ascended, the visionary in the ML sees a disk (δίσκος) and a pipe (αὐλός). The disk clearly represents the sun-disk, while the pipe emits wind towards the west and east. Betz follows Dieterich in identifying the latter with the sun of Anaximander, which is portrayed as a "heat-pipe" that emits thunderstorms and winds, claiming that "there can hardly be any doubt" of this identification.[105] But in that case we have two separate objects, both representing the sun. The heavenly gods will be seen *through* the sun-disk, an odd statement that Betz suggests may refer to a "pictorial representation in which the sun illuminates the course of the stars."[106] But I find Merkelbach's explanation, which Betz writes off as "adventurous speculations," more likely: the pipe might refer to a double-flute, explaining the two winds instead of the traditional four, perhaps with some sort of bellows ("Windsack") that makes it emit wind. If we take the pipe and disk to refer to actual ritual instruments, we can easily imagine the disk to be a reflecting surface, which the operator used so as to create a "planetarium-effect"[107] for the visionary to perceive the heavenly gods. Indeed, Merkelbach adduces the testimony of the *Refutation of All Heresies*, that Egyptian priests were known to produce this kind of illusions, using apparatuses such as those described by Heron.[108] This impression is strengthened by what happens next: "You will see the outpouring of the vision, and you will see the gods staring at you and rushing at you."[109] To "see

104 Cf. Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, "Did the Mithraists Inhale? A Technique for Theurgic Ascent in the Mithras Liturgy, the Chaldaean Oracles, and Some Mithraic Frescoes," *The Ancient World* 32 (2001): 10–24. Edmonds does not see the possible relevance of kyphi here.

105 Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy,"* 143.

106 Ibid., 142.

107 Merkelbach, *Abrasax*, 3:30.

108 Ibid., referring to [Hipp.], *Ref.* 4.32.

109 PGM IV.555–557: ὄψῃ τὴν ἀποφορὰν τοῦ ὁράματος· ὄψῃ δὲ ἀτενίζοντάς σοι τοὺς θεοὺς καὶ ἐπί σε ὁρμωμένους. My trans. The word ἀποφορά can according to Dieterich be taken to mean "turning around," (Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, 62) although this is not attested in Liddell-Scott nor Lampe. Betz follows Dieterich, Meyer has "reverse," while Merkelbach translates that the vision "disappears" ("entschwindet", *Abrasax*, 3:163).

the outpouring" possibly means that the pipe or flute is turned towards the visionary, who thus feels a gust of hot air striking him, adding realism to the expected onrush of heavenly gods. This is surely a somewhat speculative reading, but the parallel of the *Refutation* shows that Egyptian priests could indeed use such "special effects" to induce visions.

There is an element of danger in the onrush of gods, which is lacking in the initiatory Hermetica. Such supernatural threats are also found in the *Chaldean Oracles* and Egyptian mortuary literature.[110] The visionary must correctly state the passwords of silence, or else the implication is that he will be hurt by the gods. As the gods are appeased, the visionary will hear the sound of thunder, and must again state the password of silence. Once again Merkelbach refers to Hippolytus, who states that the Egyptian priests could produce the special effects of perceived earth-quakes, shooting stars and thunder.[111] This time the visionary also utters a self-representation: "I am a star, wandering about with you, and shining forth out of the deep, OXYOXER Theuth."[112] As is common for Egyptian rituals in which the gods are addressed the ritualist takes on the role of a god, and then in particular the divine ritualist *par excellence*, Thoth. After this self-presentation, "the sun-disk will be expanded," and after the password of silence is uttered, along with hissing and popping, "you will see a multitude of five-pronged stars proceeding from the sun-disk and filling all the air, … and when the sun-disk has opened, you will see the boundless circle and its fiery doors shut tight."[113] The visionary should then close his eyes and utter a

110 *Chald. Or.* 149; Sarah I. Johnston, "Rising to the Occasion: Theurgic Ascent in Its Cultural Milieu," in Schäfer and Kippenberg, *Envisioning Magic*, 165–94 at 180. This is however a terrestial demon. Each hour of the netherworld contains astral gods/demons who threaten the deceased in the Amduat, cf. Erik Hornung, *The Egyptian Amduat: The Book of the Hidden Chamber* (trans. David A. Warburton; Zurich: Living Human Heritage, 2007), passim.

111 Merkelbach, Abrasax, 3:30.

112 PGM IV.574–575: ἐγώ εἰμι σύμπλανος ὑμῖν ἀστήρ, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ βάθους ἀναλάμπων οξυοξερ θευθ. Trans. Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy"*. Commentators have so far failed to note that Thoth is behind the spelling, familiar from Plato, of θευθ. OXYOXER is harder to make any sense of. Betz has "the XY, the XERTHEUTH" referring to David Jordan, who noted the parallel in PGM XII.297–298: τὸν Ξεριθώθ [Preis. Ξεφιθώθ], τὸν Ξουθούθ, τὸν Θοωθιου, τὸν Ξεριφωναρ. An alternative could be "sharp, sharp" or "brilliant, brilliant" (ὀξύ, ὀξέ⟨η⟩), which would make sense since Theuth is said to be shining (ἀναλάμπων).

113 PGM IV.579–585: εὐθέως ὄψῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ δίσκου ἀστέρας προσερχομένους πενταδακτυλιαίους πλείστους καὶ πιπλῶντας ὅλον τὸν ἀέρα. σὺ δὲ πάλιν λέγε· 'σιγή, σιγή.' καὶ τοῦ δίσκου ἀνοιγέντος (Betz; Preis.: ἀνυγέντος) ὄψῃ ἄπειρον (Betz; Preis.: ἄπυρον) κύκλωμα καὶ θύρας πυρίνας ἀποκεκλεισμένας. Trans. Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy"*.

lengthy prayer seven times, once for each planetary sphere, after which he is to reopen his eyes and see the fiery gates opened, and the world of gods inside. This strengthens the suspicion that some sort of lamp is used, for this is the same procedure as in the lamp-divination treated above (PGM IV.930–1114): the eyes are closed while the prayer is recited seven times, and an open gate of light will be seen as the eyes are reopened.

The visionary is now directed to "draw spirit from the divine into yourself, while you gaze intently,"[114] and then invoke a god who will subsequently bring him to the celestial pole. There, the seven pole-lords and seven fates must be ritually greeted, before finally the ruler-god descends to him. It is interesting that, as in the *Disc.8–9*, a god appears in order to bring the visionary up to the final vision. It could be that this dependence on a divine power to bring the supplicant before the god stems from Egyptian mortuary literature, where the deceased is always depicted as being brought forward before Osiris by Anubis or some other deity. But this cannot be proven: Enoch is also given an angel to guide him through his visions in the *First Book of Enoch*.[115]

What separates the visionary ascent of the ML from *Disc.8–9*, is that the former uses the vision to obtain a divination, while in the latter text the vision is the goal in itself. Also, the Hermetic vision presumes a lengthy course of initiation in order to attain the power to see God, while in the ML a three-day purification is apparently sufficient, if there is not more to the initiation than we are told. It has been suggested that the main body of the ML (PGM IV.485–732), hereafter referred to as the *Immortalization* (lns. 741, 747, 771: ἀπαθανατισμός), was originally a mystery liturgy later commodified to serve in this magical divination. Dietrich took the position that this liturgy was taken from the cult of Mithras, a position that still has its adherents, who counter the devastating early critique of Cumont and Reitzenstein by claiming that the Mithraic liturgy must have been a "local variant." This view was recently attacked by Jaime Alvar Ezquerra, who pointed out that "local variant" can in this way be used to explain any discrepancy, and is thus not very informative. He also rightly points out that the cult of Mithras seems to have been virtually non-existent in Egypt. However, Alvar's own suggestion, that the main part of the ML was taken from the *Chaldean Oracles*,[116] is equally speculative, since

114 PGM IV.628–629: στὰς οὖν εὐθέως ἕλκε ἀπὸ τοῦ θείου ἀτενίζων εἰς σεαυτὸν τὸ πνεῦμα. Trans. Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy"*.

115 *1 En.* 19.1.

116 Jaime A. Ezquerra, "Mithraism and Magic," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005* (ed. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco M. Simón; RGRW 168; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 519–49 at

we have no indication that this text was ever read on Egyptian soil. The connection between the ML and the *Chaldean Oracles* has been elaborated upon before Alvar, by Sarah Iles Johnston and Radcliffe G. Edmonds III. Johnston states that the theurgy of the *Chaldean Oracles* (hereafter CO), from the second half of the second century CE, contains the earliest ritual for ascent that we know of.[117] That entirely depends on our dating of the ML and the Hermetica, however. Our manuscripts for the ML and the *Disc.8–9* are from the fourth century, but of course, the manuscripts of the CO are much later, culled from a variety of secondary sources.[118] Since we know that Hermetic doctrines of the soul were known by the mid-second century CE, and we have seen that the idea of the ascent of royal souls was earlier still, it is likely that the Hermetic ascent predates that of the CO. In fact, it turns out that we do not really have a preserved rite of ascent in CO either, since Johnston relies on the ML to reconstruct this rite. The souls, according to two short fragments of the CO, are said to "inhale" in order to be free, or to be "drawing in the flowering flames which come down from the Father,"[119] similar to the ML's instructions to "draw spirit from the divine." This parallel is to my mind too weak to allow the wholesale reconstruction of the Chaldean rite of ascent using the ML as a blueprint, and we have seen that the ML likely refers to inhalation of kyphi, not "inhalation of sunlight," which Johnston claims is the only plausible way that the theurgist could incorporate the sun's power.[120] This seems to me to explain the obscure *per obscurius*.

545, referring to the similarities observed by Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1978), 197 n. 85, 207f., 415. Alvar makes note of but does not at all consider Betz' assertion of a Hermetic background (p. 528).

117 Johnson, "Rising to the Occasion," 166.

118 Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 47ff.

119 *Chald. Or.* 124: ψυχῆς ἐξωστῆρες ἀνάπνοοι εὔλυτοί εἰσιν; 130: Μοίρης εἱμαρτῆς τὸ πτερὸν φεύγουσιν ἀναιδές, ἐν δὲ θεῷ κεῖνται πυρσοὺς ἕλκουσαι ἀκμαίους ἐκ πατρόθεν κατιόντας, ἀφ' ὧν ψυχὴ κατιόντων ἐμπυρίων δρέπεται καρπῶν ψυχοτρόφον ἄνθος.

120 Johnston, "Rising to the Occasion," 182–83. Johnston also claims (183–85) that the several "conduits" (ὀχετόν) of CO are parallel to the "pipe" (αὐλός) of ML, but where the former are conduits for the souls, the pipe is an instrument of the ministering wind, and it is the disk which acts as a passageway. Furthermore, Johnston claims that the phrase "symbol of the living incorruptible God" refers to a secret password not provided by the author (185 n. 59), but the symbol likely refers to the immediately preceding instructions to place the finger to the mouth and utter "silence, silence, silence," which is indeed the symbol of Harpocrates (as pointed out in *PGMT* 49 n. 83; missed also by Henry Chadwick, "The Silence of Bishops in Ignatius," *HTR* 43 [1950]: 169–72 at 171). This is typical of Johnston's

Edmonds adds to the arguments of Johnston a proposed similarity between the cosmic levels of ML and CO, that the ritualist ascends from the sublunar hylic sphere to the ethereal realm of the cosmic sun, where the hypercosmic sun descends from the empyrean realm to meet the visionary.[121] But this is not a precise account of the ascent in ML. At first when the visionary draws deep breaths he does not ascend into the ethereal realms of the visible planetary gods, but expressly to mid-air (540–541: [μ]έσον τοῦ ἀέρος), the sublunary realm where demons dwell. Only after being let past the gods who rush at him there, and pronouncing new prayers, does he advance to the ether of the visible gods. This mirrors the cosmology of the Hermetic dialogues of Isis more than it does the CO. True, the latter also talk about streams of air, but the testimonies always talk about a tripartite cosmology,[122] where air seems to be subsumed under the material realm, while the independent intermediary station of air is more emphasized in Hermetism. This is likely a result of the more marked distaste of the material realm in Chaldean Neoplatonism, a "hylophobia" as Majercik called it, making a clean break between the hylic and ethereal preferable to the continuum sketched out in the Hermetica.

Unlike Johnston and Edmonds, Reinhold Merkelbach perceived the ML to be a liturgy not of Mithras, but of Sarapis-Aion and Pschai-Agathodaimon, two Alexandrian syncretistic deities. Merkelbach further alleges that the text, together with the *Leiden Kosmopoiia*, stems directly from Egyptian priestly initiation rites. I would agree that the main section of the rite as it stands is likely to have been adapted from an Egyptian cultic source. After all, it is referred to as a rite of immortalization, although there is no indication that this is the effect of the rite as it stands, which is instead used to receive an oracle. If the rite really was considered to make the ritualist immortal, there would be little need to repeat the rite three times a year or every month, as per the instructions given (lns. 748, 797). The *Immortalization* has therefore been adapted secondarily to a divinatory rite.[123]

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refusal to see any Egyptian elements in a papyrus found in Egypt, containing Old Coptic script, and referring extensively to Egyptian deities. The existence of passwords is common to many religious traditions, and cannot be used to link ML and CO.

121 Edmonds, "Did the Mithraists Inhale?" 24.

122 Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 17.

123 Morton Smith, "Transformation by Burial (1 Cor 15:35–49; Rom 6:3–5 and 8:9–11)," in *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh* (ed. Shaye J.D. Cohen; RGRW 130; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 2:110–29 at 126–27. Smith here also argues that the similarities between ML and CH X, 6, 16 and 24 prove that the Hermetic treatises had a ritual component.

In my view, the most likely scenario is that the source of the main text of the ML is a version of the Hermetic rite of rebirth. As in *On the Rebirth*, we find references to rebirth in mind, visions, deification and immortalization. The one who is to be reborn in both texts perceives himself as leaving the body and ascending to midair. The ascent-pattern is much more pronounced in the *Immortalization*, somewhat resembling the *Disc.8–9*, but unlike the latter the visionary in the *Immortalization* never penetrates the cosmic vault, but seems to remain within the Hebdomas. Indeed, like *On the Rebirth*, the divinity invoked descends to the visionary, and not vice versa. Also, in both the *Immortalization* and *On the Rebirth* the cosmic divinity unites with the soul of the visionary,[124] and in both texts the divinity is named Aion.[125] If this hypothesis is correct, we must account for the discrepancies between the two texts. One explanation could be that advanced by Betz, that the ML represents an early stage of Hermetism, perhaps from the first century CE, which was later refined to suit the Platonic tastes of the High Empire. However, the evidence of Iamblichus makes such a conclusion conjectural, since ritualism such as that of ML came into vogue only in Iamblichan Neoplatonism, as does the fact that the manuscript containing the ML is from the fourth century. There is nothing to preclude the assumption that the demythologized account of *On the Rebirth* and the *Immortalization* could be coeval. Rather, we should take the intended readers as our point of departure. The *Immortalization* is essentially a ritual handbook, giving precise details for the rite to be performed, while *On the Rebirth* is an idealized description of the mythological prototype for the ritual, possibly intended for publication from the outset despite its protestations of secrecy. The texts are thus written for respectively internal and external use, not necessarily of the same group, but of the same ritual tradition.

124 PGM IV.710.

125 PGM IV. 520–521, 594.

CHAPTER 9

The Egyptian Priesthoods and Temples

Thessalos goes to Thebes in order to seek out a specific brand of ritual expert, the Egyptian priest, whom he supposes might help him encounter the deity by means of the institutionally transmitted art of magic. Much debate on the text has centered on the location of the divine encounter of Thessalos. Festugière noted that οἶκος καθαρὸς might mean a room in a temple, but here probably referred to a hut constructed for the occasion. Jonathan Z. Smith famously used the text to exemplify the shift from locative to utopian modes of religiosity in Hellenistic times, and accordingly considered that the divination simply took place in a privat home, purified for the occasion.[1] As noted by Smith, all three options, hut, house, or temple, are possible readings of the text, and so we must decide what is the most likely reading. Since the diviner is presented as a high-priest, we can assume that temple facilities would have been available to him, and it is therefore in my view unlikely that a home or hut would need to be prepared ad hoc. László Kákosy suggested that the divination took place in the Karnak temple of Ptah,[2] while David Klotz recently advanced the more likely hypothesis that it took place in the sanctuary at Deir el-Bahari associated with both Imhotep and Amenhotep son of Hapu. This shrine featured dark chambers for incubation rites, and the many Greek graffiti indicate that it was accessible to non-Egyptians.[3] A Greek dipinto written by a Roman soldier called

1 Smith, "The Temple and the Magician."

2 László Kákosy, "Thessalos in Thebes," in *Hommages à Fayza Haikal* (ed. Nicolas-Christophe Grimal, Amr Kamel, and Cynthia May-Sheikholeslami; Cairo: IFAO, 2003), 161–64.

3 Klotz, "Kneph," 36. A tempting solution would be to interpret the οἶκος καθαρὸς prepared for Thessalos with the *w<b.t*, "the pure place," which has the "house" determinative and is thus a direct parallel (*Wb* 1:284). The *wabet* was a specialized chapel found in late period temples well into the Roman period, though it is not attested in the Deir el-Bahari sanctuary. It was an open-air chapel where the statues of the gods would be taken at the beginning of the new year to unite with the sun-god, and thus be rejuvenated for the new year. However, there is no indication that visionary rituals or rituals of rebirth were preformed in these chapels. Cf. Filip Coppens, *The Wabet: Tradition and Innovation in Temples of the Ptolemaic and Roman Period* (Prague: Czech Institute of Egyptology, 2007). On the sanctuary at Deir el-Bahari, see now Gil H. Renberg, *Where Dreams May Come: Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World* (2 vols.; RGRW 184; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 448–83. Renberg points out that oracular dream-visions of Amenhotep, but only possibly Imhotep, are attested in the sources for this sanctuary. A *synodos* of worshippers of Amenhotep is attested in Thebes, which likely held some

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Athenodorus in the second century claims that after he came to the sanctuary and prayed to Asclepius together with Amenhotep and Hygieia, he received a nocturnal vision of the god (likely Asclepius), opening the inner sanctuary for him.[4] The parallel makes it plausible that the ritual encounter between the Egyptian priest and the educated Greek took place within the confines of an Egyptian sanctuary. It remains to be considered what role the Egyptian priests and temples might have played in the Hermetic tradition.

9.1 Egyptian Priests as Purveyors of Native Tradition

We have already referred to Egyptian priests several times in our account, but it is now time to consider if the priestly milieu is indeed a likely Sitz-im-Leben for our Hermetic treatises. This was the controversial and quickly abandoned thesis of Reitzenstein in his *Poimandres*, which has only recently been somewhat rehabilitated. Fowden notes tentatively that Egyptian priests are possible authors of, or audiences for, the treatises, but his influential work tends rather to treat Egyptian priestly literature as one of many currents that influenced the Hermetica, and the Egyptian temple is treated more as a background than as a place of origin.

There is still an unfortunate tendency, I think, to expect from priestly authors only "traditional" Egyptian material. In this respect Jacco Dieleman's work, *Priests, Tongues and Rites*, is extremely important, as it demonstrates that bilingual Egyptian scribes were quite conscious in their use of script, and made use of Greek and Egyptian for different purposes.[5] We now know that when Egyptian priests wrote in Greek, they expressed themselves in an entirely different idiom from when they wrote in Demotic or other Egyptian scripts.

Another important recent contribution is David Frankfurter's work, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, in which he explains the Greek Magical Papyri as the response of an Egyptian priesthood that was increasingly dispossessed by the Roman temple-administration.[6] Forced to fend for themselves, the priests made use of their reputation as supreme sages and magicians in order to carve out a niche for themselves as religious entrepreneurs, a process that Frankfurter calls

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of their meetings at the sanctuary (p. 482). Another possibility for the location of Thessalos' vision is an unknown temple of Imhotep at Karnak (p. 482–83).

4 Renberg, *Where Dreams*, 458–60, n. 36 for the likelihood that Imhotep/Asclepius is the god appearing.

5 Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites*, 103ff.

6 Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 225ff.

"stereotype-appropriation." Richard Gordon supplied an important corrective to this theory, by demonstrating that the self-image of the priests in Roman Egypt was as much the result of internal developments within the priesthoods as an appropriation of external stereotypes.[7]

With these two concepts of scribal bilingualism and stereotype-appropriation in mind, we will in the following reconsider Reitzenstein's thesis of a *Poimandresgemeinde*, which at least in its early phase was a circle of initiates gathered around one or several priests. No better point of departure can be found than Iamblichus' explanation of the Greek philosophical idiom of the Books of Hermes: "Those documents, after all, which circulate under the name of Hermes contain Hermetic [i.e. authentically Egyptian] doctrines, even if they often employ the terminology of the philosophers; for they were translated from the Egyptian tongue by men not unversed in philosophy."[8]

Classical scholars tend to see any reference to Egyptian priests in ancient literature as an exoticizing device, a hallmark of pseudepigraphy and romances, and they thus forget that Egyptian priests were concrete human beings living side by side with Greeks and Romans, with their own vested interests and corporate group-identity. We must naturally see through the priests' claims to represent an unbroken chain of tradition going back to the primeval wisdom of the gods, but at the same time we must recognize that this myth was as alluring in antiquity as it is for many today, and was therefore a potent legitimizing tool for the Egyptian temple institution that did in fact transmit theological writings and rituals going back over two millennia.[9] The hallmark of traditions is that they present themselves as unchanging, in order to claim identity with the authoritative point of origin. Even though the traditions kept within the closed circulation of the temples were not as unchanging as they make out, one can still sense a strong continuity between Egyptian texts written in Greco-Roman times and texts of the New Kingdom. One obvious rupture in the chain of transmission takes place when the dominant language changes, and we find priestly literature in Greek and Old Coptic. However, the pre-eminent Egyptologist Jan Assmann still finds strong resonances between the unknown god, the One who is All, of the Ramesside solar theology of Amun and of the Hermetic and

7 Gordon, "Shaping the Text," 71–76.

8 Iamb., *Myst.* 8.4: τὰ μὲν γὰρ φερόμενα ὡς Ἑρμοῦ ἑρμαϊκὰς περιέχει δόξας, εἰ καὶ τῇ τῶν φιλοσόφων γλώττῃ πολλάκις χρῆται· μεταγέγραπται γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς αἰγυπτίας γλώττης ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν φιλοσοφίας οὐκ ἀπείρως ἐχόντων. Trans. Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell.

9 For example, passages from the Pyramid-texts were still copied in the Roman period, cf. Martina Minas-Nerpel, "Egyptian Temples," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (ed. Christina Riggs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 362–82 at 363.

Neoplatonic texts.[10] Even though much of the chain linking these theologies is obscure to us, the similarities should not be discounted, especially since the Greek Hermetica and Neoplatonic texts such as the *Response of Abammon* also identify themselves as derived from Egyptian sources. Frankfurter refers to this as a "Hellenization of priestly tradition," and elaborates:

> … a priestly "upper class" is also quite evident in the Roman period, one that actively sought to promote itself in the world and values of a "higher" or ecumenical Hellenism. Their traces appear most vividly behind such literary endeavors as the Hermetica, which continue the ancient tradition of the "writings of Thoth" in Greek guise, and Iamblichus's *On the Mysteries*.[11]

As will be apparent from the foregoing, I agree with this assessment of Frankfurter, although he does not provide any evidence for his assertion beyond referring to Fowden, who as we have seen does not actually make this claim. Let us recapitulate the arguments adduced so far for seeing priestly scribes as authors of at least some of the Hermetica:

1. Hermes-Thoth was a figure of memory for priestly scribal identity.
2. Hermetic myths privilege Egyptian temples and priests.
3. Undisputed priestly authorship of astrological Hermetica, ca. second century BCE, and use of Hermetic astrology in Hermetica.
4. Undisputed priestly authorship of magical Hermetica, ca. second to fourth centuries CE, and common textual traditions with theoretical Hermetica.
5. Internal evidence: Hermetic self-representation as priestly literature (CH XVI–XVII; *Ascl.*; SH XXIII–XXVI; *Disc.8–9*).
6. External evidence: Universal contemporary acceptance of Hermetica as Egyptian primeval wisdom conveyed by priests (possibly disputed by Porphyry on grounds of modern vocabulary).
7. Supporting evidence: Egyptian priests did engage with the Greco-Roman world, assuming the role of magicians and spiritual masters and asserting themselves in the wider discourse of philosophy.

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10 Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, 240–44; id., *The Mind of Egypt*, 424–27; id., "Primat und Transzendenz," in *Aspekte der ägyptischen Religion* (ed. Wolfhart Westendorf; GO 4/9; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979), 7–42 at 38.

11 Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 222.

In the following we shall consider some further parallels between the priesthoods of Roman Egypt and the *Perfect Discourse*, which support the hypothesis of a priestly provenance.

9.2 The Idealized Priests of Chaeremon and the Perfect Discourse

We have already mentioned the importance of Chaeremon, who was a sacred scribe of Memphis, tutor of Nero, and called a Stoic philosopher.[12] Festugière has pointed out that Chaeremon's account of the priestly way of life is highly idealized, having more in common with the Therapeutai of Philo, or the Pythagoreans described by Iamblichus, than with what we know about the historical realia of Egyptian priests.[13] But unlike Philo and Iamblichus, who were unaffiliated with the groups they describe, Chaeremon claimed membership of the group of "true philosophers" that he extolled. The traditional authority of the Egyptian sacred scribes must no doubt have been instrumental in gaining Chaeremon imperial favor, but when he represents this tradition to the dominant culture of Hellenism in which he tries to assert himself, he makes it out to be a "community of saints" probably inspired by Pythagorean sources. Chaeremon does mention the perhaps most important traditional duties of priests, the daily rituals performed for the statues of the gods, but he chooses to emphasize the personal purity demanded of the priests in order for them to perform these rites, rather than the rites themselves. We here clearly see the beginning of the change in the locus of the sacred, from traditional temples and rites to the holy man.[14] However, the temple has not disappeared but is still the place where the priests philosophize, the place in which they gain their holy status through their continuous proximity to divinity. Such a claim

12 Van der Horst, *Chaeremon*; id. "The Way of Life of the Egyptian Priests according to Chaeremon," in *Studies in Egyptian Religion Dedicated to Professor Jan Zandee* (ed. Matthieu H. van Voss et al.; SHR 43; Leiden: Brill, 1982), 61–71; Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 54–56.

13 André-Jean Festugière, "Sur une nouvelle édition du 'De Vita Pythagorica' de Jamblique," *REG* 50 (1937): 470–94; Cf. Sauneron, *Les prêtres de l'ancienne Égypte,* for an account that gives a balanced picture between the idealized priests and the day to day reality in which they lived. As with holy men cross-culturally there can be a gulf between the ideal and reality. However, the fact that an ideal might be transgressed in actual life does not lessen its importance for the self-definition and public perception of a group.

14 Cf. Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *JRS* 61 (1971): 80–101; Garth Fowden, "The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society," *JHS* 102 (1982): 33–59; Smith, "The Temple and the Magician."

to authority must have been vital for an itinerant entrepreneur offering magic and wisdom to a Hellenized clientel. It is informative to compare the idealized self-representation of the priestly caste found in fragment 10 of Chaeremon with the Hermetica:

	Chaeremon, fr. 10 (apud Porph., *Abst.* 4.6–8).	Hermetica
1.	Philosophize in temples.	SH XXIII, 68; *Ascl.* 1, 41; *Disc.*8–9.
2.	Life of contemplation and worship	CH I, 27; VI, 5; IX, 4; X, 4, 8–9; *Ascl.* 12.
3.	Stay away from the impure crowd	CH I, 29; IV, 4–5; IX, 4; *Ascl.* 23–26.
4.	Repress passions	CH VI, 2; X, 8; XII, 4–7, 10–11; *Ascl.* 22.
5.	Purification and fasting	CH I, 22; XIII, 1, 7; *Ascl.* 9, 41.
6.	Cleave to statues	CH XVII; *Ascl.* 23–24, 37–38.
7.	Frugal diet	*Ascl.* 11, 22, 41.
8.	Egyptian patriotism	CH XVI, 1–2; SH XXIV, 11–15; *Ascl.* 24–26.
9.	Astrological observation	SH VI; XXIII; *Disc.*8–9; *Ascl.* 6.
10.	Hymn-singing	CH I, 31; XIII; XVIII; *Disc.*8–9; *Ascl.* 38, 41.
11.	Claim to be true philosophers	*Ascl.* 12–14.

As is apparent from the table, the *Perfect Discourse* is the only treatise that contains all of these elements, which is not all that surprising since this is a compendious text—as signaled by the original Greek title, the *Perfect Discourse*—and it is the only treatise which provides the dialogue with a somewhat developed narrative framework. Just as with Chaeremon's priests, the interlocutors congregate in the temple, more exactly in its *adyton*, which means the inner chambers that are off-limit to visiting outsiders. This narrative framework has been universally discounted as a pseudepigraphal trope, but Chaeremon's self-representation of priests philosophizing in temples should make us wary of jumping to conclusions. We will in the following reconsider the narrative setting of the *Perfect Discourse* in light of the two modes of religiosity recommended in the text: to tend to the earth and to contemplate the cosmos. These double duties point us towards the self-representation of the author, as we shall see.

First, we must consider the anthropology of the PD, which famously holds mankind to be "a great miracle," an expression later immortalized by Pico della Mirandola.[15] This elevated status is due to the mixed nature of humankind,

15 *Ascl.* 6: *magnum miraculum est homo*. Cf. Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* 2.

which unlike the heavenly gods possesses both a material and an essential component. As in the other Hermetica the essential human is seen as the better half, but the *PD* also sees the body as an instrument necessary for tending the cosmos, in order to make it a worthy reflection of its maker. The creation of humans as double beings was part of the providential plan of the creator, not a curse, and each part has its attendant duties: the material body is given to humankind in order that it may take care of the earth, while the essential part is given so that it can contemplate the heavens. The essential human is able to transcend its earthly fetters:

suspicit caelum. sic ergo feliciore loco medietatis est positus, ut, quae infra se sunt, diligat, ipse a se superioribus diligatur. colit terram, elementis uelocitate miscetur, acumine mentis maris profunda descendit.
omnia illi licent: non caelum uidetur altissimum; quasi e proximo enim animi sagacitate metitur. intentionem animi eius nulla aëris caligo confundit; non densitas terrae operam eius inpedit; non aquae altitudo profunda despectum eius obtundit. omnia idem est et ubique idem est.

He looks up to heaven. He has been put in the happier place of middle status so that he might cherish those beneath him and be cherished by those above him. He cultivates the earth; he swiftly mixes into the elements; he plumbs the depths of the sea in the keenness of his mind. Everything is permitted him: heaven itself seems not too high, for he measures it in clever thinking as if it were nearby. No misty air dims the concentration of his thought; no thick earth obstructs his work; no abysmal deep of water blocks his lofty view. He is everything, and he is everywhere.[16]

This striking passage is clearly akin to the cosmic ubiquity, the sense of unity with the universe that is also described in *On the Rebirth* (CH XIII, 11; cf. XI, 20). The ontological range of humans, comprising both heaven and earth, is greater than that of the heavenly gods, who are after all set in their eternal fixed course, and humans are therefore in some ways better than the gods (*Ascl.* 22). But this does not apply to all people. The peculiarity of the essential part is that it is "omniform," enabling it to take on the quality of those beings it connects itself to. Thus four categories of humans are drawn up (*Ascl.* 5):

16 *Ascl.* 6. Trans. Copenhaver.

Category	*Conjunction with*	*Governing faculty*
Divine people	Gods	Nous (*mens*, *sensus*)
Demonic people	"Philanthropic" demons	Rational soul?
Regular humans	Median humanity	Lower soul?
Others	Other kinds	Passions

Only divine people are connected to the gods through their "divine religion,"[17] and these people are later declared to be few in number, as opposed to the crowd of blasphemers and atheists, who are in the thrall of their bodily passions like wild beasts.[18] Hermes does not wish to speak further about the latter, for fear of blaspheming against the sanctity of the discourse, which might explain why he simply refers to them as "others" in the passage listing the four kinds of people. The categorization of humanity thus gives us a hierarchy of four kinds of people, whereas Hermes later in the treatise speaks only of the reverent and irreverent people, similar to the two paths of life or death in the *Poimandres*.

The kinship of humankind with the gods is taken up again in the discussion of the earthly gods. The essential human is a brother of the heavenly gods, since both are born by God. Therefore the gods know the affairs of humans, and humans know the affairs of gods, though this applies only to those humans who are equipped with insight and knowledge, namely the divine people.[19] Just as God made heavenly gods, so humans too make earthly gods. The power of humans to do this is due to their kinship with the heavenly gods, and due to the fact that they are made in God's image and can thus emulate his creative activity.[20] The creation of earthly gods is later characterized as something that "wins more admiration than all wonders,"[21] and is explained as the act of summoning demons to come down and dwell inside statues that have been made of material ingredients in sympathetic relation to divine nature (*Ascl.* 37–38). The divine powers residing in statues are thus in fact demons, no doubt identifiable with the "philanthropic" demons mentioned above, who come down to mankind as emanations of the heavenly gods (*Ascl.* 5). This explains the relationship between different kinds of humans and the gods in a new way:

17 *Ascl.* 5: *propter quod et prope deos accedit, qui se mente, qua diis iunctus est, diuina religione diis iunxerit*.

18 *Ascl.* 22 = NHC VI 66,1–8.

19 *Ascl.* 22 = NHC VI 68,4–15.

20 *Ascl.* 23 = NHC VI 68,20–31.

21 *Ascl.* 37: *omnium enim mirabilium uincit admirationem, quod homo diuinam potuit inuenire naturam eamque efficere*. My trans.

> DIVINE PEOPLE worship the HEAVENLY GODS.
> DIVINE PEOPLE create and then propitiate with hymns and offerings the EARTHLY GODS.
> DEMONIC PEOPLE worship the EARTHLY GODS.

The description of how earthly gods are made in §§ 37–38 accurately represents the authentic Egyptian procedure of the *Opening of the Mouth* rite, performed so that the *ba*-emanation of a god would be able to inhabit its statue.[22] The divine people in *PD* are thus identified with the upper echelons of the Egyptian clergy, one of whose duties it was to uphold the cult of the statues. The demonic people are harder to locate precisely: they could be the lower priesthoods, which were only part-time staff with regular dayjobs, or they could be the devout worshippers who participate in festivals, seek out divinations and cures, and contribute funding to the temples. Perhaps the first option is the better one, since *The Key* informs us that to become demonic is a step on the way to becoming divine (CH X, 7). A similar division between higher and lower degrees of sanctity is found in Chaeremon's account of the priests:

PD	Chaeremon, fr. 10 (apud Porph., *Abst.* 4.8).
Divine people	True philosophizing: Prophets, stolistes, sacred scribes, and astrologers
Demonic people	Same rites, but with less accuracy and self-control: Priests, pastophoroi, temple-wardens, and assistants.

If this is a correct interpretation, the median human class of the *Perfect Discourse* must be regular lay worshippers. The *PD* thus creates the same self-representation as Chaeremon, of a hieratic class which gains its sanctity from constant rites performed to the earthly gods and contemplation of the heavens.

Garth Fowden admits the cultic dimension in Hermetism, but claims that the cultic stage was one to be superseded in the further process of initiation:

> the full spiritual scope of Hermetism … recognizes that not just the mysteries but all forms of cult may play a part in the lower stages of spiritual progress. They are not defunct, but they are intended to be superseded. And it happens to be with the post-cultic phase of the soul's experience that the Hermetica are concerned.[23]

22 Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 203–14; Bull, "No End to Sacrifice in Hermetism."

23 Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 150. Van den Kerchove, *La voie d'Hermès*, 214–22, also thinks that veneration of the statues is to be recalled with veneration, but not practiced. Scott, 3:221, sees the worshippers of the gods as the median people, subject to their passions.

This notion is not supported by the *Perfect Discourse*, quite the opposite: as already mentioned, the humans have earthly duties which the disciples of Hermes are warned not to neglect, even at the point of their ascent to heaven:

is nouit se, nouit et mundum, scilicet ut meminerit, quid partibus conueniat suis, quae sibi utenda, quibus sibi inseruiendum sit, recognoscat, laudes gratesque maximas agens deo, eius imaginem uenerans, non ignarus se etiam secundam esse imaginem dei, cuius sunt imagines duae mundus et homo.
unde efficitur ut, quoniam est ipsius una conpago, parte, qua ex anima et sensu, spiritu atque ratione diuinus est, uelut ex elementis superioribus, inscendere posse uideatur in caelum, parte uero mundana, quae constat ex igne ⟨et terra⟩, aqua et aëre, mortalis resistat in terra, ne curae omnia suae mandata uidua desertaque dimittat. sic enim humanitas ex parte diuina, ex alia parte effecta mortalis est in corpore consistens.

Mankind knows himself and knows the world: thus, it follows that he is mindful of what his role is and of what is useful to him; also, that he recognizes what interests he should serve, giving greatest thanks and praise to God and honoring his image but not ignoring that he, too, is the second image of God, who has two images, world and mankind. Whence, though mankind is an integral construction, it happens that in the part that makes him divine, he seems able to rise up to heaven, as if from higher elements—soul and consciousness, spirit and reason. But in his material part—consisting of fire ⟨and earth,⟩ water and air—he remains fixed on the ground, a mortal, lest he disregard all the terms of his charge as void and empty. Thus, humankind is divine in one part, in another part mortal, residing in a body.[24]

Even such humans as are able to rise up to heaven are thus explicitly not exempt from earthly duties, but should keep their feet on the ground, so to speak. Then what are the earthly duties of divine humans? Tilling the earth below is beneath the dignity of divine humans: "Some very small number of these humans, endowed with pure mind, have been allotted the honored duty of looking up to heaven. But those who lagged behind ⟨at⟩ a lower reach of understanding … have been appointed to care for the elements and these lower objects."[25] These latter are then the median humans, since we are told

24 *Ascl.* 10. Trans. Copenhaver.

25 *Ascl.* 9: *aliqui ipsique ergo paucissimi pura mente praediti sortiti sunt caeli suspiciendi uenerabilem curam. quicumque autem ex duplici naturae suae confusione ⟨in⟩ inferiorem intellegentiam mole corporis resederunt, curandis elementis hisque inferioribus sunt praepositi.* Trans. Copenhaver.

just before this passage that the arts pertaining to the lower elements of earth and water, such as agriculture, trade, and shipping, create the strongest bonds between humans.[26] The anthropology of the *Perfect Discourse* is thus in fact a justification of a society in which one group of people is exempt from work, in order for them to contemplate heaven. It follows that the earthly duty of the divine people is to take care of the earthly gods. The latter must after all be gratified with *constant* worship to ensure their connection to heaven (*Ascl.* 38). The double duties are also reflected in the aretalogy of Isis and Osiris, where the prophet who is destined to lay his hands upon the gods is endowed with philosophy and magic for the soul—presumably related to the contemplation of the heavens—and medicine for the body (SH XXIII, 68). The earthly benefits of the material gods are indeed said to be divination and healing in *Ascl.* 24, which would thus be the earthly benefits ensured by the divine people. We thus have a hierarchy of human beings, based on their level of insight and proximity to the divine.

1. Divine humans:	Contemplate the heavens. Create earthly gods and secure their continued presence. Convey their boons of divination and healing to lay worshippers.
2. Demonic humans:	Participate in the cult of the earthly gods. Possibly affiliated with the muses and the higher arts.
3. Median humans:	Practice trades connected to the lower elements of water and earth, such as agriculture, commerce, and shipping.
4. Impious humans:	People who do not give the gods their dues. Temple-thieves.

It is vital to point out at this juncture that the picture of the priest as a full-time purveyor of divine favors matches the social realities of the priesthoods under the Roman administration. The regulations of the special account of Augustus for Egypt, the *Gnomon of the Idios Logos*, specifically forbid priests in the higher echelons to hold any profane occupation.[27] Since most of the sacred land

26 *Ascl.* 8: *aut ipsius terrae cultus, pascuae, aedificatio, portus, nauigationes, communicationes, commodationes alternae, qui est humanitatis inter se firmissimus nexus et mundi partis, quae est aquae et terra.*

27 *Gnomon of the Idios Logos* § 71: ἱερεῦσ[ι] οὐκ ἐξὸν πρὸς ἄλ[λ]ῃ χρείᾳ εἶναι ἢ τῇ τῶν θ̣ε̣ῷ̣ν̣ [θρ]ησκείᾳ; Emil Seckel and Wilhelm Schubart, *Der Gnomon des Idios Logos* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919), 29; Cf. Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism*, 271–73. Laymen were in section 86 of the same regulations expressly permitted to officiate in ceremonies of

of the temples was also reclaimed by the state, the priests were made increasingly dependent on the state subsidies of the temples. As David Frankfurter has pointed out, this created a situation where the priesthood had to diversify their sources of income, commodifying their ritual expertise for the private market.[28] For sure, the priests had certainly acted as ritual experts for their community long before the Greco-Roman period, but their lessened prestige and income would be an additional factor accelerating the Hellenization of priestly lore to respond to market demands. The author of the *PD* is however not content with merely portraying the priests as ritual experts and philosophers, but rather makes the very existence of the world depend on their daily service in the temple.

9.3 The Temple as a Dwelling-Place of Priests and Gods

The Egyptian temple plays a vital role in the *PD*. First of all, as we have seen, the teaching itself takes place in the *adytum* of a temple, thus corresponding to Chaeremon's portrayal of priests philosophizing within the temples. The teaching is portrayed not as mere human speech, however, but as an inspired and holy teaching. In the narrative framework, Asclepius brings in Tat and Ammon to partake in the teaching, but Hermes tells him not to include anyone else, since this would risk profaning the elevated discourse by making it public (*Ascl.* 1). The text was of course published and does not bear any marks of ever having been kept hidden, but the examples of the mystery cults demonstrate that actual secrecy is not a prerequisite for claiming status as an esoteric mystery.[29] A mystery must rhetorically, but not necessarily in actuality be kept secret.

When the interlocutors have gathered in the *adytum* they fall silent, so that divine Eros fills the room and speaks through the mouth of Hermes. As noted, this corresponds to Hermes receiving the "eloquent spirit" in *Disc.8–9*. The

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Greek temples, cf. Naphtali Lewis, *Life in Egypt Under Roman Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 90; Serge Sauneron, "Les conditions d'accès à la fonction sacerdotale à l'époque gréco-romaine," *BIFAO* 61 (1962): 55–57. See also the regulations on priests in the *Book of the Temple*, Quack, "Ämtererblichkeit und Abstammungsvorschriften."

28 Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 198–237.

29 Cf. Jan Assmann, "Das verschleierte Bild zu Sais—griechische Neugier und ägyptische Andacht," in *Schleier und Schwelle III: Geheimnis und Neugierde* (ed. Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann; München: Wilhelm Fink, 1999), 45–66; Burkert, "Der geheime Reiz des Verborgenen," 79–100; Bull, "Hemmelig tekst."

atmosphere of sanctity persists in the dialogue, as Hermes declines to speak about certain subjects out of fear that his divine discourse might be profaned. The narrative setting of the temple is thus used to give the whole discourse an aura of the sacred. No narrative setting is indicated in *Disc.8–9*, but in the epilogue the temple of Hermes in Diospolis is invoked to lend its authority to the treatise. Like several of the spells in the *Book of the Dead* and the Greek Magical Papyri, as well as some philosophical and alchemical text, the treatise purports to have been originally deposited in an Egyptian temple. This is, as we have seen, also the case with the stelae of Hermes in the *Korê Kosmou* and the letter of Manetho. Once again, we must remind ourselves that this was *both* an effective fictive rhetorical device, and a historical reality, since temple scriptoria actually did produce and reproduce both classical Egyptian, as well as more recent Demotic and Greek literature, sometimes inscribed on stelae.[30]

The reason for the sanctity of the temples is the divine presence dwelling in the statues. As mentioned earlier, the credit for the discovery of making gods is given to the ancestors of Hermes and his disciples (*Ascl.* 37). At that time, we are told, people were still ignorant concerning the nature of divinity, and the creation of earthly gods was thus part of Hermes' acts as a civilizing deity. The myths of both *Korê Kosmou* and the *Poimandres* equally describe the early salvific activities of Hermes in a period when ignorance reigned. In the former, the written account of the discoveries of Hermes were placed "near the secrets of Osiris" (SH XXIII, 7), implying a relation with the sanctuaries of this god, which were spread out throughout Egypt. According to tradition, the corpse of Osiris was divided into forty-two parts, and each part was buried in a separate nome of Egypt.[31] The sanctuaries of Osiris thus represent the totality of Egypt, even if his main seat remained in Abydos. It is worth recalling also that Isis and Hermes are credited by Diodorus with instituting the rites of Osiris (1.20).

Indeed, Osiris is one of the earthly gods mentioned in *Ascl.* 37, along with Isis, Asclepius and Hermes, the latter two being the eponymous ancestors of the interlocutors. It seems that these gods are identified as the ancestors who discovered the art of making gods, thus corresponding to the story of Diodorus. The art of producing gods entails first fabricating a material statue, which "comes from a mixture of plants, stones and spices … that have in them a natural power of divinity."[32] The material statue must thus be made of ingredients

30 Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 238–64.

31 Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 410; id., *Death and Salvation*, 361.

32 *Ascl.* 38: *Constat, o Asclepi, de herbis, de lapidibus et de aromatibus diuinitatis naturalem uim in se habentibus*. Trans. Copenhaver. On the Egyptian practice and theory of creating divine images, cf. David Lorton, "The Theology of Cult Statues in Ancient Egypt," in

that are in sympathy with the deity to be invoked. Second, souls of angels or demons are called down through "holy and divine mysteries" and made to dwell in the statue.[33] As in Egyptian cult, this is not a one-time event, but rather a process:[34] the divine souls must constantly be appeased with hymns and sacrifices in order for them to remain in their earthly abodes (*Ascl.* 38). These souls apparently once belonged to mortal humans, for Hermes immediately goes on to speak of the ancestor of Asclepius: "They dedicated a temple to him on the Libyan mountain near the shore of the crocodiles. There lies his material person—his body, in other words. The rest, or rather, the whole of him (if the whole person consists in the consciousness [*sensus* = nous] of life) went back happier to heaven."[35] The "wholeness" of Asclepius, namely his nous, has thus returned to heaven, while his body lies in his temple, still healing the sick. The body can refer either to the cult statue, an identification that was common in Egypt,[36] or to the corpse of the god who was often thought to reside in the underworld.

So an earthly god like Asclepius consists of three parts: a corpse, a statue, and a soul called down from above, while the mind or totality of the god remains in heaven. The souls thus emanate from their noetic counterparts in heaven down into the statues, which are consequently "filled with spirit and soul."[37] One might recall that in SH XXVI, 9 Asclepius was called the king of medicine, in the same way that Osiris was king of the dead, and that souls emanate from these kingships. The division of the earthly god as consisting of body, statue and soul, with a nous in heaven, resonates with the tripartite theology emerging in the Ramesside era: "His [Amun-Re-Atum] *ba* is in the sky, his *body* is in the west, his *image* is in 'Southern Heliopolis' and wears his

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Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East (ed. Michael B. Dick; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 123–210.

33 *Ascl.* 37: *euocantes animas daemonum uel angelorum eas indiderunt imaginibus sanctis diuinisque mysteriis.*

34 Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, 43.

35 *Ascl.* 37: *cui templum consecratum est in monte Libyae circa litus crocodillorum, in quo eius iacet mundanus homo, id est corpus* (*reliquus enim uel potius totus, si est homo totus in sensu uitae, melior remeauit in caelum*). Trans. Copenhaver.

36 Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, 238.

37 *Ascl.* 24: *statuas animatas, sensu et spiritu plenas* = NHC VI 69,32–34: ⲉⲕⲱⲗⲁⲍⲉ ⲉⲛⲉⲧⲉ ⲟⲩⲛ̄ ⲯⲩⲭⲏ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲉ̄ⲓⲛⲓⲫⲉ ⲭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲩⲟⲧⲉ. My trans. While the Latin attributes to the statues *sensus*, which most often translates Greek αἴσθησις or νοῦς, the Coptic is in agreement with *Ascl.* 37 that they are filled with soul.

crowns."[38] Jan Assmann, in his discussion of Egyptian cult statues, utilized the *PD* as an apt explanation of this theology of the cult statue and emphasizes the passage describing Egypt as a temple of the world, the sacred land where one can find "the conveying or descent of all that is regulated and carried out in heaven."[39] It is by conveying divine souls down from above that Egypt becomes an image of heaven and the temple of the entire world, and Assmann adduces a number of examples from Egyptian texts where the gods alight on their statues as *ba*-emanations.

The importance of the rite of the *Opening of the Mouth* is that it makes the god present locally, who is otherwise far removed in heaven or the netherworld. Each nome of Egypt was organized around a temple, in which the deity was present, at least before the Roman administration under Septimius Severus reorganized the nomes according to *boulai*, town councils that also regulated the temples.[40] This local dimension is also preserved in the *PD*:

terrenis etenim diis atque mundanis facile est irasci, utpote qui sint ab hominibus ex utraque natura facti atque conpositi. unde contingit ab Aegyptiis haec sancta animalia nuncupari colique per singulas ciuitates eorum animas, quorum sunt consecratae uiuentes, ita ut et eorum legibus incolantur et eorum nominibus nuncupentur: per hanc causam, o Asclepi, quod aliis quae colenda uidentur atque ueneranda, apud alios dissimiliter habentur, ac propterea bellis se lacessere Aegyptiorum solent ciuitates.

Anger comes easily to earthly and material gods because humans have made and assembled them from both natures. Whence it happens that these are called *sancta animalia* by the Egyptians, who throughout their cities worship the souls of those deified while alive, in order that cities might go on living by their laws and calling themselves by their names. For this reason, Asclepius, because what one group worships and honors another group treats differently, Egypt's cities constantly assail one another in war.[41]

38 P. Leiden I 350, IV, 12–21; Assmann, *The Search for God*, 237. Cf. also Zandee, "Der Hermetismus und das alte Ägypten," 102.

39 *Ascl.* 24: *translatio aut descensio omnium quae gubernantur atque excercentur in caelo*. Trans. Assmann, *The Search for God*, 41. Cf. Hubert Cancik and Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier, "'Tempel der ganzen Welt': Ägypten und Rom," in *Temple of the Whole World: Studies in Honour of Jan Assmann* (ed. Sibylle Meyer; SHR 97; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 41–58.

40 Andrea Jördens, "Status and Citizenship," in *The Oxford handbook of Roman Egypt* (ed. Christina Riggs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 247–59 at 256; Gaëlle Tallet and Christiane Zivie-Coche, "Imported Cults," in ibid., 457–73 at 441.

41 *Ascl.* 37. Trans. Copenhaver, slightly modified.

Commentators have in unison seen in the *sancta animalia* a reference to the notorious animal worship of Egypt.[42] But this fits poorly in the context, which deals with the cult of statues. Humans have not "made and assembled" the sacred animals from both natures. It is also odd to say that cities live by the laws of the sacred animals, and call themselves by their names.[43] The statement that cities go to war over animals is the best argument in favor of this interpretation, since we know from Juvenal and elsewhere of conflicts breaking out over one city hurting animals held sacred by another.[44]

The *sancta animalia* are best understood, I would argue, as the Latin translation of Greek ζῷα ἱερά. A *zôon* can be an animal, but it also denotes an animated image, and it is in that sense we should translate the expression here: *sancta animalia* are ensouled sacred images, not sacred animals. This sense can also be found with the Latin word, as in Servius's commentary to the *Aeneid*, where he refers to a lost work by Marcus Antistius Labeo, *De diis animalibus*. The title refers to human souls that have been turned into gods, namely as the statues referred to as Lares (here: *vialis*) and Penates.[45] This interpretation makes better sense of the passage as a whole. Those who were deified while still alive, namely the ancestors of Hermes and his disciples, gave laws to their cities, which were therefore named after them. After their death, they were provided with statues and sanctuaries, into which their souls were called down from heaven, while their nous remained up above. Because of their different objects of worship, the cities are constantly at war with each other. This might be a reference to the sacred animals after all, or perhaps the Latin translator understood ζῷα ἱερά as sacred animals, and added this passage derived from Juvenal? Such interpolations are not unheard of with our translator, and the description

42 Cf. Klaas A.D. Smelik and Emily A. Hemelrijk, "'Who knows not what monsters demented Egypt worships?' Opinions on Egyptian animal worship in Antiquity as part of the ancient conception of Egypt," *ANRW* 17.4:1852–2000.

43 For example, the city of Hermes is not called after his sacred animal, the ibis, though the nome of the Upper Egyptian Hermopolis Magna is the nome of the hare, while that of the Lower Egyptian Hermopolis Parva is the nome of the ibis.

44 Juv., *Sat.* 15.1–13, 33–44. Cf. Smelig and Hemelrijk, "Who knows not," 1965–70; Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 256. Also, in Elephantine there was religious trouble between the Jewish garrison and the temple of Khnum, since the former sacrificed sheep, which was seen as an aberration by the priests of the Ram-god.

45 Serv., *In Verg. Aen.* 3.168: *quod autem dicit "a quo principe genus nostrum est" potest et generaliter intellegi, id est unde originem ducimus, ut deos penates quasi Troianos intellegas, et ad ritum referri, de quo dicit Labeo in libris qui appellantur de diis animalibus: in quibus ait, esse quaedam sacra quibus animae humanae uertantur in deos, qui appellantur animales, quod de animis fiant. hi autem sunt dii penates et uialis*.

of a bellicose Egypt does not exactly correspond to its image as the "seat of religion" (*Ascl.* 24: *sedes religionum*). On the other hand, the warring could very well be explained by the irascibility of the earthly gods.

9.4 Egypt as the Temple of the World and The Twilight of Its Gods

All the domains of the Roman Empire had their temples and their gods, who could often offer their adherents divination and healing, so in this respect there is nothing inherently different about Egypt. But the author of the *Perfect Discourse* claims uniqueness for his home country: "Do you not know, Asclepius, that Egypt is an image of heaven, or, to be more precise, that everything governed and moved in heaven came down to Egypt and was transferred there? If truth were told, our land is the temple of the whole world."[46] As the temple is the symbolic center of each Egyptian city, the seat of its tutelary deity, so Egypt is the center of the world. As we have seen, the idea of Egypt as the center of the world is also important in the passage describing Egypt as the heart of the body of the world (SH XXIV, 11–15). The passage celebrating Egypt as the temple of the world is famous for its patriotic fervor, and corresponds to the ideology of the temple in Greco-Roman Egypt: the temple is a microcosmos, or rather a micro-cosmogony, where every day the world is ritually created anew.[47] The temple is the axis mundi, to borrow a central idea from Mircea Eliade, where heaven, earth and netherworld are connected vertically. The oft-cited apocalypse of the *Perfect Discourse* shows how cultic activity is inextricably connected with social and cosmic order. When the cults in the individual Egyptian temples are threatened, this not only has consequences for the region and worshippers served by those temples, but also for the entire cosmos, since Egypt is its temple. The conveying and descent of heavenly rejuvenating vitality is interrupted.[48] As Mahé has pointed out, the apocalypse[49]

46 *Ascl.* 24: *an ignoras, o Asclepi, quod Aegyptus imago sit caeli aut, quod est verius, translatio aut descensio omnium, quae gubernantur atque exercentur in caelo? et si dicendum est verius, terra nostra mundi totius est templum*. I keep the translation of Copenhaver here, instead of that of Assmann quoted above.

47 Ragnhild B. Finnestad, *Image of the World and Symbol of the Creator* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1985).

48 Finnestad, *Image of the World*, 157; Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, 73.

49 Mahé prefers to call it a "prédiction" instead of an apocalypse, to avoid confusing it with Jewish and Christian apocalypticism. But this is a sort of exceptionalism. According to the influential definition of John J. Collins, "Apocalypse: The morphology of a genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 1–20 at 9: "'Apocalypse' is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative

corresponds to the traditional Egyptian *Chaosbeschreibung*, which is generally used to contrast the present order with past chaos, thus legitimizing new ruling dynasties. The main difference between the apocalypse of the *PD* and its classical Egyptian predecessors, such as the *Prophecy of Neferty*, is that the latter tend to valorize the present order, while the former sees the present as the stage of decline.[50] As we have seen, such chaos-descriptions that were used to legitimize new regimes have left their marks in the royal annals used by Manetho.[51]

The temporal dimensions of the Chaosbeschreibung

	Classical Chaosbeschreibung	***PD***
Narrative framework	**Past**	**Past**
	Legitimate kingship	Divine order
	= Divine order	
Chaosbeschreibung	**Past**	**Present**
	Foreign invasion	Foreign invasion
	Illegitimate kingship	Decline in cult
	Gods leave Egypt	Gods leave Egypt
Restitution	**Present**	**Future**
	Legitimate kingship	God purges the world
	Gods restored	and recreates it.
		Gods restored[52]

framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world." Hermes seems to be human in the treatise, but the divine Eros is talking through his mouth, which makes the origin of the apocalypse otherworldly.

50 Cf. Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 106ff.

51 Cf. above, chap. 2.2.3.4.

52 Cf. Bernard van Rinsveld, "La version copte de l'Asclépius et la ville de l'âge d'or: à propos de Nag Hammadi VI, 75,22–76,1," in *Textes et études de papyrologie grecque, démotique et copte* (ed. Pieter W. Pestman et al.; P. L. Bat. 23; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 233–42.

As will be apparent from the table, the king has left the picture in the apocalypse of *PD*, and we could take this to support Jonathan Z. Smith's view on apocalypticism as "wisdom lacking a royal patron."[53] Also other Demotic and Greek apocalypses from Egypt in the Late Period, such as the *Demotic Chronicle*, the *Oracle of the Potter,* and the *Prophecy of the Lamb*, were written in times of foreign domination, and their present is thus not characterized by legitimate kingship.[54] The author of *PD* no longer has any faith in the human-cum-god king portrayed in the dialogues of Isis and Horus, but sees a complete reboot of the cosmos as the only option for a restitution of the divinely ordained cosmos preserved by the Egyptian temples. Yet it seems clear that the apocalypse still hopes to reverse the trend that will lead towards full cosmic-scale destruction. Obviously, the historical situation of the author had not yet reached the full stage of the chaos predicted: the Nile never did run over with blood and corpses, nor did the earth become unstable, the sea innavigable and the stars unknowable. Rather, the present godless society is portrayed as inevitably leading to these events in the future, unless true religion is restored.

The foreigners have of course invaded the land, though in the apocalypse the Macedonians and Romans are disguised as Scythians and Indians. But this is not portrayed as the cause of the disaster; rather, the real problem is that the Egyptians are prevented from worshipping in the temples:[55] "Egypt, and in particular the Egyptians will be prevented from worshipping God, and moreover, they will undergo the utmost punishment, the one who will be found amongst

53 Smith, "Wisdom and Apocalyptic," 81.

54 Krause, "Ägyptisches Gedankengut," 54: "Nach dem Ende des einheimischen Königtums lebte diese Rolle des Königs in der Apokalyptik weiter, auf einen Gott übertragen." Cf. Blasius and Schipper, *Apokalyptik und Ägypten*; Koenen, "The Prophecies of a Potter," 251–53; Zauzich, *Das Lamm des Bokchoris*; Thissen, "Apocalypse now"; Janet H. Johnson, "The Demotic Chronicle as a Statement of a Theory of Kingship," *JSSEA* 13 (1983): 61–72; Joachim F. Quack, "'As he Disregarded the Law, he was Replaced During his Own Lifetime'. On Criticism of Egyptian Rulers in the So-Called *Demotic Chronicle*," in *Antimonarchic Discourse in Antiquity* (ed. Henning Börm; SAM 3; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2015), 25–43.

55 Benedikt Rotshöhler, "Hermes und Plotin," in *Egypt—Temple of the Whole World. Ägypten—Tempel der gesamten Welt. Studies in Honour of Jan Assmann* (ed. Sibylle Meyer; Numen BS 97; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 389–407, sees the apocalypse as a result of new religious faiths, i.e. Christianity, outcompeting the traditional Egyptian one. But Hermes bemoans that the foreigners prevent Egyptians from their cult, not that they bring in their own, and Christians would not prevent Egyptian temple cult until long after the apocalypse was written.

them worshipping and venerating God."[56] The Latin text adds a judicial aspect to the punishment, referring to a law proscribing religious practice, which occurs only later in the Coptic text: "But believe me that this kind of people will be in grave danger for their life, and a new law will be established [...]."[57] Although Hermes has just discussed the people who ridicule his teachings of the soul and immortality, it is likely that "this kind of people," who are in danger, refers to the reverent people he has discussed earlier.[58] The new law will thus be directed at reverent and good people according to Hermes. These are the people who according to the Latin text adhere to the *religio mentis*—the religion of the mind—an expression that has frequently been used to describe Hermetism as a whole.[59] Unfortunately, the expression is unattested in the Coptic version, although it is possible that something similar was found on the first four lines of page 73, which are now too lacunose to be read. But quite likely *religio mentis* is merely the Latin translator's embellishment of reverence of the soul—τῆς ψυχῆς εὐσέβεια.[60] What is meant by this expression can be seen by the consequences that will follow when this reverence is forbidden by the new law, namely that the gods leave Egypt. Since we are told in *Ascl.* 37 that the only thing keeping the gods down on earth is constant worship, through hymns and sacrifice, it is clear that the cult that will be forbidden in the prophecy is the cult of the statues.

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56 NHC VI 70,23–29: ⲕⲛⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲟⲩⲟ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲕⲛⲙⲉ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲣ̄ⲕⲱⲗⲩⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲩⲱ̄ⲟⲩⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ· ⲛ̄ⲣⲟⲩⲟ ⲇⲉ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲉ̄ⲛ ⲑⲁⲏ ⲛ̄ⲧⲓⲙⲱⲣⲓⲁ· ⲡⲉⲧⲟⲩⲛⲁⲣⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲛ̄ⲣⲙⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲱⲟ̄ⲩⲉ ⲉⲩⲣ̄ⲥⲉⲃⲉⲥⲑⲁⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ. = *Ascl.* 24: *non solum neglectus religionum, sed, quod est durius, quasi de legibus a religione, pietate cultuque diuino statuetur praescripta poena prohibito.* My trans.

57 NHC VI 72,34–38: ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲉⲣⲓⲡⲓⲥⲧⲉⲩⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲓ̈ⲙⲓⲛⲉ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲥⲓⲛⲇⲩⲛⲉⲩⲉ ⲉ̄ⲙ ⲡⲣⲁⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲓⲛⲇⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲩⲩⲩⲭⲏ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲥⲓⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲃⲣ̄ⲣⲉ [...]. = *Ascl.* 25: *sed mihi credite: et capitale periculum constituetur in eum qui se mentis religioni dederit. Noua constituentur iura, lex noua; nihil sanctum, nihil religiosum nec caelo nec caelestibus dignum audietur aut mente credetur.* My trans. I accept Mahé's reading of ⲧⲟⲩⲩⲩⲭⲏ as their life, rather than soul, on the basis of the Latin parallel.

58 NHC VI 72,20: ⲡⲣⲙ̄ⲛⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ. Not "les spirituels" as Mahé has it (HHE 2:180).

59 E.g., NF 2:381 n. 216: "une heureuse formule qui pourrait servir à désigner toute la piété hermétique"; Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 95ff. Cf. Bull, "No End to Sacrifice in Hermetism," 146.

60 This in parallel to an earlier passage, where the Latin gives the more florid *pia mente diuinitatem sedula religione seruasse et omnis eorum sancta ueneratio*, while the Coptic only has ⲉⲁⲩϩⲓⲥⲉ ⲉⲧⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ (NHC VI 70,14; ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ = εὐσέβεια [Crum 231a]). Cf. also *Ascl.*22 = NHC VI 68,10–12, where the Latin embellishes *ipsos religione et sancta mente ueneratur*, not found in the Coptic. Even before the Nag Hammadi version, A.S. Ferguson suspected that *religio mentis* was simply τῆς ψυχῆς εὐσέβεια (Scott 4:xii n. 7).

Accordingly, the pure philosophers are the same as the truly reverent people in the apocalypse, namely the upper echelons of the Egyptian priesthoods who tend to the cult of statues. The apocalypse presents these people not only as purveyors of oracles and healing, but as vital for the continuation of Egypt, whose very life is portrayed as coterminous with its religious practice: "No longer will it be full of temples, but it will be full of tombs; nor will it be full of gods, but corpses."[61] The author is however not content to show that the priests and temples are vital for the survival of Egypt, but since Egypt is the temple of the whole world, the departure of its gods means that the whole cosmos will be bereft of divine presence. The Egyptian apocalypse is thus not merely a patriotic sprinkling meant to produce an exotic flavor, but rather it reflects the interests and ideological self-projection of a specific group of people who felt increasingly dispossessed by the Roman administration, namely the Egyptian priests.

9.5 The New Law

The question remains: is the impious new law pure fiction or an *ex eventu* prophecy? And if it were an actual law, then which one? Walter Scott suggested that the law refers to the legislation of Theodosius, forbidding pagan cult, and that it was a later addition to the text. The discovery of the Coptic text, which predates the edicts of Theodosius, invalidates Scott's thesis.[62] Robin Lane Fox argued that the prophecy of Hermes must respond to Christian persecution after Constantine I, some time between 325–350, claiming that the echoes of the apocalypse in Lactantius are less than Fowden averred.[63] Fowden had demonstrated that Lactantius depended on the language of the prophecy in *PD* in two passages, which Lane Fox disputed.[64] However, that Lactantius knew the prophecy of Hermes is guaranteed by another passage, where he first refers to a prophecy of Hystaspes, on the iniquity of the final generation of humans, and then goes on to Hermes: "In his book entitled *Perfect Discourse*, after enumerating the evils we have spoken of, he added this: 'When this happens, my dear Asclepius, then the lord and father and god and creator of the first and

61 NHC VI 70,33–36: ⲟⲩⲕⲉⲧⲓ ⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩϩ ⲛ̄ⲣ̄ⲡⲉ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩϩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲫⲟⲥ· ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩϩ ⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ϩⲉⲛⲕⲱⲙⲥ.

62 Scott 1:61ff., 3:161–63.

63 Robin Lane Fox, review of Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, *JRS* 80 (1990): 237–40 at 238.

64 Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 39, referring to Lact., *Inst.* 7.15.10 and 7.16.4.

only god will look upon events and will defy disorder with his own will.'"[65] The passage quoted is a direct parallel to *Ascl.* 26 and its Coptic equivalent,[66] and Lactantius' reference to an enumeration of evils proves that he had a prophecy quite like the one in *PD* in front of him.

The law can thus not be a reference to the anti-pagan efforts of either Constantine or his successors. There exists, however, an earlier law against traditional cult practices in Egyptian temples, namely the decree of Q. Aemilius Saturninus, the prefect of Egypt during the reign of Septimius Severus, which outlawed all divination throughout Egypt:[67] "let no man through oracles, that is, by means of written documents supposedly granted under divine influence, nor by means of the parade of images or suchlike charlatanry, pretend to know things beyond human ken and profess (to know) the obscurity of things to come."[68] Of course, prophecy by means of statues is just what Hermes has just lauded some passages prior to the mention of the new law (*Ascl.* 24), and the Hermetica themselves, *PD* included, are exactly "written documents supposedly granted under divine influence" that "pretend to know things beyond human ken." Transgressors against the decree will be handed over to the "utmost punishment" (τῇ ἐσχά[τ]ῃ τιμωρίᾳ{ν} παραδοθήσεται) just as the reverent people in the prophecy (ⲑⲁⲏ ⲛ̄ⲧⲓⲙⲱⲣⲓⲁ). The decree was issued in the seventh year of Septimius Severus, and was decreed to be displayed in every metropolis and village. David Frankfurter argues that the prohibition had little effect, and that the oracular processions kept being practiced at least into the fourth century,[69] but at any rate it would have been interpreted as a severe affront against local cult by any Egyptian priest who happened to read it.

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65 Lact., *Inst.* 7.18.1: *Quod Hermes tamen non dissimulavit. In eo enim libro, qui* λόγος τέλειος *inscribitur, post enumerationem malorum de quibus diximus, subjecit haec:* ἐπὰν δὴ ταῦτα ὧδε γένηται, ὦ Ἀσκληπιέ, τότε ὁ κύριος καὶ πατὴρ καὶ θεὸς καὶ τοῦ πρώτου καὶ ἑνὸς θεοῦ δημιουργός, ἐπιβλέψας τοῖς γενομένοις, καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βούλησιν, τοῦτ' ἐστιν τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀντερεῖσας τῇ ἀταξίᾳ κτλ. Trans. Bowen and Garnsey, *Lactantius: Divine Institutes*, 427.

66 Cf. all three texts arranged synoptically in HHE 2:185–87.

67 P. Coll. Youtie 1.30 = P. Yale inv. 299; George M. Parássoglou, "Circular from a Prefect: Sileat Omnibus Perpetuo Divinandi Curiositas," in *Collectanea Papyrologica: Texts Published in Honor of H.C. Youtie* (ed. Ann E. Hanson; Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1976), 261–74; Moyer, "Thessalos of Tralles and Cultural Exchange," 49; id., *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism*, 255 n. 190.

68 P. Yale inv. 299, ln. 5–8: μήτ' οὖν διὰ χρη[σμῶ]ν ἤτοι ἐνγράφων διὰ γραφῶν ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ θείου διδομένων μήτε διὰ κωμασίας ἀκαλμάτω[ν] (ἀγαλμάτων) ἢ τοιαύτης παγγανίας (μαγγανείας) τὰ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπόν τις εἰδένα[ι] προσποιείσθω. Text and translation John Rea, "A New Version of P. Yale Inv. 299," *ZPE* 27 (1977): 151–56.

69 Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 153–56.

It is therefore likely that the apocalypse was written in the early third century, when the decree of Saturninus would still be visible throughout Egypt.

9.6 The Hermetic Sitz-im-Leben: A Suggestion

The true relevance of the story of Thessalos, for our understanding of the Hermetica, lies in what it tells us about the relation between Egyptosophical texts, their readers, and the Egyptian priesthood during the Empire.[70] Thessalos had read Nechepsos in the library of Alexandria, and the text had awakened in him a desire to experience the truth behind the text. This desire led him up the Nile to Thebes, which was fabled for its Hermetic wisdom, as is attested by Strabo. Once there, he found a priest who was willing to procure the experience he was looking for. This scenario does not demonstrate the decline of the role of the temples, as Jonathan Z. Smith claimed. Rather, it testifies to a new relationship between the temple and the interested laity. Ian Moyer has aptly labeled the visionary experience describe by Thessalos a commoditization,[71] whereby priestly knowledge is made available to a wider readership. Although not expressly mentioned, we can assume that the priest was payed by Thessalos, who by his own admission went to Egypt with large amounts of cash. Furthermore, we are told in the narrative epilogue of the text, only preserved in the corrupt Latin versions, that the priest helped Thessalos put into practice the recipes gained in the revelation. It would seem that the unnamed priest had gained a wealthy Greek benefactor through his ritual competence.

A similar dynamic would likely come into play with the Hermetica. The educated elite throughout the Roman Empire would be familiar with the Egyptian Hermes through the works of Herodotus, Plato and Cicero, amongst others, and would perhaps even have access to Hermetica, at least by the second century CE. As G.R. Boys-Stones has shown, Plato was by this time seen to encapsulate the wisdom of the Golden Age,[72] but if the seeker was sufficiently zealous, he or she would follow in the footsteps of Pythagoras and Plato and go to Egypt, to find the putative sources of their wisdom. Like Thessalos, their first stop would likely be Alexandria, where they would no doubt have access to a wide range of Hermetica. Therein they would find the exhortation to find a safe harbor and take the hand of a guide to lead them to the gates of knowledge (CH VII, 2). Like Plotinus, they might have had a hard time finding a guide

70 On the term Egyptosophy, cf. Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt*.

71 Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism*, 265.

72 Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy*.

that met their needs in Alexandria, and some people would doubtlessly like Thessalos go up the Nile, to a center of priestly learning like Saïs, Memphis, Heliopolis, Hermopolis or Thebes. In any of these places they would be likely to encounter sacred scribes, astrologers, stolists or prophets conversant with the books written by Thoth. Many of the priests would no doubt be stand-offish, just as those encountered by Thessalos were at first, but if the pilgrims were tenacious enough, they might finally encounter a priest who saw it in his interest to be forthcoming. Or alternatively, the priests could also be eager to gain a client, as the priest of Souchos in Arsinoë who eagerly welcomed Strabo and showed him the sacred crocodile (17.1.38). Our literary sources are full of accounts of people who undergo apprenticeships under Egyptian priests, mostly in order to become magicians.[73] These sources are mostly fictional or pseudepigraphic, yet they testify to the allure of the magic and the philosophy thought to be possessed by Egyptian priests. In Lucian's *Lovers of Lies*, both the superstitious Euchrates and the Neopythagorean philosopher Arignotus brag about their apprenticeship under the fabled Egyptian priest Pancrates, who supposedly had spent twenty-three years in an underground chamber in an Egyptian temple, learning magic directly from Isis.[74] Daniel Ogden convincingly argues that the literary figure of Pancrates was based on the historical Pancrates Epicus, a native Egyptian who wrote poems commemorating Antinous for Emperor Hadrian and as a reward was granted lifetime dining rights in the museum of Alexandria. He was probably the same person as Pachrates in the magical papyri, the chief prophet of Heliopolis who sent dreams to Hadrian and was therefore given double rations.[75] Lucian's satire makes fun of educated people, even philosophers, who believe in the claims of Egyptian priests—as well as Chaldeans and Syrians—to have power over and direct contact with ghosts, demons and gods, and who attempt to gain some of this power for themselves. The satire would have had little effect if it were not at all rooted in reality. It is entirely plausible that Neopythagorean philosophers, such as the one Lucian depicts, would seek out Egyptian wisdom and magic: Arignotus the Pythagorean in Lucian's story claims to have been an apprentice of Pancrates, and to have obtained Egyptian books that give him power over murderous ghosts.[76]

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73 Cf. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 205, 212; Gordon, "Reporting the Marvellous," 77.

74 Luc., *Philops.* 32.

75 Daniel Ogden, "The Apprentice's Sorcerer: Pancrates and His Powers in Context (Lucian, *Philopseudes* 33–36)," *Acta Classica* 47 (2004): 101–26 at 104–10. Pancrates Epicus: Athen., *Deipn.* 15.21 (677d–f). Pachrates: PGM IV.2446–2455.

76 Luc., *Philops.* 31.

But would such apprenticeships be one-on-one relationships, or would there be a community? The Hermetica mostly portray a private dialogue between master and disciple, although Hermes obviously has several pupils such as Tat, Asclepius, Ammon, and Isis. We could easily imagine that an Egyptian priest took on a single student, and guided him or her through the introductory stages of self-knowledge and alienation from the world, through the rebirth and to the heavenly ascent. Such a scenario would correspond to the sociological model of craftsmanship, according to Walter Burkert: his example is the Orpheotelestai, priests without a community who according to the Derveni papyrus "make a craft of the holy rites."[77] This ritual craftsmanship is, like profane crafts, often transmitted from father to son, and it is important for the craftsman to have some sort of symbol of his authority, such as books written by Orpheus or Musaeus.[78] Egyptian priesthoods were also mostly transmitted from father to son,[79] as is reflected in the dialogues between Hermes and his son Tat, and the priests carried both Egyptian books and their distinctive priestly garb and tonsure as visible symbols of their ritual authority. The abovementioned commoditization of temple rituals in the magical papyri would correspond well to the Derveni papyrus' critique of those who turn holy rites into a craft.

However, there are as we have seen elements in the Hermetica that point toward community formation. As the treatises were certainly not meant to circulate exclusively in the temple scriptoria, to be used in the education and initiation of priests in the Egyptian temples, we must consider what kind of sociological formation could facilitate the encounter between Egyptian priests and philosophically inclined Greeks and Romans. It is not impossible that a priest could have set himself up in the stoa or the gymnasia, or in the private house of wealthy members of the circle, as Greek philosophers did. However, that would have deprived him of much of the institutional charisma that could be gained from always being in close proximity with the divine, as Chaeremon writes (fr. 10). One possibility is that the meetings took place in voluntary associations connected to the Egyptian temples.[80] Such associations are documented for both the Ptolemaic and Roman eras, and we have already

77 Derveni Papyrus col. 20: οἱ τέχνην ποιούμενοι τὰ ἱερά. Walter Burkert, "Craft Versus Sect: The Problem of Orphics and Pythagoreans," in *Kleine Schriften III: Mystica, Orphica, Pythagorica* (ed. Fritz Graf; Hypomnemata Supp. 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 191–216 at 195–96.

78 Ibid., 198–201.

79 Quack, "Ämtererblichkeit und Abstammungsvorschriften."

80 On associations in Egypt, cf. Ilias Arnaoutoglou, "Collegia in the Province of Egypt in the First Century A.D.," *Ancient Society* 35 (2005): 197–216.

mentioned the possibility that the way of Thoth was the designation for one such type of association.[81] A limestone relief of an ibis with the inscription "Hermes," from Tuna el-Gebel, the necropolis of Hermopolis Magna, could according to Klaas Smelik derive from a cult association of the god.[82] We have a reference to "those from the association of Hermes" in the district of Ombos in 78 BCE.[83] The *thiasoi* of Sarapis could have their banquets "in a Serapeum, more specifically in an oikos of a Serapeum, in a *lochion*, apparently a room or building in a temple complex, in a temple of Thoeris, and in private homes."[84]

If the thesis that the *Poimandres* derives from the Fayum in the early Roman period is correct, a philosophically minded association of the god Souchos, the father of Poremanres, in which both native priests and Greeks participated, would be the best candidate for a Sitz-im-Leben for the *Poimandresgemeinde*. Indeed, we have evidence for the participation of the clergy in lay associations devoted to the god Souchos in the Fayum, in the Late Ptolemaic period, which could also congregate at the temples.[85] Another association from the end of the Ptolemaic period was devoted to Zeus Hypsistos, probably in Philadelphia in the Fayum, where they gathered in a common room of the temple of Zeus: "[the president] should make for all the contributors one banquet a month in the sanctuary of Zeus, at which they should in a common room pouring libations, pray, and perform the other customary rites on behalf of the god and lord, the king."[86] The association is also referred to as a brotherhood (φράτρα), and a father of the brothers is mentioned. In view of the predominantly Egyptian names of the members listed, Zeus is likely to be identified with

81 Cf. above, chap. 4.2.

82 Klaas Smelik, "The Cult of the Ibis in the Graeco-Roman Period, with special Attention to the Data from the Papyri," in *Studies in Hellenistc Religions* (ed. Maarten J. Vermaseren; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 225–41 at 236; cf. László Kákosy, "Problems of the Thoth-cult," *Act. Hung.* 15 (1963): 123–28.

83 Colin Roberts, Theodore C. Skeat, and Arthur D. Nock, "The Gild of Zeus Hypsistos," *HTR* 29 (1936): 39–88 at 74, Prinz Joachim Ostraka 2.12: τοὺς ἐκ τοῦ Ἑρμαίου συνόδου.

84 James F. Gilliam, "Invitations to the Kline of Sarapis," in *Collectanea Papyrologica: Texts Published in Honor of H.C. Youtie* (ed. Ann E. Hanson; Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1976), 315–24 at 318. Gilliam associates the otherwise unattested word λοχίῳ with the mammisi of late temple complexes.

85 De Cenival, *Les associations religieuses en Égypte*, 1:177–78; id., "Les associations dans les temples égyptiens d'après les données fournies par les papyrus démotiques," in *Religions en Égypte hellénistique et romaine* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1969), 5–19.

86 Roberts, Skeat, and Nock, "The Gild of Zeus Hypsistos," P. Lond. 2710 r. 40: συνειςφ[ό]ρ[οι]ς δὲ πᾶσι π[οιεῖσθ]ε κατὰ μῆνα πόσι[ν] μίαν ἃ ἐν τῶι τοῦ Διὸς ἱερῶι ἐν αἷς ἐν ἀνδ[ρῶνι] κοινῶι ςπένδοντες εὐχέσθωισαν καὶ τἄλλα τὰ νομιζό[μεν]α ὑπέρ τε τ[ο]ῦ θεο(ῦ) καὶ κυρίο(υ) βαςιλέως.

Amun. The epithet Hypsistos, "most high," is of Macedonian origin according to Roberts, Skeat, and Nock.[87] It is clearly the same epithet as *deus summus exsuperantissimus* in *Ascl.* 41. There is, however, nothing in the law of this cult association that indicates that the members had any interest in philosophy or rites of initiatory rebirth and ascent. It is just one example of the form of organization that the Hermetic groups *might* have had.

We know from the archive of Theophanes that a high-priest of Thoth was in close contact with a philosophically minded Greek at least in the early fourth century.[88] Theophanes had in his care three letters from Anatolius, the chief prophet of Thoth in Hermopolis Magna, who refers to his god as Hermes Trismegistus. One of these letters is directed to Ambrosius, whom he calls "all-wise" and "champion of the wisdom of the Hellenes." The letter is otherwise not very informative, being merely a greeting, but suffices to demonstrate the relationship between native ritual experts and philosophically minded Greeks. In another letter Anatolius relates the heavy burdens of the festivals and processions he is in charge of, proving that his interest in Greek philosophy had not supplanted his care for the cult of the earthly gods. If this was the situation of the cult of Thoth in early fourth century Hermopolis, there is little reason to believe that the situation was fundamentally different earlier in the Roman era, before the major decline of Egyptian temples in the late third century.

Burkert compares the "craft" of Orphism to the "sect" of the Pythagoreans, and follows Bryan Wilson and Arnaldo Momigliano in his view of sects:

> A sect is a minority protest group with (1) an alternative life style, (2) an organization providing (2.1) regular group meetings and (2.2) some sort of communal or cooperative property, and (3) a high level of spiritual integration, agreement on beliefs and practices, (3.1) based on authority, be it a charismatic leader or a sacred scripture with special interpretation, (3.2) making the distinction of 'we' versus 'they' the primary reference system, and (3.3) taking action on apostates. The historian will add (4.1) the perspective of diachronic stability … and (4.2) local mobility.

Hermetism is not really a protest group, although there is a strong sense of a 'we' set apart from 'them,' those who follow the way of life and immortality as opposed to those who follow the way of death. If we lack solid proof for organizational structure (2), it is at the very least likely that such a structure existed, since

87 Ibid., 61, 72.

88 Matthews, *The Journey of Theophanes*, 19–23; Rees, *Papyri from Hermopolis*, 2–7; Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 176, 192; Bull, "Hermes between Pagans and Christians," 215.

the description of the way of life in the Hermetica and Chaeremon's account of Egyptian priests were likely based on the by then legendary Pythagorean sect, which again was commonly assumed to be based on Egyptian precepts. Hermetic groups could potentially have been found in larger centers of priestly learning, especially Hermopolis Magna of course, which was moreover one of the largest cities in Egypt after Alexandria in the Roman period.[89] Thebes is invoked in the Hermetica and was likely a center for Hermetic ritual activity, as evidenced by the Thebes-cache. Alexandria could potentially accommodate several Hermetic groups, although there is no reason to identify the city as the birthplace of a "Hermetic lodge" as several scholars have done.[90] There is neither internal nor external evidence for such an Alexandrian "lodge," a designation that is alien to the ancient world and carries Masonic connotations. It is of course entirely possible, even likely, that associations of the type we have described existed there, but there is no reason to assume that Alexandria was the birth-place of Hermetism. As to the degree of internal cohesion to the groups, and the level of involvement of the local priesthoods, they would no doubt vary from place to place.

The question remains if Hermetism as such existed only in Egypt. It is possible that Hermetism might have been found side by side with the cult of Isis and Osiris around the Mediterranean world. When an Egyptian priest wanted to arrange an invocation of the tutelary spirit of Plotinus he had access to the temple of Isis, probably the Campensis Iseum, which was the only pure place he could find in Rome.[91] There is no reason to suppose that Hermetic groups could not also arrange to use rooms adjoining the sanctuaries of Isis. Hermetism would in that case be offered to those who sought Egyptian wisdom with a more philosophical flavor, perhaps supplementing the daily rites, festivals, and rites of initiation also offered by the cult of Isis. This point must remain speculative for now, since much research remains to be done on the role of Isis and Osiris in Hermetism, and that of Hermes in the Isiac cults.

There was a consistent demand for primeval Egyptian wisdom in the Roman Empire, if not before. It would be highly unlikely that a priesthood increasingly dispossessed by the Roman administration, as portrayed at length by David Frankfurter, would not find some way to benefit from this demand. It is equally unlikely that the wisdom offered by the priests would correspond to

89 Richard Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt* (London: Routledge, 2002), 332, 334, lists Hermopolis as second to Alexandria, though some cities are not included in the survey.

90 E.g. van den Broek, "Religious Practices in the Hermetic 'Lodge.'"

91 Porph., *Vit. Plot.* 10.

the priestly lore taught to the aspiring native Egyptian priests. Rather, it would have been a Hellenized mélange. The Greco-Roman audience was not conversant with the holy languages required by the priests, nor would they be likely to derive much sense from the convoluted theologies of the temple, developed from centuries of collective speculation by a specialized guild of theologians. It is therefore not at all surprising that we have not found any direct precursors to the Hermetica in Hieroglyphic, Hieratic, or Demotic script, nor are we likely to. Such direct precursors simply did not exist. As Jacco Dieleman has demonstrated with respect to the magical papyri, the choice of language is not accidental, but serves a specific need of bilingual scribes. The Greek Hermetica use the idiom of Greek philosophy, which has no place in the writings of traditional Egyptian cult. But Egyptian priests were also interested in Greek literature, as the remains of the temple library from Tebtunis testify,[92] and in Greek philosophy.[93]

The Hermetica are accordingly most likely the stereotype-appropriating literary productions of the Egyptian priesthood, presenting Greek philosophical teachings as derived from ancient Egyptian wisdom. The evidence points to a Sitz im Leben for this literature in a small community where Egyptian priests taught and initiated people who sought divine revelations. A pilgrim arriving at Thebes, looking for the sources of Plato, would not have been satisfied by a translation of a work such as the Demotic *Book of Thoth*. That would not have been the type of wisdom he was looking for. The Hermetica, on the other hand, would fit the bill perfectly. This is not to say that the Hermetica are nothing but Platonic pastiches designed for naïve Roman tourists. Egyptian priests were demonstrably affected by Greek philosophy, and their tradition had long before the Hellenistic era shown itself capable of taking up foreign elements and make them "authentically" Egyptian. Jan Assmann has also demonstrated that the Ramesside solar theology can be seen as a precursor to Hermetic, Gnostic and Neoplatonic speculation on the Hidden God, the One who is All, and this theology continued into the Roman period.[94] There is thus no reason to assume that the priests were duping their credulous clients: the strict division between genuine religiosity and worldly interests is an anachronistic bias that we need no longer be burdened with in our scholarly endeavors.

92 Ryholt, "On the Contents and Nature of the Tebtunis Temple Library," 141–70; id., "Libraries in Ancient Egypt," 28.

93 Philippe Derchain, "Le stoïcien de Kom Ombo," *BSÉG* 22 (1998): 17–20; Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 167 n. 44.

94 Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, xii, 87, 123 n. 137, 155, 157 n. 5, 177.

Conclusion

Around three hundred years separate the lives of the geographer Strabo and the Neoplatonic philosopher Iamblichus, both of whom state unequivocally that Egyptian priests were wont to attribute their philosophical writings to their tutelary god Hermes.[1] Sometime between the time of Strabo and the time of Iamblichus the bulk of the "philosophical" or "theoretical" Hermetica were written, which are indeed attributed to the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus and profess to represent Egyptian wisdom. When scholars have been reluctant to accept the natural corollary of these facts, namely that Egyptian priests were the authors hiding behind the pseudonym of Hermes Trismegistus, it is because the Greek Hermetica have more in common with Greek philosophical literature from the Imperial period than with priestly Egyptian literature of either the classical Hieroglyphic or the contemporary Demotic variety. However, recent scholarship has demonstrated that bilingual priestly scribes used Greek and Demotic for varying purposes. Contemporary Demotic priestly manuals, such as the so-called *Book of Thoth*, were written for other Egyptian priests or apprentices, who were expected to master the Egyptian scripts—Hieroglyphic, Hieratic, and Demotic—as well as the convoluted theological lore accumulated over millennia of concerted priestly speculation and elaboration. This was specialized knowledge that was kept safe from prying outsiders, though certain temple rituals were also adapted and commodified for use outside the temple, such as we find in some of the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri. Greeks who were seeking for the ostensible Egyptian sources for the philosophy of Pythagoras and Plato would likely not have been satisfied with a translation of literature like the *Book of Thoth*, so replete with arcane theological minutiae.[2] If Egyptian priests wanted to communicate with a Grecophone clientele, and several sources indicate that they did, they would have to do so in a Greek idiom, as also Iamblichus indicates (*Myst.* 8.4). The tradition of Hermes is thus an invented tradition, all the while presenting itself as going back to primeval times, in which Egyptian theology with roots reaching all the way back to the solar theology of the Ramesside era is presented in the prevailing idiom of Greek philosophy, and is transformed thereby.

1 Strab., *Geo.* 17.1.46; Iamb., *Myst.* 1.1, 8.1, 8.4.

2 Egyptian wisdom literature would have been more accessible, and indeed Mahé has shown the dependence of Hermetic sentences on this literature, HHE 2:278–308.

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In order to substantiate this hypothesis, we have divided our inquiry into three parts. In the first part, we investigated Hermes Trismegistus as a figure of memory, and the myths associated with this figure. We found that myths dealing with the divine souls of Egyptian kings, and the revelation to these kings of knowledge about nature and the stars, are shared in philosophical and astrological Hermetica, and likely stem from at least as early as the first century BCE. They are thus earlier than the common dating of the philosophical Hermetica between the late first and the third century CE. The teaching of royal souls supports Howard Jackson's identification of the Hermetic divinity Poimandres with Porremanres, the deified Amenemhat III, who was widely worshipped in the Fayum. The hymn composed to him by Isidorus in the first century BCE has important parallels with the Hermetica. Since the worship of this figure waned in the second century CE, we can hypothesize that the "Poimandres-congregation" (*Poimandresgemeinde*) probably first surfaced in the Fayum around the turn of the Common Era. The structural similarities between the protology of the *Poimandres* (CH I) and the Hermetic system reported by Iamblichus (*Myst.* 8.2–3), where the protology is formulated in accordance with the Theban theology of Amun-Kneph, show that the Hermetic system could take various forms depending on local Egyptian theology.

The *Poimandres* ends with an account of how the narrator, identified with Hermes, gathered a tight-knit group around himself, the members of which he taught how to secure their salvation, namely by ascending to the hypercosmic realms of the Ogdoad and Ennead. In part two we have outlined this ritual tradition of the Way of Hermes that those who desired the Hermetic brand of salvation would embark upon. Contrary to the theories of Jean-Pierre Mahé and Garth Fowden, we have argued that the first stages of the Way of Hermes was characterized by a pedagogical dualism, in which the candidate was taught first to despise the material body as an obstacle to the essential inner human, and then to consider the material cosmos as devoid of truth. A number of Hermetica can with some certainty be related to these stages (CH I, II, IV, VI, X; SH II A–B, VI, XI). When the acolyte had become a stranger to the world, he (or she) could undergo the ritual of rebirth (CH XIII). In the course of this initiatory ritual the dark avengers of matter, representing astral fatality, were conclusively exorcized. In their place, ten divine powers were invoked to descend into the candidate, who now became "the one human, a god and son of God," namely the androgynous primordial human of the *Poimandres*. The initiate had thus become ontologically equal to the demiurgic mind residing in the Ogdoad, the brother of the primordial human, who surrounds and suffuses the cosmos. He was now fully integrated with the cosmos: the dualism

of the earlier stages has been resolved into a monism, a union with the All, celebrated in the hymn of the rebirth. Now deified, the initiate could proceed to go through a rite of visionary ascent (*Disc.8*–9), on the principle that "like can only be understood by like" (CH XI, 20). In this rite, the spiritual master, in the role of Hermes, guided the initiate through the planetary spheres by means of chanting the vowels and uttering certain *nomina barbara*, techniques well-known from the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri. The reborn was thus brought into the Ogdoad, where he saw indescribable glories and heard silent hymnodies sung by the powers that reside there. This is the culmination of the Way of Hermes, and the visionary was now fully initiated and could join his spiritual brothers in silent hymn-singing, which united them with the powers in the Ogdoad until the day when they would leave the body for good. The initiate also wrote the name of Hermes inside himself. The self-identification of the ritualist with Thoth-Hermes, which was a common feature of Egyptian priestly rituals, has thus been made permanent: the fully initiated Hermetist is one of the powers who sing hymns to God, in the same way as the baboons identified with Thoth in Egyptian theology sang perpetual hymns to the sun-god in his barge.

In the third and last part of this monograph, the Way of Hermes was placed in the successive contexts of philosophy, magic, and traditional Egyptian religion. We saw that several of the Hermetica present themselves as carriers of the "true philosophy," contrasting Egyptian divine wisdom with the hollow, discursive reasoning of the Greeks. The true philosopher is thus a holy man and a "doctor of occult sciences," of which astrology took pride of place. The Hermetica share the interest of contemporary philosophical schools in astronomical observations, but sees the main purpose of such observation to be reverence for the cosmic deity. The astrological Hermetica, moreover, show an interest in horoscopes and astral amulets and medicine, which might also have been used by Hermetists to avert demonic influences from the stars. The term *mageia* is used only once in the Hermetica (SH XXIII, 68), where it together with philosophy and medicine is one of the arts given by Isis and Osiris to the prophets of Egyptian temples, whose task it was to perform the daily liturgy for the statues in the innermost shrines. Many of the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri we have preserved today must have been owned and used by Egyptian priests, since they contain Demotic and Old Coptic spells alongside Greek ones. Since the Hermetic rites of rebirth and ascent share strong similarities with the divinatory spells in these papyri, the argument that the originators of the Hermetica were also Egyptian priests is strengthened. Finally, the idealized portrait of Egyptian priests as true philosophers in the surviving fragments of

Chaeremon, himself a priest of the first century CE, corresponds to the portrait of the true philosophers and divine people of the Hermetic *Perfect Discourse*, whose temple service maintains the cosmic order.

The argument advanced is a cumulative one. Any one of the pieces of the puzzle in itself could be discounted as exoticizing fiction, as has been the case in much of the scholarship on the Hermetica. Taken together, however, all the evidence points in my view overwhelmingly in the direction of Egyptian priests as the real authors behind the pseudonym of Hermes Trismegistus. In the century since the publication of Richard Reitzenstein's *Poimandres* (1904), our knowledge of Egyptian priests in the Greek and Roman period has grown enormously, and the ongoing process of publication and improved understanding of Demotic texts are sure to increase this knowledge further in years to come. The Egyptian priests were not mythical figures but real human beings, although they were portrayed as stereotypical oriental sages in contemporary Greek and Latin literature. It is only understandable that the priests would use this stereotype to their advantage, and present their wisdom inherited from Hermes Trismegistus, by means of the Greek Hermetic treatises, as the source of Greek philosophy. *Post hoc ergo propter hoc*: though the Hermetica as we have them were later than Plato, educated Greeks and Romans seem largely to have been ready to accept the priority of Egyptian wisdom, all the more easily since Plato himself refers to the Egyptian Theuth as the divine inventor of writing.

The priests did not merely write. Since we see clear references to initiatory rituals, hymns, and religious gatherings in the treatises, we can with some confidence say that they gathered seekers around themselves, in groups likely similar to the voluntary associations we know congregated in Egyptian temples. These groups must have communicated mostly in Greek, since the hymns we have are Greek, and likely included a philosophically minded laity, perhaps of varying ethnicities (cf. CH XII, 13). Such meetings between Egyptian priests and outsiders with an interest in philosophy we see exemplified by Thessalos of Tralles and the Theban priest who procured a vision of Asclepius, as well as the high-priest of Hermopolis, Anatolius, who wrote a letter to one Ambrosius, whom he called the "champion of the wisdom of the Greeks," while referring to his own god as Hermes Trismegistus (P. Herm. Rees 2–3). While the Platonic school offered potential adherents a vision of God through philosophical contemplation, Hermetic spiritual masters could offer deification and visionary ascent by means of both philosophical contemplation and ritual practice. The resulting vision of the essential unity of humankind, the world, and God was evocative enough that the fame of Hermes Trismegistus long outlived the

Egyptian temples, whose demise is so poignantly described in the apocalypse of the *Perfect Discourse*:

> On that day the land which is more reverent than all other lands will be irreverent; no longer will it be full of temples but it will be full of tombs; nor will it be full of gods but of corpses. O Egypt! Egypt, your divinities will be like fables, and your religion will no longer be believed in.[3]

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3 NHC VI 70,30–71,1: ⲙ̄ⲫⲟⲟⲩ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲧⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲧⲭⲱⲣⲁ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲙⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡⲁⲣⲁ ⲛ̄ⲭⲱⲣⲁ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲥⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲥⲉ ⲛ̄ⲁⲥⲉⲃⲏⲥ· ⲟⲩⲕⲉⲧⲓ ⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩϩ ⲛ̄ⲣⲡⲉ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩϩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲫⲟⲥ· ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩϩ ⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ϩⲉⲛⲕⲱⲱⲥ: ⲱ ⲕⲏⲏⲉ ⲕⲏⲏⲉ ⟨ⲛⲉⲕⲏⲛ̄ⲧⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ⟩ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲓⲙϣⲃⲱⲱⲥ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲉⲕⲑⲉⲓⲟⲛ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲛ̄[ϩⲟ]ⲩⲧⲟⲩ ⲁ̣[ⲛ] = *Ascl.* 24: *Tunc terra ista sanctissima, sedes delubrorum atque templorum, sepulcrorum erit mortuorumque plenissima. O Aegypte, Aegypte, religionum tuarum solae supererunt fabulae, eaeque incredibiles posteris tuis …*

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