

# *The Hermetic Fragments*

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TRADITION



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## Of Piety and True Philosophy

*Her.* Both for the sake of love to man, and piety to God, I [now], my son, for the first time take pen in hand.

For there can be no piety more righteous than to know the things that are, and to give thanks for these to Him who made them, which I will never cease to do.

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

*Her.* Be pious, son! Who pious is, doth reach the height of [all] philosophy; without philosophy the height of piety cannot be scaled.

But he who learns what are existent things, and how they have been ordered, and by whom, and for whose sake, he will give thanks for all unto the Demiurge, as unto a good sire, a nurse [most] excellent, a steward who doth never break his trust.

Who giveth thanks, he will be pious; and he who pious is, will [get to] know both where is Truth, and what it is.

And as he learns, he will more and more pious grow.

For never, son, can an embodied soul that has once leaped aloft, so as to get a hold upon the truly Good and True, slip back again into the contrary.

For when the soul [once] knows the Author of its Peace, 'tis filled with wondrous love, and with forgetfulness of every ill, and can no more keep from the Good.

Let this be, O [my] son, the goal of piety; to which if thou attain, thou shalt both nobly live, and happily depart from life, for that thy soul no longer will be ignorant of whither it should wing its flight again.

This is the only [Way], my son; the Path [that leads] to Truth, [the Path] on which our forebears, too, did set their feet, and, setting them, did find the Good.

Solemn and smooth this Path, yet difficult to tread for soul while still in body.

For first it hath to fight against itself, and make a great dissension, and manage that the victory should rest with the one part [of its own self]. For that there is a contest of the one against the two; the former trying to flee, the latter dragging down.

And there's great strife and battle [dire] of these with one another; the one desiring to escape, the others striving to detain.

The victory, moreover, of the one or of the others is not resemblant.

For that the one doth hasten [upwards] to the Good, the others settle [downwards] to the bad.

The one longs to be freed; the others love their slavery.

If [now] the two be vanquished, they remain deprived of their own selves and of their ruler; but if the one be worsted, 'tis harried by the two, and driven about, being tortured by the life down here.

This is, [my] son, the one who leadeth thee upon the Thither Path.

Thou must, [my] son, first leave behind thy body, before the end [of it is reached], and come out victor in the life of conflict, and thus as victor wend thy way towards home.

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

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

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

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

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

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

First God; second the Cosmos; third [is] man.

The Cosmos, for man's sake; and man, for God's.

The soul's irrational part is mortal; its rational part, immortal. All essence [is] immortal; all essence, free from change.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

God[’s] good; [and] man [is] bad.

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

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

The good law of the mighty [One] is the good law; good law’s the law.

Time’s for the gods; the law for men.

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

All in the heaven is free from change; all on the earth is subject unto it.  
Naught in the heaven’s a slave; naught on the earth is free.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Things subject unto dissolution wax and wane.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Activities do not ascend, but they descend.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fortune['s] the course of the disorderly; the image of activity, untrue opinion.

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

What, man? The bad that can be changed.

If thou rememberest these heads, thou wilt remember also what I have already set forth for thee with greater wealth of words. For these are summaries of those.

Avoid, however, converse with the many [on these things]; not that I would that thou shouldst keep them selfishly unto thyself, but rather that thou shouldst not seem ridiculous unto the multitude.

For that the like's acceptable unto the like; the unlike's never friend to the unlike.

Such words as these have very very few to give them ear; nay, probably, they will not even have the few.

They have, moreover, some [strange force] peculiar unto themselves; for they provoke the evil all the more to bad.

Wherefore thou shouldst protect the many [from themselves], for they ignore the power of what's been said.

*Tat.* What meanest thou, O father?

*Her.* This, [my] son! All that in man is animal, is proner unto bad [than unto good]; nay, it doth cohabit with it, because it is in love with it.

Now if this animal should learn that Cosmos is subject to genesis, and all things come and go according to Fore-knowledge and by Necessity, Fate ruling all — in no long time it would grow worse than it is now, thinking scorn of the whole [universe] as being subject unto genesis, and unto Fate referring [all] the causes of the bad, would never cease from every evil deed.

Wherefore, care should be taken of them, in order that being [left] in ignorance, they may become less bad through fear of the unknown.

## *Of the Ineffability of God*

*Her.* To understand God is difficult, to speak [of Him] impossible.

For that the Bodiless can never be expressed in body, the Perfect never can be comprehended by that which is imperfect, and that 'tis difficult for the Eternal to company with the ephemeral.

The one is for ever, the other doth pass; the one is in [the clarity of] Truth, the other in the shadow of appearance.

So far off from the stronger [is] the weaker, the lesser from the greater [is so far], as [is] the mortal [far] from the Divine.

It is the distance, then, between the two that dims the Vision of the Beautiful.

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

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

## Of Truth

*Her.* Concerning Truth, O Tat, it is not possible that man should dare to speak, for man's an animal imperfect, composed out of imperfect members, his tabernacle patched together from many bodies strange [to him].

But what is possible and right, this do I say — that Truth is [to be found] in the eternal bodies only, [those things] of which the bodies in themselves are true; fire the very fire and nothing else, earth the very earth and nothing else, air the very air and nothing else, and water the very water and naught else.

Our frames, however, are a compound of all these. For they have [in them] fire, and they have also earth, they've water, too, and air; but they are neither fire, nor earth, nor water, nor air, nor any [element that's] true.

And if our composition has not had Truth for its beginning, how can it either see or speak the Truth?

Nay, it can only have a notion of it, [and that too] if God will.

All things, accordingly, that are on earth, O Tat, are not the Truth; they're copies [only] of the True.

And these are not all things, but few [of them]; the rest consist of falsity and error, Tat, and shows of seeming like unto images.

Whenever the appearance doth receive the influx from above, it turns into a copy of the Truth; without its energizing from above, it is left false.

Just as the portrait also indicates the body in the picture, but in itself is not a body, in spite of the appearance of the thing that's seen.

'Tis seen as having eyes; but it sees naught, hears naught at all.

The picture, too, has all the other things, but they are false, tricking the sight of the beholders — these thinking that they see what's true, while what they see is really false.

All, then, who do not see what's false see truth. If, then, we thus do comprehend, or see, each one of these just as it really is, we really comprehend and see.

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

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

*Her.* Not inconsiderably, O son, art thou at fault.

Truth is in no wise, Tat, upon the earth, nor can it be.

But some men can, [I say,] have an idea of it,—should God grant them the power of godly vision.

Thus there is nothing true on earth; [so much] I know and say. All are appearances and shows, I know and speak true [things]. We ought not, surely, though, to call the knowing and the speaking of true things the Truth?

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

*Her.* This [much] is true; that we do not know aught that's true down here. How could it be, O son?

For Truth is the most perfect virtue, the very highest Good, by matter undisturbed, uncircumscribed by body — naked, [and] evident, changeless, august, unalterable Good.

But things down here, O son, thou seest what they are: not able to receive this Good, corruptible, [and] passible, dissolvable, changeful, and ever altering, being born from one another.

Things, then, that are not true even to their own selves, how can they [possibly] be true?

For all that alters is untrue; it does not stay in what it is, but shows itself to us by changing into one another its appearances.

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

*Her.* As for man, he is not true, O son. For the True is that which has its composition from itself alone, and in itself stays as it is.

But man has been composed of many things, and does not stay in his own self.

He changes and he alters, from age to age, from form to form, and that too, even while he's still in [one and] the [same] tent.

Nay, many fail to recognize their children, when a brief space of time comes in between; and so again of children with their parents.

That, then, which changes so that it's no longer recognized — can that be true, O Tat?

Is it not, rather, false, coming and going, in the [all] varied shows of its [continual] changes?

But do thou have it in thy mind that a true thing is that which stays and lasts for aye.

But "man" is not for ever; wherefore it is not true. "Man's" an appearance. And appearance is extreme untruth.

*Tat.* But these external bodies, father, too, in that they change, are they not true?

*Her.* All that is subject unto genesis and change, is verily not true; but in as much as they are brought to being by the Forefather [of them all], they have their matter true.

But even they have something false in that they change; for naught that doth not stay with its own self is true.

*Tat.* True, father [mine]! Is one to say, then, that the Sun alone — in that in greater measure than the rest of them he doth not change but stayeth with himself — is Truth?

*Her.* [Nay, rather, but] because he, and he only, hath entrusted unto him the making of all things in cosmos, ruling all and making all; to whom I reverence give, and worship pay unto his Truth, and recognise him as the Demiurge after the One and First.

*Tat.* What then, O father, should'st thou say is the first Truth?

*Her.* The One and Only, Tat; He who is not of matter, or in body, the colourless, the figureless, the changeless [One], He who doth alter not, who ever is.

But the untrue, O son, doth perish. All things, however, on the earth that perish, the Forethought of the True hath comprehended [them], and doth and will encompass [them].

For birth without corruption cannot be; corruption followeth on every birth, in order that it may be born again.

For that things that are born, must of necessity be born from things that are destroyed; and things that have been born, must of necessity be [once again] destroyed, in order that the genesis of things existent may not stop

First, [then], see that thou recognize him as the Demiurge for birth-and-death of [all] existent things.

Things that are born out of destruction, then, must of necessity be false, —in that they are becoming now these things, now those. For 'tis impossible they should become the same.

But that which is not “same” — how can it possibly be true?

Such things we should, then, call appearances, [my] son; for instance, if we give the man his proper designation, [we ought to designate him] a man's appearance; [and so] the child a child's appearance, the youth a youth's appearance, the man a man's appearance, the old man an appearance of the same.

For man is not a man, nor child a child, nor youth a youth, nor grown up man a grown up man, nor aged man a [single] aged man.

But as they change they are untrue; both pre-existent things and things existent.

But thus think of them, son: as even these untruths being energies dependent from above from Truth itself.

And this being so, I say untruth is Truth's in-working.



## God, Nature and the Gods

*Her.* There is, then, That which transcends being — beyond all things existent, and all that really are.

For That transcending being is [the mystery] because of which exists that being-ness which is called universal, common unto intelligibles that really are, and to those beings which are thought of according to the law of sameness.

Those which are contrary to these, according to the law of otherness, are again themselves according to themselves.

And Nature is an essence which the senses can perceive, containing in itself all sensibles.

Between these are the intelligible and the sensible gods.

Things that pertain to the intelligence, share in [the nature of] the Gods that are intelligible only; while things pertaining to opinion, have their part with those that are the sensible.

These latter are the images of the intelligences; the Sun, for instance, is the image of the Demiurgic God above the Heaven.

For just as He hath made the universe, so doth Sun make the animals, and generate the plants, and regulate the breaths.

## Of Matter

*Her.* Matter both has been born, O son, and it has been [before it came into existence]; for Matter is the vase of genesis, and genesis, the mode of energy of God, who's free from all necessity of genesis, and pre-exists.

[Matter], accordingly, by its reception of the seed of genesis, did come [herself] to birth, and [so] became subject to change, and, being shaped, took forms; for she, contriving the forms of her [own] changing, presided over her own changing self.

The unborn state of Matter, then, was formlessness; its genesis is its being brought into activity.

## Of Time

Her. Now to find out concerning the three times; for they are neither by themselves, nor [yet] are they atoned; and [yet] again they are atoned, and by themselves [as well].

For should'st thou think the present is without the past, it can't be present unless it has become already past.

For from the past the present comes, and from the present future goes.

But if we have to scrutinize more closely, thus let us argue:

Past time doth pass into no longer being this, and future [time] doth not exist, in its not being present; nay, present even is not present, in its continuing.

Time, then, which stands not [steady] (ἔστηκε), but which is on the turn, without a central point at which to stop — how can it be called instant (ἐνεστώς), seeing even that it hath no power to stand (ἑστάναι)?

Again, past joining present, and present [joining] future, they [thus] are one; for they are not without them in their sameness, and their oneness, and their continuity.

Thus, [then], time's both continuous and discontinuous, though one and the same [time].

## *Of Bodies Everlasting and Bodies Perishable*

*Her.* The Lord and Demiurge of all eternal bodies, Tat, when He had made them once for all, made them no more, nor doth He make them [now].

Committing them unto themselves, and co-uniting them with one another, He let them go, in want of naught, as everlasting things.

If they have want of any, it will be want of one another and not of any increase to their number from without, in that they are immortal.

For that it needs must be that bodies made by Him should have their nature of this kind.

Our Demiurge, however, who is [himself already] in a body, hath made us,—he makes for ever, and will [ever] make, bodies corruptible and under sway of death.

For 'twere not law that he should imitate the Maker of himself — all the more so as 'tis impossible.

For that the latter did create from the first essence which is bodiless; the former made as from the bodying brought into existence [by his Lord].

It follows, then, according to right reason, that while those bodies, since they are brought into existence from incorporeal essence, are free from death, ours are corruptible and under sway of death, in that our matter is composed of bodies — as may be seen from their being weak and needing much assistance.

For how would it be possible our bodies' continuity should last, unless it had some nutriment imported [into it] from similar elements, and [so] renewed our bodies day by day?

For that we have a stream of earth, and water, fire, and air, flowing into us, which renovates our bodies, and keeps our tent together.

We are too weak to bear the motions [of our frames], enduring them not even for one single day.

For know, [my] son, that if our bodies did not rest at night, we should not last a single day.

Wherefore, our Maker, being good, and with foreknowledge of all things, in order that the animal may last, hath given sleep, the greatest [calm] of the fatigue of motion, and hath appointed equal time to each, or rather more, for rest.

Ponder well, son, the mightiest energy of sleep — the opposite to the soul's [energy], but not inferior to it.

For that just as the soul is motion's energy, so bodies also cannot live without [the help of] sleep.

For 'tis the relaxation and the recreation of the jointed limbs; it also operates within, converting into body the fresh supply of matter that flows in, apportioning to each its proper [kind] — the water to the blood, the earth to bones and marrow, the air to nerves and veins, the fire to sight.

Wherefore the body, too, feels keen delight in sleep, for it is sleep that brings this [feeling of] delight into activity.

## *Of Energy and Feeling*

*Tat.* Rightly hast thou explained these things, O father [mine]. Now give me further teaching as to those.

For thou hast said somewhere that science and that art do constitute the rational's energy.

But now thou say'st that the irrational lives, through deprivation of the rational, are and are called ir-rational.

According to this reasoning, [therefore], it follows of necessity that the irrational lives are without any share in science or in art, through deprivation of the rational.

*Her.* [It follows] of necessity, [my] son.

*Tat.* How, then, O father, do we see some of irrational [creatures] using [both] intelligence, and art? — the ants, for instance, storing their food for winter, and in like fashion, [too,] the creatures of the air building their nests, and the four-footed beasts [each] knowing their own holes.

*Her.* These things they do, O son, neither by science nor by art, but by [the force of] nature.

Science and art are teachable; but none of these irrationals is taught a thing.

Things done by nature are [so] done by reason of the general energy of things.

Things [done] by art and science are achieved by those who know, [and] not by all.

Things done by all are brought into activity by nature.

For instance, all look up [to heaven]; but all [are] not musicians, or [are] all archers, or hunters, or the rest.

But some of them have learned one thing, [others another thing], science and art being active [in them].

In the same way, if some ants only did this thing, and others not, thou would'st have rightly said they acted by [the light] of science, and stored their food by means of art.

But if they all without distinction are driven by their nature to [do] this, though [it may be] against their will — 'tis plain they do not do it or by science or by art.

For Tat, these energies, though [in themselves] they are incorporeal, are [found] in bodies, and act through bodies.

Wherefore, O Tat, in that they are incorporeal, thou sayest that they are immortal; but, in so far as without bodies they cannot manifest activity, I say that they are ever in a body.

Things once called into being for some purpose, or some cause, things that come under Providence and Fate, can never stay inactive of their proper energy.

For that which is, shall ever be; for that this [being] is [the very] body and the life of it.

It follows from this reason, [then,] that these are always bodies. Wherefore I say that "bodying" itself is an eternal [exercise of] energy.

If bodies are on earth, they're subject unto dissolution; yet must these [ever] be [on earth to serve] as places and as organs for the energies.

The energies, however, [are] immortal, and the immortal is eternally — [that is, that] body-making, if it ever is, is energy.

[The energies] accompany the soul, though not appearing all at once.

Some of them energize the man the moment that he's born, united with the soul round its irrational [parts]; whereas the purer ones, with change of age, co-operate with the soul's rational part.

But all these energies depend on bodies. From godly bodies they descend to mortal [frames], these body-making [energies]; each one of them is [ever] active, either around the body or the soul.

Yea, they are active with the soul itself without a body. They are for ever in activity.

The soul, however, is not for ever in a mortal body, for it can be without the body; whereas the energies can never be without the bodies.

This is a sacred saying (logos), son: Body apart from soul cannot persist; its being can.

*Tat.* What dost thou mean, O father [mine]?

*Her.* Thus understand it, Tat! When soul leaves body, body itself remains.

But [even] the body so abandoned, as long as it remains, is in activity, being broken up and made to disappear.

For body without [the exercise of] energy could not experience these things.

This energy, accordingly, continues with the body when the soul has gone.

This, therefore, is the difference of an immortal body and a mortal one — that the immortal doth consist of a one single matter, but this [body does] not.

The former's active, and the latter's passive.



For every thing that maketh active is the stronger; and [every thing] that is made active is the weaker.

The stronger, too, being in authority and free, doth lead; the [weaker] follows [as] a slave.

The energies, then, energize not only bodies that are ensouled, but also [bodies] unensouled — sticks, stones, and all such things — both making [them] to grow, and to bear fruits, and ripening [them], dissolving, melting, rotting and crumbling [them], and setting up [in them] all like activities which bodies without souls can undergo.

For energy's the name, O son, for just the thing that's going on — that is becoming.

And many things needs must for ever be becoming; nay, rather, all things [must].

For never is Cosmos bereft of any of existent things, but being borne for aye in its own self, it bears existent things — [things] that shall never cease from being destroyed again.

Know, then, that energy of every kind is ever free from death — no matter what it is, or in what body.

And of the energies, some are of godly bodies, and some of those which are corruptible; some [are] general, and some special. Some [are] of genera, and some are of the parts of every genus.

The godly ones, [accordingly], are those that exercise their energies through everlasting bodies. And these are perfect [energies], in that [they energize] through perfect bodies.

But partial [energies are] those [that energize] through each one of the [single] living things.

And special [energies are those that energize] through each one of existent things.

This argument, accordingly, O son, deduces that all things are full of energies.

For though it needs must be that energies should be in bodies — and there be many bodies in the Cosmos — I say that energies are many more than bodies.

For often in one body there is [found] one, and a second and a third [activity], not counting in the general ones that come with it.

By general ones I mean the purely corporal ones, that exercise themselves through the sensations and the motions [of the body].

For that without these energies the body [of an animal] can not persist.

The souls of men, however, have a second class of energies: the special ones [that exercise themselves] through arts, and sciences, and practices, and [purposed] doings.

For that the feelings follow on the energies or rather are completions of the energies.

Know, then, O son, the difference of energy and of sensation.

[Thus] energy is sent down from above; whereas sensation, being in the body and having its existence from it, receives the energy and makes it manifest, as though it did embody it.

Wherefore I say sensations are both corporal and mortal, and last as long as doth the body [only].

Nay, rather, its sensations are born together with the body, and they die with it.

But the immortal bodies in themselves have no sensation,—[not even an] immortal [one], as though they were composed out of some essence of some kind.

For that sensation doth arise entirely from naught else than either from the bad or else the good that's added to the body, or that is, on the contrary, taken [from it] again.

But with eternal bodies there is no adding to nor taking from.

Wherefore, sensation doth not occur in them.

*Tat.* Is, then, sensation felt in every body?

*Her.* In every body, son; and energies are active in all [bodies, too].

*Tat.* Even in bodies without souls, O father [mine]?

*Her.* Even in them, O son. There are, however, differences in the sensations.

The feelings of the rationals occur with reason; those of irrationals are simply corporal; as for the things that have no soul, they [also] have sensations, but passive ones: experience of increase [only] and decrease.

Moreover, passion and sensation depend from one [same] head, and they are gathered up again into the same, and that, too, by the energies.

Of lives with souls there are two other energies which go with the sensations and the passions: grief and joy.

And without these, an ensouled life, and most of all a rational one, could not experience sensation.

Wherefore, I say that there are forms of passions — [and] forms that dominate the rational lives more [than the rest].

The energies, then, are the active forces [in sensations], while the sensations are the indications of the energies.

Further, as these are corporal, they're set in motion by the irrational parts of [a man's] soul; wherefore, I say that both of them are mischievous.

For that both joy, though [for the moment] it provides sensation joined with pleasure, immediately becomes a cause of many ills to him who feeleth it; while grief [itself] provides [still] greater pains and suffering.

Wherefore, they both would seem [most] mischievous.

*Tat.* Can, then, sensation be the same in soul and body, father [mine]?

*Her.* How dost thou mean; sensation in the soul, [my] son?

*Tat.* Surely it cannot be that soul's incorporal, and that sensation is a body, father — sensation which is sometimes in a body and sometimes not, [just as the soul]?

*Her.* If we should put it in a body, son, we should [then] represent it as like the soul or [like] the energies. For that we say these are incorporals in bodies.

But [as] sensation's neither energy nor soul, nor any other thing than body, according to what has been said above, it cannot, therefore, be incorporal.

And if it's not incorporal, it must be body.

For of existing things some must be bodies and the rest incorporal.

## Of the Decans and the Stars

*Tat.* Since in thy former General Sermons (Logoi), [father,] thou didst promise me an explanation of the Six-and-thirty Decans — explain, I prithee, now concerning them and their activity.

*Her.* There's not the slightest wish in me not to do so, O Tat, and this should prove the most authoritative sermon (logos) and the chiefest of them all. So ponder on it well.

We have already spoken unto thee about the Circle of the Animals, or the Life-giving one, of the Five Planets, and of Sun and Moon, and of the Circle of each one of these.

*Tat.* Thou hast done so, Thrice-greatest one.

*Her.* Thus would I have thee understand as well about the Six-and-thirty Decans, calling the former things to mind in order that the sermon on the latter may also be well understood by thee.

*Tat.* I have recalled them, father, [to my mind].

*Her.* We said, [my] son, there is a Body which encompasses all things.

Conceive it, then, as being in itself a kind of figure of a sphere-like shape; so is the universe conformed.

*Tat.* I've thought of such a figure in my mind, just as thou dost describe, O father [mine].

*Her.* Beneath the Circle of this [all-embracing] frame are ranged the Six-and-thirty Decans, between this Circle of the Universe and that one of the Animals, determining the boundaries of both these Circles, and, as it were, holding that of the Animals aloft in the air, and [so] defining it.

They share the motion of the Planetary Spheres, and [yet] have equal powers with the [main] motion of the Whole, crosswise the Seven.

They're checked by nothing but the All-encircling Body, for this must be the final thing in the [whole grades of] motion — itself by its own self.

But they speed on the Seven other Circles, because they move with a less rapid motion than the [Circle] of the All.

Let us, then, think of them as though of Watchers stationed round [and watching] over both the Seven themselves and o'er the Circle of the All — or rather over all things in the World — holding together all, and keeping the good order of all things.

*Tat.* Thus do I have it, father, in my mind, from what thou say'st.

*Her.* Moreover, Tat, thou should'st have in thy mind that they are also free from the necessities laid on the other Stars.

They are not checked and settled in their course, nor are they [further] hindered and made to tread in their own steps again; nor are they kept away from the Sun's light; [all of] which things the other Stars endure.

But free, above them all, as though they were inerrant Guards and Overseers of the whole, they night and day surround the universe.

*Tat.* Do these, then, also, further exercise an influence upon us?

*Her.* The greatest, O [my] son. For if they act in them, how should they fail to act on us as well — both on each one of us and generally?

Thus, O [my] son, of all those things that happen generally, the bringing into action is from these; as for example — and ponder what I say — downfalls of kingdoms, states' rebellions, plagues [and] famines, tidal waves [and] quakings of the earth; no one of these, O son, takes place without their action.

Nay, further still, bear this in mind. If they rule over them, and we are in our turn beneath the Seven, dost thou not think that some of their activity extends to us as well — [who are] assuredly their sons, or [come into existence] by their means?

*Tat.* What, [then,] may be the type of body that they have, O father [mine]?

*Her.* The many call them daimones; but they are not some special class of daimones, for they have not some other kind of bodies made of some special kind of matter, nor are they moved by means of soul, as we [are moved], but they are [simple] operations of these Six-and-thirty Gods.

Nay, further, still, have in thy mind, O Tat, their operations; that they cast in the earth the seed of those whom [men] call Tanēs, some playing the part of saviours, others being most destructive.

Further the Stars in heaven as well do in their several [courses] bear them underworkers; and they have ministers and warriors too.

And they in [everlasting] congress with them speed on their course in æther floating, fullfilling [all] its space, so that there is no space above empty of stars.

They are the cosmic engine of the universe, having their own peculiar action, which is subordinate, however, to the action of the Thirty-six — from whom throughout [all] lands arise the deaths of [all] the other lives with souls, and hosts of [lesser] lives that spoil the fruit.

And under them is what is called the Bear, just in the middle of the Circle of the Animals, composed of seven stars, and with another corresponding [Bear] above its head.

Its energy is as it were an axle's, setting nowhere and nowhere rising, but stopping [ever] in the self-same space, and turning round the same, giving its proper motion to the Life-producing Circle, and handing over this whole universe from night to day, from day to night.

And after this there is another choir of stars, to which we have not thought it proper to give names; but they who will come after us, in imitation, will give them names themselves.

Again, below the Moon, are other stars, corruptible, deprived of energy, which hold together for a little while, in that they've been exhaled out of the earth itself into the air above the earth — which ever are being broken up, in that they have a nature like unto [that of] useless lives on earth, which come into existence for no other purpose than to die; such as the tribe of flies, and fleas, and worms, and other things like them.

For these are useful, Tat, neither to us nor to the world; but, on the contrary, they trouble and annoy, being nature's by-products, which owe their birth to her extravagance.

Just in the same way, too, the stars exhaled from earth do not attain the upper space.

They cannot do so, since they are sent forth from below; and, owing to the greatness of their weight, dragged down by their own matter, they quickly are dispersed, and, breaking up, fall back again on earth, affecting nothing but the mere disturbance of the air about the earth.

There is another class, O Tat, that of the so-called long-haired [stars], appearing at their proper times, and after a short time, becoming once again invisible — they neither rise nor set nor are they broken up.

These are the brilliant messengers and heralds of the general destinies of things that are to be.

They occupy the space below the Circle of the Sun.

When, then, some chance is going to happen to the world, [comets] appear, and, shining for some days, again return behind the Circle of the Sun, and stay invisible — some showing in the east, some in the north, some in the west, and others in the south.

We call them Prophets.



Such is the nature of the stars. The stars, however, differ from the star-groups.

The stars are they which sail in heaven; the star-groups, on the contrary, are fixed in heaven's frame, and they are borne along together with the heaven — Twelve out of which we call the Zōdiac.

He who knows these can form some notion clearly of [what] God is; and, if one should dare say so, becoming [thus] a seer for himself, [so] contemplate Him, and, contemplating Him, be blessed.

*Tat.* Blessèd, in truth, is he, O father [mine], who contemplateth Him.

*Her.* But 'tis impossible, O son, that one in body should have this good chance.

Moreover, he should train his soul beforehand, here and now, that when it reacheth there, [the space] where it is possible for it to contemplate, it may not miss its way.

But men who love their bodies — such men will never contemplate the Vision of the Beautiful and Good.

For what, O son, is that [fair] Beauty which hath no form nor any colour, nor any mass?

*Tat.* Can there be aught that's beautiful apart from these?

*Her.* God only, O [my] son; or rather that which is still greater — the [proper] name of God.

## Concerning the Rule of Providence, Necessity and Fate

*Tat.* Rightly, O father, hast thou told me all; now further, [pray,] recall unto my mind what are the things that Providence doth rule, and what the things ruled by Necessity, and in like fashion also [those] under Fate.

*Her.* I said there were in us, O Tat, three species of incorporals.

The first's a thing the mind alone can grasp; it thus is colourless, figureless, massless, proceeding out of the First Essence in itself, sensed by the mind alone.

And there are also, [secondly,] in us, opposed to this, configurings — of which this serves as the receptacle.

But what has once been set in motion by the Primal Essence for some [set] purpose of the Reason (Logos), and that has been conceived [by it], straightway doth change into another form of motion; this is the image of the Demiurgic Thought.

And there is [also] a third species of incorporals, which doth eventuate round bodies: space, time, [and] motion, figure, surface, size, [and] species.

Of these there are two [sets of] differences.

The first [lies] in the quality pertaining specially unto themselves; the second [set is] of the body.

The special qualities are figure, colour, species, space, time, movement. [The differences] peculiar to body are figure configured, and colour coloured; there's also form conformed, surface and size.

The latter with the former have no part.

The Intelligible Essence, then, in company with God, has power o'er its own self, and [power] to keep another, in that it keeps itself, since Essence in itself is not under Necessity.

But when 'tis left by God, it takes unto itself the corporal nature; its choice of it being ruled by Providence — that is, its choosing of the world.

All the irrational is moved to-wards some reason.

Reason [comes] under Providence; unreason [falls] under Necessity; the things that happen in the corporal [fall] under Fate.

Such is the Sermon on the rule of Providence, Necessity and Fate.

## Of Justice

*Her.* For there hath been appointed, O [my] son, a very mighty Daimon turning in the universe's midst, that sees all things that men do on the earth.

Just as Foreknowledge and Necessity have been set o'er the Order of the gods, in the same way is Justice set o'er men, causing the same to act on them.

For they rule o'er the order of the things existing as divine, which have no will, nor any power, to err.

For the Divine cannot be made to wander; from which the incapacity to err accrues [to it].

But Justice is appointed to correct the errors men commit on earth.

For, seeing that their race is under sway of death, and made out of bad matter, [it naturally errs], and failure is the natural thing, especially to those who are without the power of seeing the Divine.

'Tis over these that Justice doth have special sway. They're subject both to Fate through the activities of birth, and unto Justice through the mistakes [they make] in life.

## *Of Providence and Fate*

All things are born by Nature and by Fate, and there is not a [single] space bereft of Providence.

Now Providence is the Self-perfect Reason.

And of this [Reason] there are two spontaneous powers,—Necessity and Fate.

And Fate doth minister to Providence and to Necessity; while unto Fate the Stars do minister.

For Fate no one is able to escape, nor keep himself from their shrewd scrutiny.

For that the Stars are instruments of Fate; it is at its behest that they effect all things for nature and for men.

## *Of the Whole Economy*

Now what supporteth the whole World, is Providence; what holdeth it together and encircleth it about, is [called] Necessity; what drives all on and drives them round, is Fate, bringing Necessity to bear on them (for that its nature is the bringing into play of [this] Necessity); [it is] the cause of birth and death of life.

So, then, the Cosmos is beneath the sway of Providence (for 'tis the first to meet with it); but Providence [itself] extends itself to Heaven.

For which cause, too, the Gods revolve, and speed round [Heaven], possessed of tireless, never-ceasing motion.

But Fate [extends itself in Cosmos]; for which cause, too, Necessity [encompasses the Cosmos].

And Providence foreknows; but Fate's the reason of the disposition of the Stars.

Such is the law that no one can escape, by which all things are ordered.

## *Of Soul, I*

The Soul is further [in itself] incorporeal essence, and even when in body it by no means doth depart from the essentiality peculiar to itself. Its nature is, according to its essence to be for ever moving, according to its thought [to be] self-motive [purely], not moved in something, nor towards something, nor [yet] because of something.

For it is prior [to them] in power, and prior stands not in any need of consequents.

“In something,” furthermore, means space, and time, and nature — “towards something,” [this] means harmony, and form, and figure — “because of something,” [this] means body; for ’tis because of body that there is time, and space, and nature.

Now all these things are in connection with each other by means of a congenital relationship

For instance, now, the body must have space, for it would be past all contriving that a body should exist without a space.

It changes, too, in nature, and ’tis impossible for change to be apart from time, and from the movement nature makes; nor is it further possible for there to be composing of a body apart from harmony.

It is because of body, then, that space exists; for that by its reception of the changes of the body, it does not let a thing that’s changing pass away.

But, changing, it doth alternate from one thing to another, and is deprived of being in a permanent condition, but not of being body.

For body, quâ body, remains body; but any special moment of its state does not remain.

The body, then, keeps changing in its states.

And so, space is incorporeal, and time, and natural motion; but each of these has naturally its own peculiar property.

The property of space is receptivity — of time [’tis] interval and number — of nature [it is] motion — of harmony [’tis] love — of body, change.

The special nature of the Soul, however, is essential thought.



## Of Soul, II

That which is moved is moved according to the operation of the motion that doth move the all.

For that the Nature of the all supplies the all with motion — one [motion being] the [one] according to its Power, the other that according to [its] Operation.

The former doth extend itself throughout the whole of Cosmos, and holdeth it together from within; the latter doth extend itself [around it], and encompasseth it from without. And these go everywhere together through all things.

Now the [Productive] Nature of all things supplies the things produced with [power of re-] production, sowing the seeds of its own self, [and] having its becomings by means of moving matter.

And Matter being moved was heated and did turn to Fire and Water; the one [being] strong and active, and the other passive.

And Fire opposed by Water was dried up by it, and did become Earth borne on Water.

And when it was excessively dried up, a vapour rose from out the three — from Water, Earth and Fire — and became Air.

The [Four] came into congress, [then,] according to the reason of the Harmony — hot with cold, [and] dry with moist.

And from the union of these [four] is spirit born, and seed proportionate to the surrounding Spirit.

This [spirit] falling in the womb does not remain inactive in the seed, but being active it transforms the seed, and [this] being [thus]

transformed, develops growth and size. And as it grows in size, it draws unto itself a copy of a model, and is modelled.

And on the model is the form supported, by means of which that which is represented by an image is so represented.

Now, since the spirit in the womb had not the motion that maintaineth life, but that which causeth fermentation [only], the Harmony composed the latter as the receptacle of rational life.

This [life] is indivisible and changeless; it never changes from its changelessness.

It ruleth the conception of the thing within the womb, by means of numbers, delivereth it, and bringeth it into the outer air.

The Soul dwells very near to it — not owing to some common property, but under the constraint of Fate; for that it has no love to be with body.

Wherefore, [the Harmony] according unto Fate doth furnish to the thing that's born [its] rational motion, and the intellectual essence of the life itself.

For that [this] doth insinuate itself into the spirit, and set it moving with the motion of the life.

## *Of Soul, III*

The Soul is, then, incorporeal essence; for if it should have body, it would no longer have the power of being self-maintained.

For every body needeth being; it needeth also ordered life as well.

For that for every thing that comes to birth, change also must succeed.

For that which doth become, becomes in size; for in becoming it hath increase.

Again, for every thing that doth increase, decrease succeedeth; and on increase destruction.

For, sharing in the form of life, it lives; it shares, also, in being through the Soul.

But that which is the cause of being to another, is being first itself.

And by [this] "being" I now mean becoming in reason, and taking part in intellectual life.

It is the Soul that doth supply this intellectual life.

It is called living through the life, and rational through the intellect, and mortal through the body.

Soul is, accordingly, a thing incorporeal, possessing [in itself] the power of freedom from all change.

For how would it be possible to talk about an intellectual living thing, if that there were no [living] essence to furnish life?

Nor, any more, would it be possible to say a rational [living] thing, were there no ratiocinative essence to furnish intellectual life.

It is not to all [lives] that intellect extends; [it doth depend] on the relationship of body's composition to the Harmony.

For if the hot in the compost be in excess, he's light and fervid; but if the cold, he's heavy and he's dull.

For Nature makes the composition fit the Harmony.

There are three forms of the becoming: the hot, the cold, and medium.

It makes it fit according to the ruling Star in the star-mixture.

And Soul receiving it, as Fate decrees, supplies this work of Nature with [the proper kind of] life.

Nature, accordingly, assimilates the body's harmony unto the mixture of the Stars, and co-unites its complex mixtures with their Harmony, so that they are in mutual sympathy.

For that the end of the Stars' Harmony is to give birth to sympathy according to their Fate.

## Of Soul, IV

Soul, Ammon, then, is essence containing its own end within itself; in [its] beginning taking to itself the way of life allotted it by Fate, it draws also unto itself a reason like to matter, possessing "heart" and "appetite."

"Heart," too, is matter; if it doth make its state accordant with the Soul's intelligence, it, [then,] becometh courage, and is not led away by cowardice.

And "appetite" is matter, too; if it doth make its state accord with the Soul's rational power, it [then] becometh temperance, and is not moved by pleasure, for reasoning fills up the "appetite's" deficiency.

And when both [these] are harmonized, and equalized, and both are made subordinate to the Soul's rational power, justice is born.

For that their state of equilibrium doth take away the "heart's" excess, and equalizes the deficiency of "appetite."

The source of these, however, is the penetrating essence of all thought, its self by its own self, [working] in its own reason that doth think round everything, with its own reason as its rule.

It is the essence that doth lead and guide as ruler; its reason is as 'twere its counsellor who thinks about all things.

The reason of the essence, then, is *gnosis* of those reasonings which furnish the irrational [part] with reasoning's conjecturing — a faint thing as compared with reasoning [itself], but reasoning as compared with the irrational, as echo unto voice, and moonlight to the sun.

And "heart" and "appetite" are harmonized upon a rational plan; they pull the one against the other, and [so] they learn to know in their own selves a circular intent.

## Of Soul, V

[Now], every Soul is free from death and in perpetual motion.

For in the General Sermons we have said some motions are by means of the activities, others are owing to the bodies.

We say, moreover, that the Soul's produced out of a certain essence — not a matter — incorporal itself, just as its essence is.

Now every thing that's born, must of necessity be born from something.

All things, moreover, in which destruction followeth on birth, must of necessity have two kinds of motion with them: the [motion] of the Soul, by which they're moved; and body's [motion], by which they wax and wane.

Moreover, also, on the former's dissolution, the latter is dissolved.

This I define, [then,] as the motion of bodies corruptible.

The Soul, however, is in perpetual motion, in that perpetually it moves itself, and makes [its] motion active [too] in other things.

And so, according to this reason, every Soul is free from death, having for motion the making active of itself.

The kinds of Souls are three: divine, [and] human, [and] irrational.

Now the divine [is that] of its divine body, in which there is the making active of itself. For it is moved in it, and moves itself.

For when it is set free from mortal lives, it separates itself from the irrational portions of itself, departs unto the godlike body, and as 'tis in

perpetual motion, is moved in its own self, with the same motion as the universe.

The human [kind] has also something of the godlike [body], but it has joined to it as well the [parts] irrational: the appetite and heart.

These latter also are immortal, in that they happen also in themselves to be activities; but [they are] the activities of mortal bodies.

Wherefore, they are removed far from the godlike portion of the Soul, when it is in its godlike body; but when this enters in a mortal frame, they also cling to it, and by the presence [of these elements] it keeps on being a human Soul.

But that of the irrationals consists of heart and appetite. And for this cause these lives are also called irrational, through deprivation of the reason of the Soul.

You may consider, too, as a fourth [kind] that of the soulless, which from without the bodies operates in them, and sets them moving.

But this should [really] be the moving of itself within its godlike body, and the moving of these [other] things as it were by the way.

## Of Soul, VI

Soul, then, is an eternal intellectual essence, having for purpose the reason of itself; and when it thinks with [it,] it doth attract [unto itself] the Harmony's intention.

But when it leaves behind the body Nature makes, it bideth in and by itself — the maker of itself in the noëtic world.

It ruleth its own reason, bearing in its own thought a motion (called by the name of life) like unto [that of] that which cometh into life.

For that the thing peculiar to the Soul [is this]: to furnish other things with what is like its own peculiarity.

There are, accordingly, two lives, two motions: one, that according to the essence of the Soul; the other, that according to the nature of the body.

The former [is] more general, [the latter is more partial]; the [life] that is according unto essence has no authority but its own self, the other [is] under necessity.

For every thing that's moved, is under the necessity of that which moveth [it].

The motion that doth move, however, is in close union with the love of the noëtic essence.

For Soul must be incorporeal: essence that hath no share in any body Nature makes.

For were it corporal, it would have neither reason nor intelligence. For every body is without intelligence; but when it doth receive of essence, it doth obtain the power of being a breathing animal.



The spirit [hath the power to contemplate] the body; the reason of the essence hath the power to contemplate the Beautiful.

The sensible — the spirit — is that which can discern appearances. It is distributed into the various sense-organs; a part of it becometh spirit by means of which we see, [a part] by means of which we hear, [a part] by means of which we smell, [a part] by means of which we taste, [a part] by means of which we touch.

This spirit, when it is led upwards by the understanding, discerns that which is sensible; but if 'tis not, it only maketh pictures for itself.

For it is of the body, and that, too, receptive of all [impressions].

The reason of the essence, on the other hand, is that which is possessed of judgment.

The knowledge of things worthy [to be known] is co-existent with the reason; [that which is coexistent] with the spirit [is] opinion.

The latter has its operation from the surrounding world; the former, from itself.

## *The Power of Choice*

There is, then, essence, reason, thought, perception.

Opinion and sensation move towards perception; reason directs itself towards essence; and thought sends itself forth through its own self.

And thought is interwoven with perception, and entering into one another they become one form, which is that of the Soul [itself].

Opinion and sensation move towards the Soul's perception; but they do not remain in the same state. Hence is there excess, and falling short, and difference with them.

When they are drawn away from the perception, they deteriorate; but when they follow it and are obedient, they share in the perceptive reason through the sciences.

We have the power to choose; it is within our power to choose the better, and in like way [to choose] the worse, according to our will.

And if [our] choice clings to the evil things, it doth consort with the corporeal nature; [and] for this cause Fate rules o'er him who makes this choice.

Since, then, the intellectual essence in us is absolutely free — [namely] the reason that embraces all in thought — and that it ever is a law unto itself and self-identical, on this account Fate does not reach it.

Thus furnishing it first from the First God, it sent forth the perceptive reason, and the whole reason which Nature hath appointed unto them that come to birth.

With these the Soul consorting, consorteth with their fates, though [in herself] she hath no part [or lot] in their fates' nature.

What is necessitated by the interwoven harmony of [all] the parts, in no way differs from that which is fated.

## *Of Isis to Horus*

A refutation, when it is recognized, O greatest King, carries the man who is refuted towards the desire of things he did not know before.

## *An Apophthegm*

Hermes on being asked, "What is God?" replied: "The Demiurge of wholes — the Mind most wise and everlasting."

## From Aphrodite

— —. How, [then,] are offspring born like to their parents? Or how are they returned to [their own] species?

*Aph.* I will set forth the reason. When generation stores up seed from the ripe blood being sweated forth, it comes to pass that somehow there's exhaled from the whole mass of limbs a certain essence, following the law of a divine activity, as though the man himself were being born; the same thing also in the woman's case apparently takes place.

When, then, what floweth from the man hath the ascendancy, and keeps intact, the young one's brought to light resembling its sire; contrary wise, in the same way, [resembling] its dam.

Moreover, if there should be ascendancy of any part, [then] the resemblance [of the young] will favour that [especial] part.

But sometimes also for long generations the offspring favoureth the husband's form, because his decan has the greater influence at that [particular] moment when the wife conceives.

## *A Hymn of the Gods*

Seven Stars far varied in their course revolved upon the [wide] Olympian plain; with them for ever will Eternity spin [fate]: Mēnē that shines by night, [and] gloomy Kronos, [and] sweet Hēlios, and Paphiē who's carried in the shrine, courageous Arēs, fair-wingèd Hermēs, and Zeus the primal source from whom Nature doth come.

Now they themselves have had the race of men entrusted to their care; so that in us there is a Mēnē, Zeus, an Arēs, Paphiē, a Kronos, Hēlios and Hermēs.

Wherefore we are divided up [so as] to draw from the ætherial spirit, tears, laughter, anger, birth, reason, sleep, desire.

Tears are Kronos, birth Zeus, reason [is] Hermēs, courage Mars, and Mēnē sleep, in sooth, and Cytherēa desire, and Hēlios [is] laughter—for 'tis because of him that justly every mortal thinking thing doth laugh and the immortal world.

## *The Virgin of the World, I*

So speaking Isis doth pour forth for Horus the sweet draught (the first) of deathlessness which souls have custom to receive from Gods, and thus begins her holiest discourse (logos):

Seeing that, Son Horus, Heaven, adorned with many a wreath [of starry crowns], is set o'er every nature of [all] things beneath, and that nowhere it lacketh aught of anything which the whole cosmos now doth hold — in every way it needs must be that every nature which lies underneath, should be co-ordered and full-filled by those that lie above; for things below cannot of course give order to the ordering above.

It needs must, therefore, be the less should give place to the greater mysteries. The ordinance of the sublimer things transcends the lower; it is both sure in every way and falleth 'neath no mortal's thought. Wherefore the [mysteries] below did sigh, fearing the wondrous beauty and the everlasting durance of the ones above,

'Twas worth the gazing and the pains to see Heaven's beauty, beauty that seemed like God,—God who was yet unknown, and the rich majesty of Night, who weaves her web with rapid light, though it be less than Sun's, and of the other mysteries in turn that move in Heaven, with ordered motions and with periods of times, with certain hidden influences bestowing order on the things below and co-increasing them.

Thus fear succeeded fear, and searching search incessant, and for so long as the Creator of the universals willed, did ignorance retain its grip on all. But when He judged it fit to manifest Him who He is, He breathed into the Gods the Loves, and freely poured the splendour which He had within His heart, into their minds, in ever greater and still greater measure; that firstly they might have the wish to seek, next they might yearn to find, and finally have power to win success as well. But this, my Horus, wonder-worthy son, could never have been done

had that seed been subject to death, for that as yet had no existence, but only with a soul that could vibrate responsive to the mysteries of Heaven.

Such was all-knowing Hermes, who saw all things, and seeing understood, and understanding had the power both to disclose and to give explanation. For what he knew, he graved on stone; yet though he graved them onto stone he hid them mostly, keeping sure silence though in speech, that every younger age of cosmic time might seek for them. And thus, with charge unto his kinsmen of the Gods to keep sure watch, he mounted to the Stars.

To him succeeded Tat, who was at once his son and heir unto these knowledges; and not long afterwards Asclepius-Imuth, according to the will of Ptah who is Hephæstus, and all the rest who were to make enquiry of the faithful certitude of heavenly contemplation, as Foreknowledge willed; Foreknowledge queen of all.

Hermes, however, made explanation to surrounding [space], how that not even to his son (because of the yet newness of his youth) had he been able to hand on the Perfect Vision. But when the Sun did rise for me, and with all-seeing eyes I gazed upon the hidden [mysteries] of that New Dawn, and contemplated them, slowly there came to me—but it was sure—conviction that the sacred symbols of the cosmic elements were hid away hard by the secrets of Osiris.

[Hermes], ere he returned to Heaven, invoked a spell on them, and spake these words. (For 'tis not meet, my son, that I should leave this proclamation ineffectual, but [rather] should speak forth what words [our] Hermes uttered when he hid his books away.) Thus then he said:

“O holy books, who have been made by my immortal hands, by incorruption’s magic spells, . . . free from decay throughout eternity remain and incorrupt from time! Become unseeable, unfindable, for every one whose foot shall tread the plains of this [our] land, until old Heaven doth bring forth meet instruments for you, whom the Creator shall call souls.”



Thus spake he; and, laying spells on them by means of his own works, he shuts them safe away in their own zones. And long enough the time has been since they were hid away.

And Nature, O my son, was barren, till they who then were under orders to patrol the Heaven, approaching to the God of all, their King, reported on the lethargy of things. The time was come for cosmos to awake, and this was no one's task but His alone.

"We pray Thee, then," they said, "direct Thy thought to things which now exist and to what things the future needs."

When they spake thus, God smiled and said: "Nature, arise!" And from His word there came a marvel, feminine, possessed of perfect beauty, gazing at which the Gods stood all-amazed. And God the Fore-father, with name of Nature, honoured her, and bade her be prolific.

Then gazing fixedly on the surrounding space, He spake these words as well: "Let Heaven be filled with all things full, and Air, and Æther too! "God spake and it was so. And Nature with herself communing knew she must not disregard the Sire's command; so with the help of Toil she made a daughter fair, whom she did call Invention. And on her God bestowed the gift of being, and with His gift He set apart all them that had been so-far made, filled them with mysteries, and to Invention gave the power of ruling them.

But He, no longer willing that the world above should be inert, but thinking good to fill it full of breaths, so that its parts should not remain immotive and inert, He thus began on these with use of holy arts as proper for the bringing forth of His own special work.

For taking breath from His own Breath and blending this with knowing Fire, He mingled them with certain other substances which have no power to know; and having made the two — either with other — one, with certain hidden words of power, He thus set all the mixture going thoroughly; until out of the compost smiled a substance, as it were, far subtler, purer far, and more translucent than the things from which it came; it was so clear that no one but the Artist could detect it.

And since it neither thawed when fire was set unto it (for it was made of Fire), nor yet did freeze when it had once been properly produced (for it was made of Breath), but kept its mixture's composition a certain special kind, peculiar to itself, of special type and special blend (which composition, you must know, God called Psychōsis, after the more auspicious meaning of the name and from the similarity of its behaviour) — it was from this coagulate He fashioned souls enough in myriads, moulding with order and with measure the efflorescent product of the mixture for what He willed, with skilled experience and fitting reason, so that they should not be compelled to differ any way one from another.

For, you must know, the efflorescence that exhaled out of the movement God induced, was not like to itself. For that its first florescence was greater, fuller, every way more pure, than was its second; its second was far second to the first, but greater far than was its third. And thus the total number of degrees reached up to sixty. In spite of this, in laying down the law, He ordered it that all should be eternal, as though from out one essence, the forms of which Himself alone could bring to their completion.

Moreover, He appointed for them limits and reservations in the height of upper Nature, that they might keep the cylinder a-whirl in proper order and economy and [thus] might please their Sire. And so in that all-fairest station of the Æther He summoned unto Him the natures of all things that had as yet been made, and spake these words:

“O Souls, ye children fair of Mine own Breath and My solicitude, whom I have now with My own Hands brought to successful birth and consecrate to My own world, give ear unto these words of Mine as unto laws, and meddle not with any other space but that which is appointed for you by My will.

“For you, if ye keep steadfast, the Heaven, with the star-order, and thrones I have ordained full-filled with virtue, shall stay as now they are for you; but if ye shall in any way attempt some innovation contrary to My decrees, I swear to you by My most holy Breath, and by this mixture out of which I brought you into being, and by these Hands

of Mine which gave you life, that I will speedily devise for you a bond and punishments.”

And having said these words, the God, who is my Lord, mixed the remaining cognate elements (Water and Earth) together, and, as before, invoking on them certain occult words, words of great power though not so potent as the first, He set them moving rapidly, and breathed into the mixture power of life; and taking the coagulate (which like the other floated to the top), when it had been well steeped and had become consistent, He modelled out of it those of the [sacred] animals possessing forms like unto men’s.

The mixtures’ residue He gave unto those souls that had gone in advance and had been summoned to the lands of Gods, to regions near the Stars, and to the [choir of] holy daimones. He said:

“My sons, ye children of My Nature, fashion things! Take ye the residue of what My art hath made, and let each fashion something which shall bear resemblance to his own nature. These will I further give to you as models.”

He took and set in order fair and fine, agreeably to the motions of the souls, the world of sacred animals, appending as it were to those resembling men those which came next in order, and on these types of lives He did bestow the all-devising powers and all-contriving procreative breath of all the things which were for ever generally to be.

And He withdrew, with promises to join unto the visible productions of their hands breath that cannot be seen, and essence of engendering its like to each, so that they might give birth to others like themselves. And these are under no necessity to do aught else than what they did at first.

[And Horus asked:]

What did the souls do, mother, then?

And Isis said:

Taking the blend of matter, Horus, son, they first looked at the Father's mixture and adored it, and tried to find out whence it was composed; but this was not an easy thing for them to know.

They then began to fear lest they should fall beneath the Father's wrath for trying to find out, and so they set to work to do what they were bid.

Thereon, out of the upper stuff which had its topmost layer superfluously light, they formed the race of birds; while they were doing this the mixture had become half-hardened, and by this time had taken on a firm consistency — thereon they fashioned out the race of things which have four feet; [next they did fashion forth] the race of fish; less light and needing a moist substance of a different kind to swim in — and as the residue was of a cold and heavy nature, from it the Souls devised the race of creeping things.

They then, my son, as though they had done something grand, with over-busy daring armed themselves, and acted contrary to the commands they had received; and forthwith they began to overstep their proper limits and their reservations, and would no longer stay in the same place, but were for ever moving, and thought that being ever stationed in one place was death.

That they would do this thing, however, O my son (as Hermes says when he speaks unto me), had not escaped the Eye of Him who is the God and Lord of universal things; and He searched out a punishment and bond, the which they now in misery endure.

Thus was it that the Sovereign King of all resolved to fabricate with art the human frame, in order that in it the race of Souls throughout might be chastised.

"Then sending for me," Hermes says, "He spake: 'Soul of My Soul, and holy mind of My own Mind, up to what point, the nature of the things beneath, shall it be seen in gloom? How long shall what has up to now been made remain inactive and be destitute of praise? Bring hither to Me now, My son, all of the Gods in Heaven,' said God" — as Hermes saith.

And when they came obedient to His command; "Look down," said He, "upon the Earth, and all beneath." And they forthwith both looked and understood the Sovereign's will. And when He spake to them on human kind's behalf, they [all] agreed to furnish those who were to be, with whatsoever thing they each could best provide.

Sun said: "I'll shine unto my full."

Moon promised to pour light upon the after-the-sun course, and said she had already given birth to Fear, and Silence, and also Sleep, and Memory—a thing that would turn out to be most useful for them.

Cronus announced himself already sire of Justice and Necessity.

Zeus said: "So that the race which is to be may not for ever fight, already for them have I made Fortune, and Hope, and Peace."

Ares declared he had become already sire of Struggle, Wrath, and Strife.

Nor yet did Aphrodite hesitate; she also said: "I'll join to them Desire, my Lord, and Bliss, and Laughter [too], so that our kindred souls, in working out their very grievous condemnation, may not exhaust their punishment unto the full."

Full pleased were all, my son, at Aphrodite's words.

"And for my part," said Hermes, "I will make men's nature well endowed; I will devote to them Prudence and Wisdom, Persuasiveness and Truth, and never will I cease from congress with Invention, but ever will I benefit the mortal life of men born underneath my types of life. For that the types our Father and Creator hath set apart for me, are types of wisdom and intelligence, and more than ever [is this so] what time the motion of the Stars set over them doth have the natural power of each consonant with itself."

And God, the Master of the universe, rejoiced on hearing this, and ordered that the race of men should be.

“I,” Hermes says, “was seeking for the stuff which had to be employed, and calling on the Monarch for His aid. And He gave order to the Souls to give the mixture’s residue; and taking it I found it utterly dried up.

“Thereon, in mixing it, I used more water far than was required to bring the matter back unto its former state, so that the plasm was in every way relaxable, and weak and powerless, in order that it might not, in addition to its natural sagacity, be full of power as well.

“I moulded it, and it was fair; and I rejoiced at seeing mine own work, and from below I called upon the Monarch to behold. And He did look on it, and was rejoiced, and ordered that the Souls should be enflashed.

“Then were they first plunged in deep gloom, and, learning that they were condemned, began to wail. I was myself amazed at the Souls’ utterances.”

Now give good heed, son Horus, for thou art being told the Mystic Spectacle which Kamēphis, our forefather, was privileged to hear from Hermes, record-writer of all deeds, and I from Kamēphis, most ancient of [us] all, when he did honour me with the Black [Rite] that gives perfection; hear thou it now from me!

For when, O wondrous son of mighty fame, if they were about to be shut in their prisons, some simply uttered wails and groans — in just the self-same way as beasts that once have been at liberty, when torn from their accustomed haunts they love so well, will be bad slaves, will fight and make revolt, and be in no agreement with their masters; nay more, if circumstance should serve, will even do to death those that oppress them.

Others with louder outcry hissed like snakes; another one shrieked shrilly, and ere he spake shed many tears, and, turning up and down what things served him as eyes, he said:

“O Heaven, thou source of our begetting, O Æther, Air, O Hands and holy Breath of God our Monarch, O ye most brilliant Stars, eyes of the Gods, O tireless light of Sun and Moon, co-nurslings of our origin — reft from [you] all we suffer piteously.

“And this the more, in that from spacious realms of light, from out [thy] holy envelope and wealthy dome, and from the blessed government we shared with Gods, we shall be thus shut down into these honourless and lowly quarters.

“What is the so unseemly thing we miserables have done? What [crime] deserves these punishments? How many sins await us wretched ones? How many are the things we have to do in this our hopeless plight, necessities to furnish for this watery frame that is so soon dissolved?

“For that no longer shall our eyes behold the souls of God; when through such watery spheres as these we see our own forefather Heaven grown small and tiny, we shall dissolve in sighs — nay, there’ll be times we shall not see at all, for sentence hath been passed on us poor things; the gift of real sight hath not been given to us, in that it hath not been permitted us to see without the light. Windows they are, not eyes!

“How wretchedly shall we endure to hear our kindred breaths breathe in the air, when we no longer shall be breathing with them! For home, instead of this great world high in the air, a heart’s small mass awaits us. Set Thou us free from bonds so base as these to which we have sunk down, and end our grief!

“O Lord, and Father, and our Maker, if so it be Thou hast thus quickly grown indifferent unto the works of Thine own Hands, appoint for us some limits! Still deem us worthy of some words, though they be few, while yet we can see through the whole world-order bright on every side!”

Thus speaking, Horus, son, the Souls gained their request; for that the Monarch came, and sitting on the Throne of Truth made answer to their prayers.

“O Souls, Love and Necessity shall be your lords, they who are lords and marshals after Me of all. Know, all of you who are set under My unageing rule, that as long as ye keep you free of sin, ye shall dwell in the fields of Heaven; but if some cause of blame for aught attach itself

to you, ye shall dwell in the place that Destiny allots, condemned to mortal wombs.

“If, then, the things imputed to your charge be slight, leaving the bond of fleshly frames subject to death, ye shall again embrace your [father] Heaven, and sigh no more; but if ye shall commit some greater sins, and with the end appointed of your frames be not advanced, no longer shall ye dwell in Heaven, nor even in the bodies of mankind, but shall continue after that to wander round in lives irrational.”

Thus speaking, Horus mine, He gave to all the gift of breath, and thus continued:

“It is not without purpose or by chance I have laid down the law of your transformings; but as [it will be] for the worse if ye do aught unseemly, so for the better, if ye shall will what’s worthy of your birth.

“For I, and no one else, will be the Witness and the Watcher. Know, then, it is for what ye have done heretofore, ye do endure this being shut in bodies as a punishment.

“The difference in your rebirths, accordingly, for you, shall be as I have said, a difference of bodies, and their [final] dissolution [shall be] a benefit and a [return to] the fair happiness of former days.

“But if ye think to do aught else unworthy of Me, your mind shall lose its sight so as to think the contrary [of what is true], and take the punishment for benefit; the change to better things for infamous despite.

“But the more righteous of you, who stand upon the threshold of the change to the diviner state, shall among men be righteous kings, and genuine philosophers, founders of states, and lawgivers, and real seers, and true herb-knowers, and prophets of the Gods most excellent, skilful musicians, skilled astronomers, and augurs wise, consummate sacrificers; as many of you as are worthy of things fair and good.

“Among winged tribes [they shall be] eagles, for these will neither scare away their kind nor feed on them; nay more, when they are by, no



other weaker beast will be allowed by them to suffer wrong, for what will be the eagles' nature is too just [to suffer it].

"Among four-footed things [they will be] lions — a life of strength and of a kind which in a measure needs no sleep, in mortal body practising the exercises of immortal life — for they nor weary grow nor sleep.

"And among creeping things [they will be] dragons, in that this animal will have great strength and live for long, will do no harm, and in a way be friends with man, and let itself be tamed; it will possess no poison and will cast its skin, as is the nature of the Gods.

"Among the things that swim [they will be] dolphins; for dolphins will take pity upon those who fall into the sea, and if they are still breathing bear them to the land, while if they're dead they will not ever even touch them, though they will be the most voracious tribe that in the water dwells."

Thus speaking God became imperishable Mind. Thereon, son Horus, from the Earth uprose a very Mighty Spirit which no mass of body could contain, whose strength consisted in his intellect. And though he knew full well the things on which he questioned — the body with which man was clothed according to his type, a body fair and dignified, yet savage overmuch and full of fear — immediately he saw the souls were entering the plasms, he cried out:

"What are these called, O Hermes, Writer of the Records of the Gods?"

And when he answered "Men!" — "Hermes," he said, "it is a daring work, this making man, with eyes inquisitive, and talkative of tongue, with power henceforth to hear things even which are no concern of his, dainty of smell, who will use to its full his power of touch on every thing.

"Hast thou, his generator, judged it good to leave him free from care, who in the future daringly will gaze upon the fairest mysteries which Nature hath? Wouldst thou leave him without a grief, who in the days to come will make his thoughts reach unto mysteries beyond the Earth?"

“Men will dig up the roots of plants, and will find out their juices’ qualities. Men will observe the nature of the stones. Men will dissect not only animals irrational, but they’ll dissect themselves, desiring to find out how they were made. They will stretch out their daring hands e’en to the sea, and cutting self-grown forests down will ferry one another o’er to lands beyond. [Men] will seek out as well the inner nature of the holy spaces which no foot may tread, and will chase after them into the height, desiring to observe the nature of the motion of the Heaven.

“These are yet moderate things [which they will do]. For nothing more remains than Earth’s remotest realms; nay, in their daring they will track out Night, the farthest Night of all.

“Naught have they, then, to stop them from receiving their initiation in the good of freedom from all pain, and, unconstrained by terror’s grievous goads, from living softly out a life free from all care.

“Then will they not gird on the armour of an over-busy daring up to Heaven? Will they not, then, reach out their souls freed from all care unto the [primal] elements themselves?

“Teach them henceforth to long to plan out something, where they have as well to fear the danger of its ill-success, in order that they may be tamed by the sharp tooth of pain in failure of their hopes.

“Let the too busy nature of their souls be balanced by desires, and fears, and griefs, and empty hopes.

“Let loves in quick succession sway their souls, hopes, manifold desires, sometimes fulfilled, and sometimes unfulfilled, that the sweet bait of their success may draw them into struggle amid direr ills.

“Let fever lay its heavy hand on them, that losing heart they may submit desire to discipline.

“Thou grieveest, dost thou, Horus, son, to hear thy mother put these things in words? Art thou not struck with wonder, art thou not terror-

struck at how poor man was grievously oppressed? Hear what is sadder still!"

When Momos said these things Hermes was pleased, for what he said was said out of affection for him; and so he did all that he recommended, speaking thus:

"Momos, the Nature of the Breath Divine which doth surround [all things] shall not become inert. The Master of the universe appointed me as steward and as manager.

"Wherefore the overseer of His command will be the keen-eyed Goddess of the all, Adrasteia; and I will skilfully devise an instrument, mysterious, possessed of power of sight that cannot err, and cannot be escaped, whereto all things on earth shall of necessity be subject, from birth to final dissolution,—an instrument which binds together all that's done. This instrument shall rule all other things on Earth as well [as man]."

These words, said Hermes, did I speak to Momos, and forthwith the instrument was set a-going.

When this was done, and when the souls had entered in the bodies, and [Hermes] had himself been praised for what was done, again the Monarch did convoke the Gods in session. The Gods assembled, and once more did He make proclamation, saying:

"Ye Gods, all ye who have been made of chiefest Nature, free from all decay, who have received as your appointed lot for ever more to order out the mighty Æon, through whom all universal things will never weary grow surrendering themselves in turn the one to other — how long shall we be rulers of this sovereignty that none can ever know? How long these things, shall they transcend the power of sight of Sun and Moon?

"Let each of us bring forth according to his power. Let us by our own energy wipe out this inert state of things; let chaos seem to be a myth incredible to future days. Set hand to mighty work; and I myself will first begin."

He spake; straightway in cosmic order there began the differentiation of the up-to-then black unity [of things]. And Heaven shone forth above tricked out with all his mysteries; Earth, still a-tremble, as the Sun shone forth grew harder, and appeared with all the fair adornments that bedeck her round on every side. For beautiful to God are even things which men think mean, in that in truth they have been made to serve the laws of God.

And God rejoiced when now He saw His works a-moving; and filling full His Hands, which held as much as all surrounding space, with all that Nature had produced, and squeezing tight the handfuls mightily, He said:

“Take [these], O holy Earth, take those, all-honoured one, who art to be the mother of all things, and henceforth lack thou naught!”

God spake, and opening His Hands, such Hands as God should have, He poured them all into the composition of the world. And they in the beginnings were unknown in every way; for that the Souls as newly shut in prison, not enduring their disgrace, began to strive in emulation with the Gods in Heaven, in full command of their high birth, and when held back, in that they had the same Creator, made revolt, and using weaker men as instruments, began to make them set upon each other, and range themselves in conflict, and make war among themselves.

Thus strength did mightily prevail o’er weakness, so that the strong did burn and massacre the weak, and from the holy places down they cast the living and the dead down from the holy shrines, until the Elements in their distress resolved to go to God their Monarch [to complain] about the savage state in which men lived.

The evil now being very great, the Elements approached the God who made them, and formulated their complaint in some such words as these:

It was moreover Fire who first received authority to speak. He said:

“O Lord, Artificer of this new World, thou Name mysterious among the Gods, and up to now revered by all mankind, how long hast Thou, O Daimon, judged it right to leave the life of mortals without God?

“Show now Thyself unto Thy World consulting Thee; initiate the savagery of life with peace; give laws to life; to right give oracles; fill with fair hopes all things; and let men fear the vengeance of the Gods, and none will sin.

“Should they receive due retribution for their sins, they will refrain henceforth from doing wrong; they will respect their oaths, and no one any more will ponder sacrilege.

“Let them be taught to render thanks for benefits received, that I, the Fire, may joyfully do service in the sacrificial rites, that they may from the altar send sweet-smelling vapours forth.

“For up to now I am polluted, Lord; and by the godless daring of these men I am compelled to burn up flesh. They will not let me be for what I was brought forth; but they adulterate with all indecency my undecaying state.”

And Air too said:

“I also, Master, am made turbid by the vapours which the bodies of the dead exhale, and I am pestilential, and, no longer filled with health, I gaze down from above on things I ought not to behold.”

Next Water, O my son of mighty soul, received authority to speak, and spake and said:

“O Father, O wonderful Creator of all things, Daimon self-born, and Nature’s Maker, who through Thee doth conceive all things, now at this last, command the rivers’ streams for ever to be pure, for that the rivers and the seas or wash the murderers’ hands or else receive the murdered.”

After came Earth in bitter grief, and taking up the tale, O son of high renown, thus she began to speak:

“O sovereign Lord, Chief of the Heavenly Ones, and Master of the Wheels, Thou Ruler of us Elements, O Sire of them who stand beside Thee, from whom all things have the beginning of their increase and of their decrease, and into whom they cease again and have the end that is their due according to Necessity’s decree, O greatly honoured One, the godless rout of men doth dance upon my bosom.

“I hold in my embrace as well the nature of all things; for I, as Thou didst give command, not only bear them all, but I receive them also when they’re killed. But now am I dishonoured. The world upon the Earth though filled with all things [else] hath not a God.

“For having naught to fear they sin in everything, and from my heights, O Lord, down [dead] they fall by every evil art. And soaking with the juices of their carcasses I’m all corrupt. Hence am I, Lord, compelled to hold in me those of no worth. With all I bear I would hold God as well.

“Bestow on Earth, if not Thyself, for I could not contain Thee, yet some holy Emanation of Thyself. Make Thou the Earth more honoured than the rest of Elements; for it is right that she should boast of gifts from Thee, in that she giveth all.”

Thus spake the Elements; and God, fulfilling all things with the sound of His [most] holy Voice, spake thus:

“Depart, ye Holy Ones, ye Children worthy of a mighty Sire, nor yet in any way attempt to innovate, nor leave the whole of [this] My World without your active service.

“For now another Efflux of My Nature is among you, and he shall be a pious supervisor of all deeds—judge incorruptible of living men and monarch absolute of those beneath the earth, not only striking terror [into them] but taking vengeance on them. And by his class of birth the fate he hath deserved shall follow every man.”

And so the Elements did cease from their complaint, upon the Master’s order, and they held their peace; and each of them continued in the exercise of his authority and in his rule.

And Horus thereon said:

How was it, mother, then, that Earth received God's Efflux?

And Isis said:

I may not tell the story of [this] birth; for it is not permitted to describe the origin of thy descent, O Horus, [son] of mighty power, lest afterwards the way-of-birth of the immortal Gods should be known unto men — except so far that God the Monarch, the universal Orderer and Architect, sent for a little while thy mighty sire Osiris, and the mightiest Goddess Isis, that they might help the world, for all things needed them.

'Tis they who filled life full of life. 'Tis they who caused the savagery of mutual slaughtering of men to cease. 'Tis they who hallowed precincts to the Gods their ancestors and spots for holy rites. 'Tis they who gave to men laws, food, and shelter.

'Tis they who will, says Hermes, learn to know the secrets of my records all, and will make separation of them; and some they will keep for themselves, while those that are best suited for the benefit of mortal men, they will engrave on tablet and on obelisk.

'Tis they who were the first to set up courts of law; and filled the world with justice and fair rule. 'Tis they who were the authors of good pledges and of faith, and brought the mighty witness of an oath into men's lives.

'Tis they who taught men how to wrap up those who ceased to live, as they should be.

'Tis they who searched into the cruelty of death, and learned that though the spirit which goes out longs to return into men's bodies, yet if it ever fail to have the power of getting back again, then loss of life results.

'Tis they who learned from Hermes that surrounding space was filled with daimons, and graved on hidden stones [the hidden teaching].

'Tis they alone who, taught by Hermes in God's hidden codes, became the authors of the arts, and sciences, and all pursuits which men do practise, and givers of their laws.

'Tis they who, taught by Hermes that the things below have been disposed by God to be in sympathy with things above, established on the earth the sacred rites o'er which the mysteries in Heaven preside.

'Tis they who, knowing the destructibility of [mortal] frames, devised the grade of prophets, in all things perfected, in order that no prophet who stretched forth his hands unto the Gods, should be in ignorance of anything, that magic and philosophy should feed the soul, and medicine preserve the body when it suffered pain.

And having done all this, my son, Osiris and myself perceiving that the world was [now] quite full, were thereupon demanded back by those who dwell in Heaven, but could not go above till we had made appeal unto the Monarch, that surrounding space might with this knowledge of the soul be filled as well, and we ourselves succeed in making our ascent acceptable [to Him]. . . . For that God doth in hymns rejoice.

Ay, mother, Horus said. On me as well bestow the knowledge of this hymn, that I may not remain in ignorance.

And Isis said: Give ear, O son!



## *The Virgin of the World, II*

Now if thou wouldst, O son of mighty soul, know aught beside, ask on!

And Horus said: O mother of great honour, I would know how royal souls are born?

And Isis said: Son Horus, the distinction which marks out the royal souls is somewhat of this kind.

Four regions are there in the universe which fall beneath a law and leadership which cannot be transgressed: Heaven, and the Æther, and the Air, and the most holy Earth.

Above in Heaven, son, the Gods do dwell, o'er whom with all the rest doth rule the Architect of all; and in the Æther [dwell] the Stars, o'er whom the mighty Light-giver the Sun holds sway; but in the Air [live] only souls, o'er whom doth rule the Moon; and on the Earth [do dwell] men and the rest of living things, o'er whom he who doth happen to be king holds sway.

The Gods engender, son, the kings it has deserved, to rule [the race] that lives on Earth. The rulers are the emanations of the king, of whom the nearer to him is more royal than the rest; for that the Sun, in that 'tis nearer than the Moon to God, is far more vast and potent, to whom the Moon comes second both in rank and power.

The king, then, is the last of all the other Gods, but first of men; and so long as he is upon the Earth, he is divorced from his true godship, but hath something that doth distinguish him from men and which is like to God.

The soul which is sent down to dwell in him, is from that space which is above those regions whence [the souls] descend to other men. Down from that space the souls are sent to rule for those two reasons, son.

They who have run a noble, blameless race throughout the cycle of their lives, and are about to be changed into Gods, [are born as kings,] in order that by exercise of kingship they may train themselves to use the power the Gods enjoy; while certain souls who are already Gods, but have in some slight way infringed the rule of life which God inspired, are born as kings, in order that they may not, in being clothed in bodies, undergo the punishment of loss of dignity as well as nature, and that they may not, when they are enfleshed, have the same lot as other men, but have when bound what they enjoyed when free.

The differences which are, however, in the dispositions shown by those who play the part of kings, are not determined by distinguishing their souls, for these are all divine, but by the constitution of the angels and the daimons who attend on them. For that such souls as these descending for such purposes do not come down without a guard and escort; for Justice up above knows how to give to each what is its due estate e'en though they be made exiles from their country ever fair.

When, then, my son, the angels and the daimons who bring down the soul are of a warlike kind, it has to keep firm hold of their proclivities, forgetting its own proper deeds, but all the more remembering the doings of the other host attached to it.

When they are peaceful, then the soul as well doth order its own course in peace.

When they love justice, then it too defends the right.

When they are music-lovers, then it also sings.

And when they are truth-lovers, then it also doth philosophize.

For as it were out of necessity these souls keep a firm hold of the proclivities of those that bring them here; for they are falling down to man's estate, forgetting their own nature, and the farther they depart from it, the more they have in memory the disposition of those [powers] which shut them [into bodies].

Well hast thou, mother, all explained, said Horus. But noble souls — how they are born, thou hast not told me yet.

As on the Earth, son Horus, there are states which differ one from other, so also is it in the case of souls. For they have regions whence they start; and that which starts from a more glorious place, hath nobler birth than one which doth not so. For just as among men the free is thought more noble than the slave (for that which is superior in souls and of a ruling nature of necessity subjects what is inferior) so also, son, . . . .

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And how are male and female souls produced?

Souls, Horus, son, are of the self-same nature in themselves, in that they are from one and the same place where the Creator modelled them; nor male nor female are they. Sex is a thing of bodies, not of souls.

That which brings it about that some of them are stouter, some more delicate, is, son, that [cosmic] “air” in which all things are made.

“Air” for the soul is nothing but the body which envelopes it, an element which is composed of earth and water, air and fire.

As, then, the composition of the female ones has more of wet and cold, but less of dry and warm, accordingly the soul which is shut in a plasm of this kind, becomes relaxed and delicate, just as the contrary is found to be in case of males.

For in their case there’s more of dry and warm, and less of cold and wet; wherefore the souls in bodies such as these are sturdy and more active.

And how do souls become intelligent, O mother mine?

And Isis answered:

The organ of the sight, my son, is swathed in wrappings. When these are dense and thick, the eye is dim; but when they're thin and light, then is the sight most keen. So is it also for the soul. For it as well has envelopes incorporal appropriate to it, just as it is itself incorporal.

These envelopes are "airs" which are in us. When these are light and thin and clear, then is the soul intelligent; but, on the contrary, when they are dense and thick and turbid, then [the soul], as in bad weather, sees not at distance but only things which lie about its feet.

And Horus said:

What is the reason, mother, that the men outside our holiest land are not so wise of mind as our compatriots?

And Isis said:

The Earth lies in the middle of the universe upon her back, like to a human being, with eyes turned up to heaven, and portioned out into as many regions as there are limbs in man.

She turns her eyes to Heaven as though to her own Sire, that with his changes she may also bring about her own.

She hath her head set to the south of all, right shoulder to south-east, left shoulder to south-west; her feet below the Bear, right foot beneath its tail, left under its head; her thighs beneath those that succeed the Bear; her waist beneath the middle [Stars].

A sign of this is that men in the south, who dwell upon her head, are fine about the head and have good hair.

Those in the east are ready for a fight and archer folk — for this pertains to the right hand.

Those in the west are steadier and for the most part fight with the left hand, and what is done by others with the right, they for their part attribute to the left.

Those underneath the Bear excel in feet and have especially good legs.

Those who come after them a little way, about the zone which is our present Italy and Greece, they all have well-made thighs and backs. . . .

Moreover, all these [northern] parts being whiter than the rest bear whiter men upon them.

But since the holiest land of our forebears lies in the midst of Earth, and that the midst of a man's body serves as the precinct of the heart alone, and heart's the spot from which the soul doth start, the men of it not only have no less the other things which all the rest possess, but as a special thing are gifted with intelligence beyond all men and filled with wisdom, in that they are begotten and brought up above her heart.

Further, my son, the south being the receiver of the clouds which mass themselves together from the atmosphere . . .

For instance, it is just because there is this concentration of them in the south, that it is said our river doth flow thence, upon the breaking up of the frost there.

For whensoever a cloud descends, it turns the air about it into mist, and sends it downward in a kind of fog; and fog or mist is an impediment not only to the eyes, but also to the mind.

Whereas the east, O Horus, great in glory, in that 'tis thrown into confusion and made overhot by the continual risings of the sun, and in like fashion too, the west, its opposite, in that it suffers the same things through its descents, afford the men born in them no conditions for clear observation. And Boreas with his concordant cold, together with their bodies doth congeal the minds of men as well.

Whereas the centre of all these being pure and undisturbed, foreknows both for itself and all that are in it. For, free from trouble, ever it brings forth, adorns and educates, and only with such weapons wars [on men], and wins the victory, and with consummate skill, like a good satrap, bestows the fruit of its own victory upon the vanquished.

This too expound, O lady, mother mine! For what cause is it that when men still keep alive in long disease, their rational part — their very reason and their very soul — at times becomes disabled?

And Isis answer made:

Of living things, my son, some are made friends with fire, and some with water, some with air, and some with earth, and some with two or three of these, and some with all.

And, on the contrary, again some are made enemies of fire, and some of water, some of earth, and some of air, and some of two of them, and some of three, and some of all.

For instance, son, the locust and all flies flee fire; the eagle and the hawk and all high-flying birds flee water; fish, air and earth; the snake avoids the open air. Whereas snakes and all creeping things love earth; all swimming things [love] water; winged things, air, of which they are the citizens; while those that fly still higher [love] the fire and have their habitat near it. Not that some of the animals as well do not love fire; for instance salamanders, for they even have their homes in it. It is because one or another of the elements doth form their bodies outer envelope.

Each soul, accordingly, while it is in its body is weighted and constricted by these four. Moreover it is natural it also should be pleased with some of them and pained with others.

For this cause, then, it doth not reach the height of its prosperity; still, as it is divine by nature, e'en while [wrapped up] in them, it struggles and it thinks, though not such thoughts as it would think were it set free from being bound in bodies.

Moreover if these [frames] are swept with storm and stress, or of disease or fear, then is the soul itself tossed on the waves, as man upon the deep with nothing steady under him.

## *From the Sermon of Isis to Horus*

In wondrous fashion (Horus said) hast thou explained to me, most mighty mother Isis, the details of God's wondrous soul-making, and I remain in wonder; but not as yet hast thou told me whereto the souls when freed from body go. I would then thank thee for being made initiate by word of mouth into this vision of the soul, O only mother, deathless one!

And Isis said:

Give ear, my son; most indispensable is this research. That which doth hold together, doth also have a place which doth not disappear. For this is what my sermon will set forth.

O wondrous, mighty son of mighty sire Osiris, [the souls] when they go forth from bodies, are not confusedly and in a rush dissolved into the air, and scattered in the rest of boundless Breath, so that they cannot any more as the same [souls] return again to bodies; nor is it possible, again, to turn them back unto that place from which they came at first — no more than water taken from the bottom of a jar can be poured [back again] into the self-same place whence it was taken; nor does the same when taken take a place peculiar to it, but is mixed up with the whole mass of water. Not thus is it [with souls], high-minded Horus!

Now as I chance myself to be as though initiate into the nature which transcendeth death, and that my feet have crossed the Plain of Truth, I will explain to thee in detail how it is; and preface this by telling thee that water is a body void of reason condensed from many compound things into a fluid mass, whereas the soul's a thing of individual nature, son, and of a royal kind, a work of God's [own] hands and mind, and of itself led by itself to mind.

What then doth come from “one” and not from “other,” cannot be mingled with a different thing; wherefore it needs must be that the soul’s congress with the body is a concord wrought by God’s necessity.

But that they are not [all] confusedly and [all] at random and by chance sent up again to one and the same place, but each to its own proper region, is clear from what [the soul] doth suffer while still it is in body and in plasm, when it has been made dense against its proper nature.

Now give good heed to the similitude recounted, Horus well-beloved!

Suppose in one and the same cage have been shut up both men and eagles, doves and swans, and swallows, hawks and sparrows, flies, and snakes, and lions, leopards, wolves, and dogs, and hares, and kine and sheep, and some amphibious animals, as seals and others, tortoises and our own crocodiles; then, that, my son, at one [and the same] moment they are [all] let out.

They [all] will turn instinctively — man to his gathering spots and roofs; the eagle to the ether, in which its nature is to spend its life; the doves into the neighbouring air; the hawks [to that] above [the doves]; the swallows where men dwell; the sparrows round the fruit-trees; the swans where they may sing; the flies about the earth, [but only] so far from it as they can with [-out their losing] smell of man (for that the fly, my son, is fond of man especially and tends to earth); the lions and the leopards towards the hills; the wolves towards desert spots; the dogs after men’s tracks; the kine to stalls and fields; the sheep to pastures; the snakes to earth’s recesses; the seals and tortoises, with [all] their kind, unto the deeps and streams, so that they neither should be robbed of the dry land nor taken from their cognate water — each one returning to its proper place by means of its internal means of judgment.

So every soul, both in a human form and otherwise incarnate on the earth, knows where it has to go — unless some foolish person come and say, my son, that it is possible a bull should live in water and a tortoise up in air!



And if this be the case when they are plunged in flesh and blood — that they do nothing contrary to what's appointed them, e'en though they are being punished (for being put in body is a punishment for them) — how much the more [is it the case] when they possess their proper liberty [and are set free] from punishment and being plunged [in body]?

Now the most holy ordering of souls is on this wise. Turn thou thy gaze above, most noble- natured son, upon their orders. The space from height of heaven to the moon devotes itself unto the gods and stars and to the rest of providence; the space, my son, from moon to us is dwelling place of souls.

This so great air, however, has in it a belt to which it is our use to give the name of wind, a definite expanse in which it is kept moving to refresh the things on earth, and which I will hereafter tell about.

Yet in no manner by its motion on itself does it become an obstacle to souls; for though it keeps on moving, souls can dart up or dart down, just as the case may be, free from all let and hindrance. For they pass through without immixture or adhesion as water flows through oil.

Now of this interval, Horus, my son, there are four main divisions and sixty special spaces.

Of these [divisions] the first one upwards from the earth is of four spaces, so that the earth in certain of its mountain heights and peaks extends and comes so far, but beyond these it cannot in its nature go in height.

The second after this is of eight spaces, in which the motions of the winds take place.

Give heed, O son, for thou art hearing mysteries that must not be disclosed — of earth and heaven and all the holy air which lies between, in which there is the motion of the wind and flight of birds. For above this the air doth have no motion and sustains no life.

This [moving] air moreover hath of its own nature this authority: that it can circulate in its own spaces and also in the four of earth with all the lives which it contains, while earth cannot ascend into its [realm].

The third consists of sixteen spaces filled with subtle air and pure.

The fourth consists of two and thirty [spaces], in which there is the subtlest and the finest air; it is by means of this that [air] shuts from itself the heavens above which are by nature fiery.

This ordering is up and down in a straight line and has no overlapping; so that there are four main divisions, twelve intervallic ones and sixty spaces.

And in these sixty spaces dwell the souls, each one according to its nature, for though they are of one and the same substance, they're not of the same dignity. For by so much as any space is higher from the earth than any other, by so much do the souls in them, my son, surpass in eminence the one the other.

What souls, however, go to each of them, I will accordingly begin again to tell thee, Horus, [son] of great renown, taking their order from above down to the earth.

## CONCERNING THE INBREATHING AND THE TRANSMIGRATION OF THE SOUL

The [air] between the earth and heavens, Horus, is spaced out by measure and by harmony.

These spaces have been named by some of our forefathers zones, by others firmaments, by others layers.

And in them dwell both souls which have been set free from their bodies, and also those which have as yet been never shut in body.

And each of them, my son, hath just the place it doth deserve; so that the godly and the kingly ones dwell in the highest space of all, those least in honour and the rest of the decadent ones [dwell] in the lowest space of all, while middling souls dwell in the middle space.

Accordingly, those souls which are sent down to rule, are sent down, Horus, from the upper zones; and when they are set free [again] they go back to the same or even still more lofty ones, unless it be they still have acted contrary to their own nature's dignity and the pronouncement of the Law of God.

Such souls as these the Providence above, according to the measure of their sins, doth banish down to lower spaces; just as with those which are inferior in dignity and power, it leads them up from lower [realms] to vaster and more lofty ones.

For up above [them all] there are two ministers of universal Providence, of whom one is the warder of the souls, the other their conductor. The warder [watches o'er the souls when out of body], while the conductor is dispatcher and distributor of souls into their bodies. The former keeps them, while the latter sends them forth according to the Will of God.

For this cause (logos) then, my son, nature on earth according to the change of deeds above doth model out the vessels and shape out the

tents in which the souls are cast. Two energies, experience and memory, assist her.

And this is memory's task, [to see] that nature guards the type of every thing sent down out of its source and keeps its mixture as it is above; while of experience [the work is this, to see] conformably to every one of the descending souls it may have its embodiment, and that the plasms may be made effective — that for the swift ones of the souls the bodies also may be swift, for slow ones slow, for active active ones, for sluggish sluggish ones, for powerful powerful, and for crafty crafty ones, and in a word for every one of them as it is fit.

For not without intention hath she clad winged things with plumage; and tricked out with senses more than ordinary and more exact those which have reason; and some of the four-footed things made strong with horns, some strong with teeth, some strong with claws and hoofs; while creeping things she hath made supple with bodies clad in easy-moving scales, which easily can glide away.

And that the watery nature of their body may not remain entirely weak, she doth provide the sharpened fangs of some of them with power; so that by reason of the fear of death [they cause] they're stronger than the rest.

The swimming things being timorous, she gives to dwell within an element where light can exercise nor one nor other of its powers, for fire in water gives nor light nor heat. But each of them, swimming in water clad in scales or spines, flees from what frightens it where'er it will, using the water as a means of hiding it from sight.

For souls are shut in each class of these bodies according to their similarity [to them]. Those which have power of judgment go down into men; and those that lack it into quadrupeds, whose [only] law is force; the crafty ones [go] into reptiles, for none of them attack a man in front, but lie in wait and strike him down; and into swimming things the timid ones or those which are not worthy to enjoy the other elements. In every class, however, there are found some which no longer use their proper nature.

How [meanest thou] again, my mother? Horus said.

And Isis answered:

A man, for instance, son, o'ersteps his power of judgment; a quadruped avoids the use of force; and reptiles lose their craftiness; and birds their fear of men. So much [then] for the ordering of [souls] above and their descent, and for the making of their bodies.

In every class and kind of the above, my son, there may be found some regal souls; others also descend with various natures, some fiery, and some cold, some overbearing, and some mild, some skilled, some unskilled, some idle, some industrious, some one thing, some another. And this results from the arrangement of the regions whence the souls leap down to their embodiment.

For from the regal zone they leap down [into birth], the soul of the like nature ruling them; for there are many sovereignties. Some are of souls, and some of bodies, and some of arts, and some of sciences, and some are of ourselves.

How [meanest thou] again, my mother, "of ourselves"?

For instance, son, it is thy sire Osiris who is [the ruler] of the souls of them born after us up to this time; whereas the prince of every race [is ruler] of their bodies; [the king] of counsel is the father and the guide of all, Thrice-greatest Hermes; of medicine Asclepius, Hephæstus' son; of power and might again Osiris, and after him thyself, my son; and of philosophy Arnebeschēnis; of poetry again Asclepius-Imuth.

For generally, my son, thou'lt find, if thou inquirest, that there are many ruling many things and many holding sway o'er many. And he who rules them all, my son, is from the highest space; while he who rules some part of them, doth have the rank of that particular realm from which he is.

Those who come from the regal zone, [have] a more ruling [part to play; those from the zone of fire ] become fire-workers and fire-tenders; those from the watery one live out their life in waters; those

from the [zone] of science and of art are occupied with arts and sciences; those from the [zone] of inactivity inactively and heedlessly live out their lives.

For that the sources of all things wrought on the earth by word or deed, are up above, and they dispense for us their essences by weight and measure; and there is naught which hath not come down from above, and will return again to re-descend.

What dost thou mean again by this, my mother? Tell me!

And Isis once again did make reply: Most holy Nature hath set in living creatures the clear sign of this return. For that this breath which we breathe from above out of the air, we send out up again, to take it in [once more].

And we have in us organs, son, to do this work, and when they close their mouths whereby the breath's received, then we no longer are as now we are, but we depart.

Moreover, son of high renown, there are some other things which we have added to us outside the weighed-out mixture [of the body].

What, then (said Horus), is this mixture, mother?

It is a union and a blend of the four elements; and from this blend and union a certain vapour rises, which is enveloped by the soul, but circulates within the body, sharing with each, with body and with soul, its nature. And thus the differences of changes are effected both in soul and body.

For if there be in the corporeal make-up more of fire, thereon the soul, which is by nature hot, taking unto itself another thing that's hot, and [so] being made more fiery, makes the life more energetic and more passionate, and the body quick and active.

If [there be] more of air, thereon the life becomes both light and springy and unsteady both in the soul and body.

And if there's more of water, then the creature also doth become of supple soul and easy disposition, and ready of embrace, and able easily to meet and join with others, through water's power of union and communion with the rest of things; for that it finds a place in all, and when it is abundant, doth dissolve what it surrounds, while if [there's] little [of it], it sinks into and doth become what it is mingled with. As for their bodies, by dampness and by sponginess they are not made compact, but by a slight attack of sickness are dissolved, and fall away by little and by little from the bond which holds them severally together.

And if the earthy [element] is in excess, the creature's soul is dull, for it has not its body-texture loosely knit, or space for it to leap through, the organs of sensation being dense; but by itself it stays within, bound down by weight and density. As for its body, it is firm, but heavy and inert, and only moved of choice by [exercise of] strength.

But if there is a balanced state of all [the elements], then is the animal made hot for doing, light for moving, well-mixed for contact, and excellent for holding things together.

Accordingly those which have more in them of fire and air, these are made into birds, and have their state above hard by those elements from which they came.

While those which have more fire, less air, and earth and water equal, these are made into men, and for the creature the excess of heat is turned into sagacity; for that the mind in us is a hot thing which knows not how to burn, but has intelligence to penetrate all things.

And those which have in them more water and more earth, but moderate air and little fire, these are turned into quadrupeds, and those which have more heat are stronger than the rest. Those which have equal earth and water, are made into reptiles. These through their lack of fire lack courage and straightforwardness; while through their having water in them they are cold; and through their having earth they heavy are and torpid; yet through their having air, they can move easily if they should choose to do so.

Those which have in them more of wet, and less of dry, these are made into fish. These through their lack of heat and air are timorous and try to hide themselves, and through excess of wet and earthy elements, they find their home, through their affinity, in fluid earth and water.

It is according to the share [they have] in every element and to the compass of that share, that bodies reach full growth [in man]; according to the smallness of their share the other animals have been proportioned — according to the energy which is in every element.

Moreover, O my well-beloved, I say, that when, out of this state [of things], the blend based on the first commixture [of the elements in any case], and the resultant vapour from it, so far preserve their own peculiarity, that neither the hot part takes on another heat, nor [does] the aery [take] another air, nor [does] the watery part another wetness, nor [yet] the earthy [take] another density, then doth the animal remain in health.

But if they do not, son, remain in the proportions which they had from the beginning, but are too much increased (I do not mean in energy according to their compass or in the change of sex and body brought about by growth, but in the blend, as we have said before, of the component elements, so that the hot, for instance, is increased too much or too much lessened, and so for all the rest) then will the animal be sick.

And if this [increase] doth take place in both the elements of heat and air, the soul's tent-fellows, then doth the creature fall into symbolic dreams and ecstasies; for that a concentration of the elements whereby the bodies are dissolved has taken place. For 'tis the earthy element itself which is the condensation of the body; the watery element in it as well is a fluidity to make it dense. Whereas the aery element is that in us which has the power of motion, and fire is that which makes an end of all of them.

Just then as is the vapour which ariseth from the first conjunction and co-blending of the elements, as though it were a kindling or an exhalation — whatever it may be, it mingles with the soul and draws it



to itself, so that it shares its nature good or bad. And if the soul remains in its original relationship and common life with it, it keeps its rank.

But when there's added from without some larger share than what was first laid down for it,—either to the whole mixture, or to its parts, or to one part of it — then the resulting change effected in the vapour doth bring about a change or in the disposition of the soul or of the body.

The fire and air, as tending upward, hasten upward to the soul, which dwells in the same regions as themselves; the watery and the earthy elements, as tending down, sink down upon the body, which doth possess the self-same seat.

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