

## **Mercvrii Trismegisti Pymander de potestate et sapientia dei A Translation and Commentary**

### **Preface**

The Greek text of the tractate often referred to as the Pœmandres/Pymander part of the Corpus Hermeticum was first published by Turnebus in Paris in 1554 CE under the title Ερμού του Τρισεμέιστου Ποιμάνδρης Ασκληπιού Όροι προς Άμμωνα Βασιλέα, *Mercurii Trismegisti Pœmander, seu De potestate ac sapientia divina*. This followed the republication, in 1532 CE, of the Latin translation by Marsilius Ficinus in an edition with the intriguing title *Mercvrii Trismegisti Pymander de potestate et sapientia dei. Eivsdem Asclepius, de uoluntate dei. Opuscula sanctissimis mysterijs, ac uerè coelestibus oraculis illustrissima. Iamblichvs De mysterijs Aegyptiorum, Chaldaeorum, & Assyriorū. Proclus In Platonicum Alcibiadem, de anima & daemone. Idem De sacrificio & magia.*

Of the origin of the knowledge expounded in the text, the author declares at v.2 that

είμι ὁ Ποιμάνδρης ὁ τῆς ἀθθεντίας νοῦς οἶδα ὃ βούλει καὶ σύνειμί  
σοι πανταχοῦ

Which implies - qv. my translation, and notes and commentary on the text - that what Pœmandres is about to reveal is an authentic perceivration, and this supernatural being [or archetype] knows what is desired/wanted because, like the guardian daemons of classical and Hellenic culture, Pœmandres is close by.

What is revealed is a summary of that weltanschauung that has been termed hermetic philosophy; a summary widely regarded as an important hermetic text and as dating from the second or the third century CE; and a summary which contains many interesting notions and allusions, such as logos, physis/Physis, the septenary system, the gospel of John, the feminine character of Physis/Nature, the doxology Agios o Theos, and θεός as being both male and female in one person - that is, either ἀνδρόγυνος or (more controversially) bisexual.

In my translation I have endeavoured to express the underlying concepts as accurately as possible - which sometimes necessitated transliterations (qv. the Introduction) - based as this endeavour is on some forty years of study of theological, ancient philosophical, classical, Arabic, and alchemical, texts.

The Greek text used is that of A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, *Corpus Hermeticum*, Collection Budé, 1946, although occasionally I have followed the reading of the MSS rather than Nock's emendations.

In the translation, angled brackets < > indicate an emendation, missing text, or a conjectural reading of the text.

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## Introduction

In the case of the Corpus Hermeticum, the task of translating ancient Greek into English is complicated by the terminology used in the text, and which text is concerned with matters which the English word metaphysical fairly well describes. Words such as λόγος, νοῦς, πνεῦμα, δημιουργόν, φῶς, ψυχή, στοιχεῖον, [καὶ τὰ λοιπά], all require careful consideration if the text is to be understood in relation to the cultural milieu existing at the time of its composition; a milieu where a Hellenistic paganism, of various types and hues, thrived alongside the still relatively new religion of Christianity. All too often, such Greek words are translated by an English word which has, over centuries, acquired a meaning which is not or which may not be relevant to that milieu, resulting in a 'retrospective reinterpretation' of the text. One thinks here of λόγος translated as 'word' (or Word) which thus suffuses, or can suffuse, the text with the meanings that nearly two thousand years of Christian exegesis have ascribed to that term. I have, in an appendix, endeavoured to explain what I mean by such retrospective reinterpretation by giving some examples from other texts.

In an effort to avoid such retrospective reinterpretation here, and the preconceptions thus imposed upon the text, I have sometimes used transliterations, sometimes used a relatively obscure English word, and sometimes used a new term. My intent in using such terms, such words, and such transliterations, is two fold. (1) To perhaps inspire some to undertake their own research into both the Greek text and the metaphysical matters mentioned in the text, sans preconceptions. (2) To hopefully enable the reader without a knowledge of Greek (and of the minutiae of over a century of scholarly analysis of the Greek text) to appreciate the text anew and understand why it is and has - in the original Greek - been regarded as an important document in respect of a particular, ancient, weltanschauung that, over the centuries, proved most influential and which can still be of interest to those interested in certain metaphysical speculations.

For, in respect of the text itself, I incline toward the view that it represents a personal weltanschauung germane to its time. That is, that rather than being representative of some axiomatical pre-existing philosophy or of some religious school of thought, it reproduces the insight and the understanding of one person regarding particular metaphysical matters; and an insight and an understanding no doubt somewhat redolent of, and influenced by, and sometimes perhaps paraphrasing, some such philosophies and/or some such

schools of thought.

Regarding my translation, some may well consider the words of Diogenes Laertius - *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 3.1 (64) - in relation to Plato, quite apposite:

χρήται δὲ ὁ Πλάτων ἐνίοτε αὐτῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ κακοῦ: ἔστι δ' ὅτε καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μικροῦ. πολλάκις δὲ καὶ διαφέρουσιν ὀνόμασιν ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σημαυνομένου χρήται.

For I have sometimes translated the same Greek word in two different ways in order to try and elucidate the meaning of the text [exempli gratia: ἀπεριόριστον, as undefinable and unmeasurable] just as I have idiosyncratically translated certain Greek words [exempli gratia: ἅγιος, as numinous], differences and idiosyncrasies I have endeavoured to explain in my commentary and notes.

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## Translation

[1] Once, while concentrating on and pondering what is real, my intuitions freely flowed, and, my alertness dulled as from an excess of wearisome bodily toil or too much eating, it seemed as if a huge being - too large to measure - chanced by calling out my name and asking what it was I wanted to see and hear about and learn and have knowledge of.

[2] Who are you, I asked.

I am Pœmandres, the perceivation of authority, knowing your desires and eachwhere with you.

[3] I answered that I seek to learn what is real, to apprehend the physis of beings, and to have knowledge of theos. That is what I want to hear.

So he said to me, remember all those things you wanted to learn, for I shall instruct you.

[4] So saying, his form altered whereupon I at once sensed everything; an indefinity of inner sight, with everything suffused in phaos - bright and clear - so that from this seeing, a desire. But all too soon there came down upon it a heavy darkness - stygian, strange - and slithering <as a serpent> until that darkness changed in physis: flowing, of an untellable disorder, with smoke as from a fire and an indescribable sound followed by some aphonous noise as if phaos was calling out.

[5] And then, from the phaos, a numinous logos came upon that physis with pure Fire going forth to the height of that physis; easily and effective and efficient. Since Air is agile, it followed the pneuma, up and above Earth and Water and as far as Fire, to be as if it were hanging from that, there.

Earth and Water remained, coagulating together such that <Earth> could not be seen apart from Water until they were stirred by the sound of the pneuma logos that came down upon them.

[6] Pœmandres asked, had I apprehended the sense of that inner seeing? And I said I shall have knowledge of it.

I am, he said, that phaos; perceivation, your theos, and prior to the flowing physis brought forth from darkness. [And] the phaomal logos, from

perceivation, is the child of theos.

So I said for him to continue.

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

Thank you, I said.

Then discover phaos and become familiar with it.

[7] So saying, he stared at me for so long a duration that I shivered because of the way he looked. But, as he tilted his head back, I, observing, discovered the phaos of unmeasurable forces and an undefinable cosmic order coming-into-being. While the fire, embraced by a strong force, was subdued and kept in stasis.

Such I observed and discovered because of those words of Pœmandres. But, since I was vexed, he spoke to me again. From your seeing, an awareness of the quidditas of semblance; of the primal before the origin without an end.

This was what Pœmandres said to me, then.

[8] So I asked from what place, then, the parsements of physis?

To which he answered, from the deliberations of theos, who, having comprehended the logos and having seen the beauty of the cosmic order, re-presented it, and so became a cosmic order from their own parsements and by the birth of Psyche.

[9] Theos, the perceivation, male-and-female, being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceivation, an artisan, who - theos of Fire and pneuma - fashioned seven viziers to surround the perceptible cosmic order in spheres and whose administration is described as fate.

[10] Directly, from the downward parsements, the logos of theos bounded to the fine artisements of Physis and joined with the perceivation of that artisan, for it was of the same essence. Thus the descending parsements of Physis were left, devoid of logos, to be only substance.

[11] The perceivation of that artisan, in combination with logos, surrounded the spheres, spinning them around, a twizzling of artisements of some indefinite origin and some undeterminable end, finishing where they

began. Turning around and around as perceivation decreed, the spheres produced, from those descending parsements, beings devoid of logos, for they were not given logos, while Air produced what flew, and Water what swam. Divided, one from the other, were Earth and Water, as perceivation had decreed, with Earth delivering from within herself beings four-footed and crawling, and animals savage and benign.

[12] Perceivation, as Life and phaos, father of all, brought forth in his own likeness a most beautiful mortal who, being his child, he loved. And theos, who loved his own image, bequeathed to him all his works of Art.

[13] Thus, having discovered what that artisan with that father's assistance had wrought, he too determined on such artiselements, which the father agreed to. Ingressing to the artisan's realm, with full authority, he appreciated his brother's artiselements, and they - loving him - each shared with him their own function.

Having fully learned their essence, and having partaken of their physis, he was determined to burst out past the limit of those spheres to discover the one who imposed their strength upon the Fire.

[14] With full authority over the ordered cosmos of humans and of beings devoid of logos, he burst through the strength of the spheres to thus reveal to those of downward physis the beautiful image of theos.

When she beheld such unceasing beauty - he who possessed all the vigour of the viziers and was the image of theos - she lovingly smiled, for it was as if in that Water she had seen the semblance of that mortal's beautiful image and, on Earth, his shadow. And as he himself beheld in that Water her image, so similar to his own, he desired her and wanted to be with her.

Then, his want and his vigour realized, and he within that image devoid of logos, Physis grasped he whom she loved to entwine herself around him so that, as lovers, they were intimately joined together.

[15] Which is why, distinct among all other beings on Earth, mortals are jumelle; deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal. Yet, although deathless and possessing full authority, the human is still subject to wyrd. Hence, although over the harmonious structure, when within become the slave. Male-and-female since of a male-and-female father, and wakeful since of a wakeful one. <...>

[16] <...> my perceivation, for I also love the logos. Then Pœmandres said, this is a mysterium esoteric even to this day. For Physis, having intimately joined with the human, produced a most wondrous wonder possessed of the

physis of the harmonious seven I mentioned before, of Fire and pneuma. Physis did not tarry, giving birth to seven male-and-female humans with the physis of those viziers, and ætherean.

Pœmandres, I said, a great eagerness has now arrived in me so that I yearn to hear more. Do not go away.

Then, Pœmandres replied, be silent for this primary explanation is not yet complete.

I shall, I said, therefore, be silent.

[17] To continue, those seven came into being in this way. Earth was muliebral, Water was lustful, and Fire maturing. From Æther, the pneuma, and with Physis bringing forth human-shaped bodies. Of Life and phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceivation; from Life - psyche; from phaos - perceivation; and with everything in the observable cosmic order cyclic until its completion.

[18] Now listen to the rest of the explanation you asked to hear. When the cycle was fulfilled, the connexions between all things were, by the deliberations of theos, unfastened. Living beings - all male-and-female then - were, including humans, rent asunder thus bringing into being portions that were masculous with the others muliebral. Directly, then, theos spoke a numinous logos: propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning, all you creations and artissements, and let the perceiver have the knowledge of being deathless and of Eros as responsible for death.

[19] Having so spoken, foreknowing - through wyrd and that harmonious structure - produced the coagulations and founded the generations with all beings spawning according to their kind. And they of self-knowledge attained a particular benefit while they who, misled by Eros, love the body, roamed around in the dark, to thus, perceptively, be afflicted by death.

[20] But why, I asked, do the unknowing err so much that they are robbed of immortality.

You seem, he said, not to have understood what you heard, for did I not tell you to discover things?

I said I do recall and am discovering, for which I am obliged.

Then tell me, if you have discovered, why death is expected for those in



death.

Because originally the body began with that stygian darkness, from whence the flowing physis which formed the body within the perceptible cosmic order which nourishes death.

[21] Your apprehension is correct. Yet why, according to the logos of theos, does the one of self-discovery progress within themselves?

To which I replied, phaos and Life formed the father of all beings, from whence that human came into being.

You express yourself well. For phaos and Life are the theos and the father from whence the human came into being. Therefore if you learn to be of Life and phaos - and that you perchance are of them - then you progress to return to Life. Thus spoke Pœmandres.

Can you - who are my perceivation - therefore tell me how I may progress to Life? For does not theos say that the human of perceivation should have self-knowledge?

[22] And do not all humans posses perceivation?

Again you express yourself well. I, perceivation, attend to those of respectful deeds, the honourable, the refined, the compassionate, those aware of the numinous; to whom my being is a help so that they soon acquire knowledge of the whole and are affectionately gracious toward the father, fondly celebrating in song his position.

Before they hand over their body to its death they loathe the influencing impressions, for they know their vigour. That is, I - perceivation - do not allow what the vigour of the body embraces to be achieved. For, as guardian, I close the entrance to the bad and the dishonourably vigorous, preventing their procrastinations.

[23] I keep myself distant from the unreasonable, the rotten, the malicious, the jealous, the greedy, the bloodthirsty, the hubriatic, instead, giving them up to the avenging daemon, who assigns to them the sharpness of fire, who visibly assails them, and who equips them for more lawlessness so that they happen upon even more vengeance. For they cannot control their excessive yearnings, are always in the darkness - which tests them - and thus increase that fire even more.

[24] You, perceivation, have instructed me well about all those things I

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

To which Pœmandres replied, first, the dissolution of the physical body allows that body to be transformed with the semblance it had disappearing and its now non-functioning ethos handed over to the daimon, with the body's perceptions returning to their origin, then becoming separated with their purpose, transplanted, and with desire and eagerness journeying toward the physis devoid of logos.

[25] Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait.

[26] Thus, stripped of the activities of that structure, they enter into the ogdoadic physis, and, with those there, celebrate the father in song for they, together, rejoice at this arrival who, now akin to them, hears those forces beyond the ogdoadic physis celebrating theos in melodious song. Then, in order, they move toward the father to hand themselves over to those forces, and, becoming those forces, they become united with theos. For to so become of theos is the noble goal of those who seek to acquire knowledge.

Why, therefore, hesitate? Should it not be that, having received all these things, you should become a guide to those who are suitable so that, because of you, descendants of mortals may - through theos - escape?

[27] Having so spoken to me, Pœmandres joined with those forces, while I, having given thanks to and expressed my gratitude toward the father of all beings, went forth strengthened and informed regarding the physis of everything and with an insight of great importance.

So it was that I began to tell mortals about how beautiful knowledge and an awareness of the numinous were. You earth-bound mortals, you who have embraced intoxicating liquor, sleepfulness, and are unknowing of theos: soberize, stop your drunkenness, for you are beguiled by irrational sleepfulness.

[28] Hearing this, they, with the same purpose, gathered round. And I said, you who are earth-bound, why do you embrace death when you have the means to partake of immortality? Change your ways, you who have

accompanied deception and who have kinship with the unknowing ones. Leave the dark chaos, partake of immortality, move away from your destruction.

[29] Then some of them, having ridiculed, went away, embracing as they did the way of death; although some others, desirous of being informed, threw themselves down at my feet. I asked them to stand, and thus became a guide to those of my kind, informing them of the logoi - of the way and the means of rescue - and engendered in them the logoi of sapientia, with the celestial elixir to nurture them.

And with the arrival of evening with the rays of Helios beginning to completely wane, I bid they express their gratitude to theos, after which - with that expression of gratitude completed - they each retired to their own bed.

[30] Commemorating within myself the noble service of Pœmandres - replete with what I had desired - I was most pleased, for the sleep of the body engendered temperance of psyche, the closing of the eyes a genuine insight, with my silence pregnant with the noble, and the expression of the logos breeding nobility.

Such is what transpired for me, received from perceivization - that is, Pœmandres; for it was by being theos-inspired that I came upon this revealing. Therefore, from my psyche and with all my strength, I offer benedictions to theos, the father.

[31]

Agios o Theos, father of all beings.

Agios o Theos, whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts.

Agios o Theos, whose disposition is to be recognized and who is recognized by his own.

Agios es, you who by logos form all being.

Agios es, you who engender all physis as eikon.

Agios es, you whom the Physis did not morph.

Agios es, you who are mightier than all artifice.

Agios es, you who surpass all excellence.

Agios es, you who transcend all praise.

You - ineffable, inexpressible, to whom silence gives voice - receive these respectful wordful offerings from a psyche and a heart that reach out to you.

[32] I ask of you to grant that I am not foiled in acquiring knowledge

germane to our essence; to invigorate me, so that - by that favour - I may bring illumination to the unknowing who, kindred of my kind, are your children.

Such I testify and believe; to advance to Life and phaos. For you, father, a benediction. Your mortal's purpose is to share in your numinosity, for which you have provided every means.

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### Notes and Commentary on the Text

The numbers refer to the sections of the Greek text, 1-32.

#### 1.

*what is real.* Regarding τῶν ὄντων cf. Plato, Republic, Book 7 (532c) - πρὸς δὲ τὰ ἐν ὕδασι φαντάσματα θεῖα καὶ σκιὰς τῶν ὄντων ἀλλ' οὐκ εἰδώλων σκιὰς δι' ἑτέρου τοιούτου φωτὸς ὡς πρὸς ἥλιον κρίνειν ἀποσκιαζομένας - where the φάντασμα (the appearance) of some-thing natural (god-given), such as the σκιά (image) that is reflected by water, is stated to be real, and contrasted with what is not considered to be real (what is an unsubstantial image) such as that cast by a fire rather than by the Sun.

*intuition.* For διανοίας. As with νοῦς (see 2. below) a term which deserves some scrutiny. Conventionally, it is translated as 'thought', or 'thinking', as if in reference to some sort of idealized faculty we human beings are said to possess and which faculty deals with ideations and their collocations and is considered as necessary to, or the foundation of, understanding and reason.

More accurately, in a classical context, διανοίας is (i) 'intelligence' (or intuition) in the sense of understanding some-thing or someone (i.e. in being able to perceive some-thing correctly or to correctly understand - to know - a person), or (ii) 'intention'.

I have opted for 'intuition' as suggesting, and as manifesting, insight, often from contemplation, as the etymology, from the Latin *intueri*, suggests. For the English word 'thought' now conveys modern meanings which, in my view, are not relevant here. And an 'intuition' that is related to, but somewhat different from, the perceiviation that is νοῦς.

*Alertness.* αἴσθησις. Alertness here in the sense that the normal, alert, awareness of the physical senses is dulled by interior intuition, insight, or

revelation. An appropriate alternative translation would thus be *awareness*, as in awareness of one's surroundings.

*Huge.* ὑπερμεγέθη - qv Plutarch *Romulus*, 16.5 ἐπὶ στρατοπέδου δρῶν ἔτεμεν ὑπερμεγέθη - chopped down a huge tree there in that encampment.

Huge, and too large to measure by ordinary means. I do not see any need to exaggerate what is implied, as some other translations do.

*Have knowledge of.* In the tractate, γινῶναι is related to νοῦς and διανοίας as an expression of what is perceived, or one is aware of. Here, of what one discerns in the sense of distinguishing some-thing from something else and thus 'knowing' of and about that thing.

2.

*Pœmandres.* Ποιμάνδρης. The older interpretation of 'shepherd of men' is unacceptable because speculative; the speculation being that it derives from ποιμήν, which has a variety of meanings other than shepherd, for example, chief, and owner.

A more recent etymology involves some ancient Egyptian term associated with the god Re. However, this etymology, first proposed by Francis Griffith in the 1920's [qv. W. Scott and A. S. Ferguson: *Hermetica: the ancient Greek and Latin writings which contain religious or philosophical teachings ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924-1936] was based on a linguistic and stylistic analysis of Coptic sources dating well over a millennia after the god Re was worshipped in ancient Egypt.

Also, the book *From Poimandres to Jacob Bohme: Hermetism, Gnosis and the Christian Tradition*, edited by Roelof van den Broek and published in 2000 (Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica) which mentions this etymology by Griffiths and which is often cited as confirming this etymology, does not provide further context in the form of extant Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions or references to papyrus fragments from long before the Coptic period, but instead makes various conjectures, as for example in respect of an alternative Coptic form of the genitive n-re, and relies on other linguistic/stylistic analysis of much later texts.

Until a link can be established to such primary Egyptian sources, or to reliable sources much earlier than such Coptic texts, I remain unconvinced in respect of the ancient Egyptian origins of the name Ποιμάνδρης, and therefore am inclined to leave it as a personal name, transliterated Pœmandres.

*perceiviation*. νοῦς. The conventional interpretation here is 'mind', as if in contrast to 'the body' and/or as if some fixed philosophical and abstract principle is meant or implied.

This conventional interpretation is in my view incorrect, being another example of not only retrospective reinterpretation but of using a word which has acquired, over the past thousand years or more, certain meanings which detract from an understanding of the original text. Retrospective reinterpretation because the assumption is that what is being described is an axiomatic, reasoned, philosophy centred on ideations such as Thought, Mind, and Logos, rather than what it is: an attempt to describe, in fallible words, a personal intuition about our existence, our human nature, and which intuition is said to emanate from a supernatural being named Pœmandres.

In addition, one should ask what does a translation such as 'I am Poimandres, mind of sovereignty' [*vide* Copenhaver] actually mean? That there is a disembodied 'mind' which calls itself Pœmandres? That this disembodied 'mind' is also some gargantuan supernatural shapeshifting being possessed of the faculty of human speech? That some-thing called 'sovereignty' has a mind?

I incline toward the view that the sense of the word νοῦς here, as often in classical literature, is perceivance; that is, a particular type of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed 'the body'.

Perceivance thus describes the ability to sense, to perceive, when something may be amiss; and hence also of the Greek word implying resolve, purpose, because one had decided on a particular course of action, or because one's awareness of a situation impels or directs one to a particular course of action. Hence why, in the Oedipus Tyrannus, Sophocles has Creon voice his understanding of the incipient hubris of Oedipus, of his pride without a purpose, of his apparent inability to understand, to correctly perceive, the situation:

εἴ τοι νομίζεις κτήμα τὴν ἀυθαδίαν  
εἶναί τι τοῦ νοῦ χωρίς, οὐκ ὀρθῶς φρονεῖς.

If you believe that what is valuable is pride, by itself,  
Without a purpose, then your judgement is not right.

Translating νοῦς as perceivance/perceivation thus places it into the correct context, given ἀϑεντίας - authority. For "I am Pœmandres, the perceivation of authority" implies "What [knowledge] I reveal (or am about to reveal) is authentic," so that an alternative translation, in keeping with the hermeticism of the text, would be "I am Pœmandres, the authentic perceivation." [ The English word authentic means 'of authority, authoritative' and is derived, via Latin, from the Greek ἀϑεντία ]

*eachwhere*. An unusual but expressive (c.15th century) English word, suited to such an esoteric text. The meaning here is that, like a guardian δαίμων of classical and Hellenic culture, Pœmandres is always close by: eachwhere with you.

### 3.

*Apprehend*. νοέω. To apprehend also in the sense of 'discover'. Again, I have tried to make a subtle distinction here, as there is in the text between the related νοῦς, γνῶναι, and διανοίας.

*physis*. A transliteration, to suggest something more than what 'nature' or 'character' - of a thing or person - denotes. That is, to know what is real and apprehend the physis of those real things - νοῆσαι τὴν τοῦ τῶν φύσιν; to discern the physis, the true nature, of beings. In other words, to have an understanding of ontology; for physis is a revealing, a manifestation, of the not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings and between beings and being.

γνῶναι τὸν θεόν. To have - to acquire - knowledge of θεός. Does θεός here mean God, a god, a deity, or the god? God, the supreme creator Being, the only real god, the father, as in Christianity? A deity, as in Hellenic and classical paganism? The god, as in an un-named deity - a god - who is above all other deities? Or possibly all of these? And if all, in equal measure, or otherwise?

The discourse of Pœmandres, as recounted in the tractate, suggests two things. First, that all are meant or suggested - for example, Τὸ φῶς ἐκεῖνο, ἔφη, ἐγὼ νοῦς ὁ σοῦς θεός could be said of Pœmandres as a god, as a deity, as the god, and also possibly of God, although why God, the Father - as described in the Old and New Testaments - would call Himself Pœmandres, appear in such a vision, and declare what He declares about θεός being both male and female in one person, is interesting. Second, that the knowledge

that is revealed is of a source, of a being, that encompasses, and explains, all three, and that it is this knowing of such a source, beyond those three conventional ones, that is the key to 'what is real' and to apprehending 'the physis of beings'.

Hence, it is better to transliterate θεός - or leave it as θεός - than to use god; and a mistake to use God, as some older translations do.

*remember all those things you want to learn.* Ἐχε νῶ: 'hold the awareness' [be aware] of what you said you wanted to learn - that is, 'remember' them; which is better, and more expressive, than the somewhat colloquial and modern 'keep in mind'.

4.

*So saying, his form [ιδέα] altered.* For τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἠλλάγη τῇ ιδέᾳ. Or - more expressively - 'he shapeshifted'. A common theme in Greek mythology and literature, as in the ancient Hymn to Demeter:

ὥς εἰποῦσα θεὰ μέγεθος καὶ εἶδος ἄμειψε γῆρας ἀπωσαμένη

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

*[An] indefinity of inner sight [inner seeing].* ὁρῶ θέαν ἀόριστον. The sense of ὁράω here is metaphorical, of an interior knowing or apprehension not occasioned by the faculty of sight; the inner knowing, for example, that the blind Tiresias has in respect of Oedipus in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles - his apprehension of what Oedipus has done and what he will do. Such an 'inner seeing' includes the Tiresian kind a prophetic knowing as well as the 'interior visions' of a mystic.

In respect of ἀόριστος, I have opted for indefinity, an unusual [read obscure] English word derived c.1600 from indefinite.

*phaos.* A transliteration of φῶς - using the the Homeric φάος. Since φάος metaphorically (qv. Iliad, Odyssey, Hesiod, etcetera) implies the being, the life, 'the spark', of mortals, and, generally, either (i) the illumination, the light, that arises because of the Sun and distinguishes the day from the night, or (ii) any brightness that provides illumination and thus enables things to be seen, I am inclined to avoid the vague English word 'light' which other translations use, and which English word now implies many things which the Greek does not or may not; as for instance in the matter of over a thousand years of New Testament exegesis, especially in reference to the



gospel of John. A transliteration requires the reader to pause and consider what *phaos* may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply; and hopefully thus conveys something about the original text.

Also, φῶς δὲ πάντα γεγενημένα suggests '[with] everything *suffused in* *phaos*' and not 'everything *became* light' as if to imply that suddenly everything was transformed into 'light'.

*clear and bright.* εὐδιόν τε καὶ ἰλαρόν - if one accepts the emendation εὐδιόν [clear] then ἰλαρόν might suggest the metaphorical sense of 'bright' (rather than the descriptive 'cheery') which fits well with the contrasting and following φοβερόν τε καὶ στυγνόν.

*Downward.* κατωφερὲς - cf. Appian, *The Civil Wars*, Book 4, chapter 13 - κατωφερὲς δ' ἐστὶ τὸ πεδίον.

*stygian.* For στυγνόν, for *stygian* is a word which in English imputes the sense of the original Greek, as both its common usage, and its literary usage (by Milton, Wordsworth, Ralph Waldo Emerson, et al) testify. Something dark, gloomy, disliked, abhorred. One might, for example, write that "that river looks as *stygian*", and as unforgiving, as the water of Styx - ἀμείλικτον Στυγὸς ὕδωρ.

*serpent.* ὄφει is one of the emendations of Nock, for the meaning of the text here is difficult to discern. Given what follows - re the smoke and fire - it is tempting to agree with Reitzenstein that what may be meant is a not an ordinary serpent but a dragon, δράκοντι, qv. the Iliad (II, 308) and the seven-headed dragon of Revelation 12, 3-17.

*flowing* (as in fluidic). The sense of ὑγρός here, since what follows - ἀφάτως τετραγαμένην καὶ καπνὸν ἀποδιδοῦσαν - does not suggest either 'watery' or 'moist'. Cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 314 - ταῦτ' ἄρ' ἐποίουν ὑγρᾶν Νεφελᾶν στρεπταιγλᾶν δάιον ὀρμάν - where clouds are described as flowing and in their flowing-moving obscure the brightness (of the day).

*aphonous ... phaos calling out.* I follow the MSS which [qv. the scanned image from the 1554 CE edition of the Greek text] have φωτὸς, which Nock emended to πυρός. While the emendation, given the foregoing mention of fire, makes some sense, it does render what follows, with the mention of φωτὸς, rather disjointed. However, if - as I suggested above - φῶς is not translated as 'light', but, as with *physis* and λόγος [qv. 5. below], is transliterated, then φωτὸς here is fine, for it is as if "phaos was calling out" in an aphonous - an un-human, animal-like, and thus wordless - way from

beneath the covering of darkness that has descended down, and descended with an indescribable noise. And aphonous here because covered - smothered, obscured, muffled - by the indescribably noisy darkness. Which leads directly to the mention of φῶς and λόγος in the next part of the text; that is, to the ascension of φῶς and λόγος.

If one reads πυρός, then the interpretation would be that it is the fire which is calling out in an un-human, animal-like, and thus wordless way.

5.

*Logos.* λόγος. A transliteration, which as with my other transliterations, requires the reader to pause and reflect upon what the term may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply. The common translation as 'Word' does not express or even suggest all the meanings (possible or suggested) of the Greek, especially as Word - as in Word of God - now imputes so much (in so many different often doctrinal ways) after two thousand years of Christianity and thus tends to lead to a retrospective re-interpretation of the text.

*Numinous.* ἅγιος. Numinous is better - more accurate - than 'holy' or 'sacred', since these latter English words have been much overused in connexion with Christianity and are redolent with meanings supplied from over a thousand years of exegesis; meanings which may or may not be relevant here.

Correctly understood, numinous is the unity beyond our perception of its two apparent aspects; aspects expressed by the Greek usage of ἅγιος which could be understood in a good (light) way as 'sacred', revered, of astonishing beauty; and in a bad (dark) way as redolent of the gods/wyrd/the fates/morai in these sense of the retributive or (more often) their balancing power/powers and thus giving rise to mortal 'awe' since such a restoration of the natural balance often involved or required the death (and sometimes the 'sacrifice') of mortals. It is the numinous - in its apparent duality, and as a manifestation of a restoration of the natural, divine, balance - which is evident in much of Greek tragedy, from the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus (and the *Orestia* in general) to the *Antigone* and the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles.

The two apparent aspects of the numinous are wonderfully expressed by Rilke:

Wer, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel  
Ordnungen? und gesetzt selbst, es nähme  
einer mich plötzlich ans Herz: ich verginge von seinem

stärkeren Dasein. Denn das Schöne ist nichts  
als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch grade ertragen,  
und wir bewundern es so, weil es gelassen verschmäh't,  
uns zu zerstören. Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich.

Who, were I to sigh aloud, of those angelic beings might hear me?  
And even if one of them deigned to take me to his heart I would dissolve  
Into his very existence.  
For beauty is nothing if not the genesis of that numen  
Which we can only just survive  
And which we so admire because it can so calmly disdain to betake us.  
Every angel is numinous

*wenn ich schrie.* 'Were I to sigh aloud' is far more poetically expressive, and more in tune with the metaphysical tone of the poem and the stress on *schrie*, than the simple, bland, 'if I cried out'. A sighing aloud - not a shout or a scream - of the sometimes involuntary kind sometimes experienced by those engaged in contemplative prayer or in deep, personal, metaphysical musings.

*der Engel Ordnungen.* The poetic emphasis is on Engel, and the usual translation here of 'orders' - or something equally abstract and harsh (such as hierarchies) - does not in my view express the poetic beauty (and the almost supernatural sense of strangeness) of the original; hence my suggestion 'angelic beings' - of such a species of beings, so different from we mortals, who by virtue of their numinosity have the ability to both awe us and overpower us.

*came upon that physis.* Came upon that which had the physis of darkness and then changed to become fluidic.

*Fire.* A capitalization, since 'fire' here is suggestive of something possibly elemental.

*Air.* A capitalization, as with Fire; ditto with the following Water and Earth.

A possible alternative here might be to use the Homeric meaning of ἀήρ - mist - since 'air' is just too general, does not describe what is happening, and thus is confusing.

*pnuema.* For πνεύματι/πνεῦμα. A transliteration, given that the English alternatives - such as 'spirit' or 'breath' - not only do not always describe what the Greek implies but also suggest things not always or not necessarily in keeping with the Hellenic nature of the text.

This particular transliteration has a long history in English, dating back to 1559 CE. In 1918, DeWitt Burton published a monograph - listing, with quotations, the various senses of πνεῦμα - entitled *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh: The Usage of Πνεῦμα, Ψυχή, and Σάρξ in Greek Writings and Translated Works from the Earliest Period to 225 AD* (University of Chicago Press, 1918)

I incline toward the view that πνεῦμα here - like λόγος - does not necessarily imply something theological (in the Christian sense or otherwise) but rather suggests an alternative, more personal, weltanschauung that, being a weltanschauung, is undoctinal and subtle, and which weltanschauung is redolent of Hellenic culture. Subtle and undoctinal in the way that early alchemical texts are subtle and undoctinal and try to express, or hint at (however obscurely to us, now), a weltanschauung, and one which is more paganus than Christian.

*coagulating.* For συμμειγμένα, which suggests something more elemental - more actively joined - than just 'mixed or mingled' together.

*pneumal logos.* πνευματικὸν λόγον. The term *pneumal logos* is interesting and intended to be suggestive and thus open to and requiring interpretation. In contrast, the usual translation is *verbo spirituali* (spiritual word), as if what is meant or implied is some-thing theological and clearly distinct from the corporeal, as Thomas Aquinas wrote in *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*: *Ex quo patet quod nomen verbi magis proprie dicitur de verbo spirituali quam de corporali. Sed omne illud quod magis proprie invenitur in spiritualibus quam in corporalibus, propriissime Deo competit. Ergo verbum propriissime in Deo dicitur. (De veritate, q. 4a. 1s. c2).*

6.

*apprehended the sense of that inner seeing.* Given what follows, the English word 'sense' is perhaps appropriate here, rather than the inflexible word 'meaning'.

*phaomal logos.* φωτεινὸς λόγος. As with *pneumal logos*, this is suggestive, and open to interpretation.

*child of theos.* υἱὸς θεοῦ. The scriptural sense - 'son of god', for example Mark 15.39, Ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν - is usually assumed; a sense which follows the general usage of υἱὸς (son) as in Homer et al. But the later (c.2nd/3rd century CE) usage 'child' is possible here, a usage known from some papyri (qv. *Papiri Greci e Latini*, edited by Girolamo Vitelli). This also has the advantage of being gender neutral, for which see the note under ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν in section 19.

*logos kyrios*. λόγος κυρίου (cf. pneumaal logos and phaomaal logos). Invariably translated as 'word of the lord', echoing the formula found in LXX (qv. for example Jeremiah 1.4 ἐγένετο λόγος κυρίου πρὸς με) although, as attested by many papyri, kyrios was also used in the Hellenic world as an epithet both of a deity and of a powerful potentate [hence 'logos kyrios' rather than 'kyrios logos'] implying respect and an acknowledgement of their authority and power.

7.

*duration*. For reasons I outlined in the *The Art of Translation, and A Question About Time* section of the Appendix, I prefer to translate χρόνος as duration (or something akin) and not as 'time'. Briefly explained, the English word 'time' now denotes what the term χρόνος did not.

*tilted his head back*. Perhaps suggestive of looking up toward the heavens, qv. the c. 2nd century CE writer Achilles Tatius (writing around the time the Corpus Hermeticum was written) who, in *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Book V, 3.3, wrote - ἀνανεύσας εἰς οὐρανὸν ὧ Ζεῦ, τί τοῦτο ἔφην φαίνεις ἡμῖν τέρας

*unmeasurable*. ἀπερίοριστον - beyond being countable, impossible to be counted; from ἀριθμητός - countable.

*cosmic order*. κόσμος. The word 'cosmos' by itself is probably insufficient here, for the Greek term κόσμος carries with it the suggestion that the cosmos is an ordered structure, an order evident in the observed regularity of heavenly bodies such as the moon, the constellations, and the planets.

*undefinable*. ἀπερίοριστον: A slightly different sense here to previously, and an interesting contrast with εὐπερίοριστον - well-defined - as used by Strabo when describing the process of measuring and defining, in geographical terms, a region of the Earth:

τὸ γὰρ σημειῶδες καὶ τὸ εὐπερίοριστον ἐκεῖθεν λαβεῖν ἔστιν, οὗ χρεῖαν ἔχει ὁ γεωγράφος: εὐπερίοριστον δέ, ὅταν ἢ ποταμοῖς ἢ ὄρεσιν ἢ θαλάττῃ δυνατὸν ᾖ (*Geography*, 2.1.30)

*coming-into-being*. γεγεννημένον. The meaning here is somewhat obscure. Is what is described a discovery of how the already existing and known cosmic order *came* into being, or the apprehension of a - or some sort of - cosmic order coming-into-being? Or does γεγεννημένον refer to phaos?

8.

*quidditas of semblance.* ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος. The transliteration 'archetype' here is, unfortunately, unsuitable, given what the term archetype now suggests and implies (vide Jungian psychology, for example) beyond what the Greek of the text means. Appropriate words or terms such as 'primal-pattern' or 'protoform' are awkward, clumsy. Hence quidditas (11th/12th century Latin), from whence came 'quiddity', a term originally from medieval scholasticism which was then used to mean the natural (primal) nature or form of some-thing, and thus hints at the original sense of ἀρχέτυπον. As used here, quidditas means exactly what ἀρχέτυπον does in the text, sans Jungian psychology; sans modern 'popular psychology'; sans expositions of hermetic/gnostic philosophy (or what is assumed to be a hermetic/gnostic philosophy) and sans expositions of Plato's philosophy.

The whole passage - τὸ ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος, τὸ προάρχον τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς ἀπεράντου - is concerned with various shades of ἀρχή, and is rather obscure. ἀρχή as the origin - 'the beginning' - of beings and thus of their εἶδος (the ἀρχέτυπον), of their semblance, their type; and ἀρχή - the primal before (προάρχον) that beginning, of beings - as that origin (that beginning) which has no end, no known limits, ἀπεράντου.

*parsements.* For στοιχεῖον, and thus avoiding the word 'elements' whose meanings, being now many and varied, somewhat detract from the meaning of the text. By a parsement - an unusual variant of partiment (from the Latin partimentum) - is meant the fundamental (the basic, elemental, primal) components or principles of 'things' as understood or as posited in Hellenic times; and whether or not these are undescribed or described in terms of a particular philosophy or weltanschauung (for example, as Air, Fire, and so on).

*deliberations of theos.* βουλής θεοῦ. 'Deliberations' is the sense here; as in theos - whomsoever or whatever theos is - having pondered upon, or considered, a particular matter or many matters. cf. Herodotus [Histories, 9.10] - ὃ μὲν σφι ταῦτα συνεβούλευε: οἱ δὲ φρενὶ λαβόντες τὸν λόγον αὐτίκα - where a similar following expression (λαβόντες τὸν λόγον) occurs.

Translations such as 'will/decreed of god' are, in my view, far too presumptive.

ἤτις λαβοῦσα τὸν λόγον. This is suggestive of theos having fully comprehended - completely understood - logos [qv. the passage from Herodotus, where the result of the deliberations was understood, approved of: 'taken to heart'], rather than of God 'taking in the Word' or 'receiving the Word'. A 'taking in' from whence to where? A 'receiving' from where?

*re-presented*. In the sense of a divine mimesis - *μίμησις* - which is the Greek word used here, and which mimesis is an important theme in ancient pagan culture, from Art to religion. It is tempting therefore to consider the suggestion that this mimesis by theos is akin to a masterful, a sublime, work of Art.

*Psyche*. For *ψυχή*, and leaving untranslated so as not to impose a particular meaning on the text. Whether what is meant is *anima mundi* - or something else, such as the 'soul' of a human being - is therefore open to debate, although I have used a capital P to intimate that it is, in the text, an important, and primal, principle, and might imply here the original sense of 'spark' (or breath) of life; of that 'thing' [or being] which [or who] animates beings making them 'alive'.

9.

*male-and-female*. *ἀρρενόθηλος*. The theos - or deity/divinity/God - is both male and female, which can be interpreted as implying a bisexual nature, or androgyny, or hermaphroditism, or a being with the unique ability to both give birth and inseminate, or a being beyond all such mortal (causal) categories and assumptions.

*whose logos brought forth another perceiviation*. *ἀπεκύησε λόγω ἕτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν*. An interesting phrase, possibly open to interpretation, for it might suggest 'whose utterance [who by speaking] brought forth...'

Consider, for example, Psalms 33.6:

τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου οἱ οὐρανοὶ ἐστερεώθησαν καὶ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ δύναμις αὐτῶν

בְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נִעְשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים כָּל-צְבָאִם

with the Greek of LXX, literally translated, meaning "By the logos of the master [κύριος] the heavens were established and, by the pneuma from his mouth, all their influence" [δύναμις], with the Hebrew stating it is יהוה [Yhvh - Jehovah] who has established שָׁמַיִם [shamayim, the heavens] and His בְּרוּחַ [ruach, pneuma] their power.

Hence, Pömandres might well be saying that it was by speaking, by the act of uttering or declaiming a logos, that this theos - whomsoever or whatever theos is - brought forth a[nother] perceiviation; that is, another way or means of apprehending - of knowing, understanding, and appreciating - the

cosmic order.

*artisan*. δημιουργόν. It is tempting to transliterate - as demiourgos - so as not to impose a meaning on the text. Does the word here imply - as possibly with Fire, pneuma, etcetera - an assumed elemental force of principle? Or a demiurge who is a (or the) theos of Fire and pneuma? Or does it imply some creator, the Theos of Fire and Pneuma? Or is some sort of artisan meant? And is this an artisan who, possibly by memesis, can create/manufacture a sublime work of Art that at the very least enables us to perceive the cosmic order - the world - in a new way and who, being a theos, can also possibly create, perhaps as a work of Art, a new cosmic order?

However, I incline toward the view, given what follows - ἐδημιούργησε διοικητάς τινας ἑπτὰ [see below, *fashioned seven viziers*] - that what is meant here is artisan, rather than demiurge.

*fashioned seven viziers*. ἐδημιούργησε διοικητάς τινας ἑπτὰ.

The word ἐδημιούργησε occurs in Diogenes Laertius [*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 3.1 (71) - ὅτι καὶ τὸ ὑπόδειγμα ἐν ἧν ἄφ' οὗ αὐτὸν ἐδημιούργησε] in the section concerned with Plato, where the meaning is what someone (such as a worker or artisan) has wrought, fashioned, or produced.

Viziers captures the meaning of διοικητάς (at the time the text was written) in a way that terms such as controllers, procurators, governors, do not, given the modern senses such terms now have and especially given the context, ἡ διοίκησις αὐτῶν εἰμαρμένη καλεῖται: that their administration - how these viziers discharge their duties; how they operate given their powers - "is described as fate." That is, is understood, by we mortals, as fate or destiny.

Vizier is a term used in Persia (in its various older forms) and ancient Egypt (a transcription of a hieroglyph), and also later on in the Middle East and North Africa following the rise of Islam, to denote a person who governed or who ruled over - in the name of a higher authority - a particular region or territory or who had a particular sphere of influence; a role similar to the Viceroy of the British Empire.

The seven viziers are the seven classical planetary bodies, named Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Sun, Jupiter, and Saturn, and well-described in ancient texts, from ancient Persia onwards. Copenhaver [*Hermetica, The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.105] refers to some of the scholarly literature regarding these 'seven'.



*spheres*. The context - the cosmic order, and especially the seven planetary viziers who surround or encompass - suggest the meaning of spheres (or orbs) rather than 'circles'. Cf. Sophocles, *Antigone*, 415-6 where κύκλος could suggest sphere, or orb, or circle, but where circle seems apposite:

χρόνον τάδ' ἦν τοσοῦτον, ἔστ' ἐν αἰθέρι μέσω κατέστη λαμπρὸς ἡλίου  
κύκλος καὶ καῦμ' ἔθαλπε

And long this continued until Helios with his radiant circle had established himself in middle-sky, burning us

## 10.

*downward parsements ... logos of theos*. Given that the MSS have στοιχείων τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος the meaning here is conjectural.

'Downward parsements' implies that the fundamental (elemental, primal) components by their nature had a tendency to descend, rather as rain descends down by nature and not because it is 'heavy' [cf. Xenophon, *On Hunting*, 5.3: ἀφανίζει δὲ καὶ ἡ πολλὴ δρόσος καταφέρουσα αὐτά] Hence 'descending parsements' would also be an appropriate translation here.

Regarding θεοῦ λόγος, I have again opted for a transliteration since the common translation here of 'word of God' imposes a particular, Christian, interpretation on the text, (i) given that 'word of god' is most probably what Cyril of Alexandria meant by the phrase, since τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος interestingly occurs in *Cyrolli Epistula Tertia ad Nestorium*:

μονογενῆς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος ὁ ἐξ αὐτῆς γεννηθεὶς τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ  
πατρὸς ὁ ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ θεὸς ἀληθινός τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐκ τοῦ φωτός  
ὁ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο τὰ τε ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ γῆι

only-offspring of the logos of theos, born from the essence [οὐσία] of the father, genuine god from genuine god, the phaos from the phaos, by whom all things in heaven and on Earth came into being

and (ii) given that this paraphrases the Nicene creed of 325 CE, with the notable exception of μονογενῆς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος instead of τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, the latter conventionally translated as 'only begotten Son of God'.

Thus, were the translation of 'word of god' to be accepted, with the implied meaning from the *Epistula Tertia ad Nestorium*, then Pœmandres is,

apparently, here stating that 'the Word of God' - Jesus of Nazareth, true god from true god, Light from Light, and the only begotten son of God by whom all things in heaven and on Earth came into being - somehow bounded up to be reunited with the work of the artisan-creator (presumably, in this context, God) who is of the same essence [ὁμοούσιος].

While this is a possible interpretation of the text given that Pœmandres uses the same word, in reference to logos, as Cyril of Alexandria - οὐσία (which correctly understood means the very being - the essential nature/physis, or essence - of someone or some-thing) - it does seem somewhat restrictive, considering (i) the many possible meanings, and shades of meaning, of both λόγος and θεός (before and after the advent of Christianity and especially in the context of pagan, Hellenic, weltanschauungen) and (ii) how theos is described by Pœmandres (for example, as being both male and female).

*fine artissements of Physis.* Fine - καθαρός; clean and free of defects. Artisement - the product of the skilled work of the artisan and the artist; their artisanship (cf. the 16th century English verb artize) and which artissements include beings of various kinds (including living and/or 'archetypal' ones).

It thus becomes clear, especially given what follows, why transliterating φύσις is better than translating it always as 'nature', as if φύσις here implied what we now, after hundreds years of scientific observation and theories such as that of Darwin, understand as 'the natural world', as a 'nature' that we are or can be or should be masters of and can and do and should control, and which we can (or believe we can) understand.

Physis is capitalized here, as in section 14, to suggest the objectification that the text here implies; and objectified as possibly a being - whomsoever or whatever such a being is - or possibly as some apprehension/emanation of theos (whomsoever or whatever theos is), or some fundamental principle, or some form such as what we now understand as an archetype. This Physis, therefore, might or might not be Nature (as Nature was understood in Hellenic times) although, given what follows about Earth delivering (from her womb) living beings [ ἡ γῆ ἐξήνεγκεν ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἃ εἶχε ζῶα... ] it might be that it is not Nature but something else, for example what may have been understood as the genesis of what we now denote by Nature.

It is interesting that here it is "the descending parsements of physis" (not Physis) who were "left, devoid of logos" while in section 14 it is Physis that is, by implication, described as 'devoid of logos' - ὤκησε τὴν ἄλογον μορφήν. This is often understood in the pejorative sense, as if this Physis, and the living beings devoid of logos - ζῶα ἤνεγκεν ἄλογα - in section 11, are

somehow [to quote one translation] 'unreasoning' beings (or forms) - lacking in reason - and thus somehow [to quote another translation] 'irrational' compared to (and by extension somewhat inferior to) the 'son of theos', which mistaken and unnecessary value-judgements arise from interpreting and translating λόγος as 'Word' or as meaning/implying 'reason'. However, logos is just logos, and devoid of (without) logos - ἄλογος - could be, depending on how logos is interpreted, akin to ἀθάνατος said in respect, for example, of theos [Θεὸν δ' εἶναι ζῶον ἀθάνατον] or implying 'cannot be reduced to something else' and thus heterogeneous [αἱ δὲ τὰ τῆ ἀσύμμετροι ἄλογοι καλείσθωσαν], or lacking the faculty of human speech (as in animals, who are not all 'brutish') or (more esoterically) suggestive of *sans denotatum*, of not denoting things or beings by assigning names or terms to them and thus not distinguishing them or marking them as separate from the whole, the unity, of which one type of wholeness is Physis understood as the goddess of Nature, as the creative force that is the genesis of, and which maintains the balance of, the life which inhabits the Earth.

*Substance.* ὕλη. Since the Greek term does not exactly mean 'matter' in the modern sense (qv. the science of Physics) it is better to find an alternative. Hence 'substance' - the *materia* of 'things' and living beings - contrasted with οὐσία, essence.

#### 11.

*the perceiviation of that artisan.* As previously, and like physis, both νοῦς and λόγος are here objectified.

*spinning them around.* δυνῶν ῥοίζω.

#### 12.

*brought forth...a mortal.* ἀπεκύησεν ἄνθρωπον. The word ἀπεκύησεν in relation to πατήρ perhaps refers back to where theos, the perceiviation, is described as being both male and female [ἄρρενόθηλυς] although whether the meaning here is the literal 'gave birth' or the descriptive 'brought forth' is interesting, especially a different word, ἐξήνεγκεν [which the English word delivered - in the sense of giving birth, of 'a woman having disburdened herself of a foetus' - usefully describes] is used in reference to the (female) Earth. This different usage, and the Epistle of James, written not long before the Pœmandres tractate where 'brought forth' is apposite [v.1.15 ἡ δὲ ἀμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον] incline me toward 'brought forth' here.

In respect of ἄνθρωπος (often emended to ἄνθρωπος) the sense here, as often, is the gender neutral 'human being' - a mortal - and not 'a man'.

*image.* μορφή. Image in both senses of the English term - as outward physical appearance, and as the impression (or concept) that others may have of, or see in, a person.

Image plays an important part in what follows; the image that the son of theos has of himself and sees reflected back to him and which image he loves. The image Physis has of him and sees a reflection of, and the image which he has of her and which makes him desire her.

*bequeathed to him all his works of Art.* παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουργήματα. This is a very interesting phrase; theos as artisan, as artist, whose works - whose creations, whose artisements, whose divine re-presentations (μίμησις) - apparently include both the cosmic order, the artisan mentioned previously, and we mortals. Less suggestive of the meaning is 'bequeathed to him all his (various) artisements'.

**13.**

*that father.* Reading πατρί, with the MSS, and not the emendation πατρί.

*Ingressing to the artisan's realm.* γενόμενος ἐν τῇ δημιουργικῇ σφαίρᾳ. The realm of the artisan: where the artisan works, and produces artisements and divine works of art, and where someone - here, the mortal, son of theos - can learn and master that skill and produce his own works. This realm is that of the seven spheres, the seven viziers.

*function.* τάξεως. Cf. Plato, *Laws*, 809d - ἡμερῶν τάξεως εἰς μηνῶν περιόδους καὶ μηνῶν εἰς ἕκαστον τὸν ἐνιαυτὸν ἵνα ὥραι καὶ θυσίαι καὶ ἑορταὶ τὰ προσήκοντ' ἀπολαμβάνουσαι ἑαυταῖς ἕκασται τῷ κατὰ φύσιν ἄγεσθαι - where the sense is of the periodic, the orderly, functioning of things; of days into weeks, weeks into months, and of months into a year; and which functionality enables us to know when to celebrate and undertake the seasonal festivals and feasts.

*limit.* περιφέρεια. Not here the literal Euclidean meaning of circumference [for example, Euclid, *Elements*, Book 13, Proposition 10 - ἐπεὶ ἴση ἐστὶν ἡ ΑΒΓΗ περιφέρεια τῇ ΑΕΔΗ περιφερείᾳ] but rather of the limits, the boundary, set or marked by the seven spheres; a limit that the mortal, son of theos, is "determined to burst out past".

*imposed their strength upon the Fire.* Cf. section 7 - περίσχεσθαι τὸ πῦρ

δυνάμει μεγίστη (the fire, embraced by a strong force).

#### 14.

*burst through the strength of the spheres.* I follow the reading of the MSS, which have ἀναρρήξας τὸ κράτος τῶν κύκλων, amended by Scott and Nock to ἀναρρήξας τὸ κύτος [burst through the container].

*harmonious structure.* Here, ἄρμονία implies the 'structure' of the κόσμος, the cosmic order [qv. the note on κόσμος in section 7] and which structure is harmonious [qv. ἄρμονίας ἐναρμόνιος in section 15].

*vigour. ἐνέργεια.* The words 'force' and 'energy' bring too many irrelevant modern connotations to the text, and 'vigour' well expresses the meaning of ἐνέργεια here, with the suggestion, as often elsewhere, of 'vigorous activity'.

*When she beheld.* This, as what follows suggests, is Physis, personified. In respect of beholding such beauty, cf. section 8 - *having seen the beauty of the cosmic order.*

*on Earth, his shadow.* τὸ σκίασμα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Cf. Diogenes Laertius [*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.146, Zeno] not especially for the similarity - τὸ τῆς γῆς σκίασμα - but more for the interesting section, preceding this mention of the shadow of the moon on Earth during an eclipse, of how the cosmic order came into being [142] and for the equally interesting following discussion [147] which concerns the attributes and images of theos - the god - who is described as 'the father of all', who has both male and female aspects, and which aspects of the divinity are given their classical pagan names with their areas of authority specified. The interest lies in how the classical gods, and the creation of the cosmic order, and thus Hellenic paganism, were understood and remembered not long after the *Hermetica* was written, and thus how they echo in part some of the metaphysical themes in, and the cosmogony of, the *Poemander*s tractate.

*Physis grasped [...] intimately joined together.* ἡ δὲ φύσις λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐρώμενον περιεπλάκη ὅλη καὶ ἐμίγησαν ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν. The sense of μίγνυμι here is that of a physical union, a sexual joining together - not of some 'philosophical mingling' of 'forms'. Similarly, περιπλέκω is not some ordinary 'embrace' but a sexual twinning (of limbs). Cf. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 375 - Κρίω δ' Εὐρυβίην τέκεν ἐν φιλότητι μιγεῖσα Ἀστραῖόν.

*jumelle.* For διπλοῦς. The much underused and descriptive English word jumelle - from the Latin gemellus - describes some-thing made in, or

composed of, two parts, and is therefore most suitable here, more so than common words such as 'double' or 'twofold'.

*deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal.* θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον. Here, in respect of my choice of English words, I must admit to being influenced by Chapman's lovely poetic translation of the Hymn to Venus from the Homeric Hymns:

That with a deathless goddess lay a deathful man

In respect of οὐσιώδης, I prefer, given the context, 'inner' - suggestive of 'real' - rather than the conventional 'essential'; although 'vital' is an alternative translation here, suggested by what Eusebius wrote (c.326 CE) about φῶς [phaos] pre-existing even before the cosmic order, with φῶς used by Eusebius to mean Light in the Christian sense:

τό τε φῶς τὸ προκόσμιον καὶ τὴν πρὸ αἰώνων νοερὰν καὶ οὐσιώδη σοφίαν τὸν τε ζῶντα [Historia Ecclesiastica, Book 1, chapter 2]

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

*wyrd.* For ἡ εἰμαρμένη. A much better choice, here, than either 'fate' or 'destiny' given how overused both those words now are and how their interpretation is also now so varied. An overview of how the concept may have been understood in the late Hellenic period (around the time the *Hermetica* was probably written) is given in the 2nd century CE discourse *De Fato*, attributed to Plutarch, which begins by stating that εἰμαρμένη has been described in two ways, as ἐνέργεια (vigorous activity) and as οὐσία (essence)

πρῶτον τοίνυν ἴσθι, ὅτι εἰμαρμένη διχῶς καὶ λέγεται καὶ νοεῖται: ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν ἐνέργεια ἡ δ' οὐσία

*of a wakeful one* <...> There is some text missing, indicated by <...>, for after ἄϋπνος ἀπὸ ἄϋπνου the MSS have κρατεῖται [mastered/ruled by - cf. 4 Maccabees 2.9 ἢ ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου κρατεῖται διὰ τὸν λογισμὸν]. Although some suggestions have been made as to this missing text (such as "ruled by love and sleep" [ἔρωτος καὶ ὕπνου] - they are purely conjectural.

## 16.

<...> *my perceivoration.* Again, the suggestions for the missing text are purely conjectural.

*a mysterium esoteric.* For κεκρυμμένον μυστήριον. The term mysterium - a truth or insight or knowledge about some-thing, which is considered religious and/or metaphysical ('hermetic') and which is unknown/unrevealed to or as yet undiscovered by others, and hence 'mysterious' to them - expresses the meaning of the Greek here (as the word mystery by itself does not). Likewise in respect of esoteric - kept concealed or which is concealed/hidden to most or which is revealed to an individual by someone who already 'knows' what the mysterium in question is.

Hence why I write *a* mysterium here rather than *the* mysterium, and why "a mysterium, esoteric even to this day", is better than the rather bland "the mystery kept hidden until this very day".

*possessed the physis of the harmonious seven.* The seven viziers. A more literal translation would be 'possessed the physis of the [harmonious] structure of the seven'. Here, physis could mean 'character' (of a person) or some-thing more archetypal/elemental of which such character or personal characteristics are an outward manifestation.

*seven male-and-female humans.* These seven humans, born from Physis, are thus akin to both theos and the child of theos who also have a male (a masculous) and a female (a muliebral) aspect. That is, although mortal - having been brought forth by and from divinities - these humans are, in their very being, both male and female and thus, in their creation, dissimilar to ordinary mortals, for reasons which Pœmandres goes on to explain.

In addition, these seven mortals have the same or a similar physis as the 'harmonious seven'.

*ætherean.* For μεταρσίους. Ætherean is the metaphorical sense of μεταρσίους here, not 'exalted' or 'sublime' (which imply some sort of human admiration or some sort of religious attitude/apprehension). For the sense is similar to what Dio Chrysostom wrote, in his tract on leadership, about the sons of Boreas, who - semi-divine - have the attributes of their father and who are depicted in and belonging to their natural realm:

ὁποίους τοὺς Βορεάδας ἐνεθυμήθησάν τε καὶ ἔγραψαν οἱ γραφεῖς  
ἐλαφροῦς τε καὶ μεταρσίους ταῖς τοῦ πατρὸς αὐραῖς συνθέοντας  
[Orations, 4.1]

Ætherean is used in the poetic sense - that is, 'supernal', meaning of the harmonious - the heavenly - cosmic order and also refined: of the essence, οὐσία, and thus not just ὕλη, substance (qv. section 10).

*Primary explanation.* πρῶτον λόγον [cf. Plato, *Republic*, Book 3 [395b] εἰ ἄρα τὸν πρῶτον λόγον διασώσομεν]. An explanation of our origins, as mortals, and thus of the 'first principle' that forms the basis of the 'hermetic weltanschauung'.

17.

*those seven came into being in this way.* It is interesting to compare 'these seven' with 'the 'nine' and the seven spheres (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, Moon) of the *Somnium Scipionis* described by Cicero:

Novem tibi orbibus vel potius globis conexa sunt omnia, quorum unus est caelestis, extimus, qui reliquos omnes complectitur, summus ipse deus arcens et continens ceteros; in quo sunt infixi illi, qui volvuntur, stellarum cursus sempiterni. Cui subiecti sunt septem, qui versantur retro contrario motu atque caelum. Ex quibus summum globum possidet illa, quam in terris Saturniam nominant. Deinde est hominum generi prosperus et salutaris ille fulgor, qui dicitur Iovis; tum rutilus horribilisque terris, quem Martium dicitis; deinde subter mediam fere regionem Sol obtinet, dux et princeps et moderator luminum reliquorum, mens mundi et temperatio, tanta magnitudine, ut cuncta sua luce lustret et compleat. Hunc ut comites consequuntur Veneris alter, alter Mercurii cursus, in infimoque orbe Luna radiis solis accensa convertitur. Infra autem iam nihil est nisi mortale et caducum praeter animos munere deorum hominum generi datos; supra Lunam sunt aeterna omnia. Nam ea, quae est media et nona, Tellus, neque movetur et infima est, et in eam feruntur omnia nutu suo pondera. [*De Re Publica*, Book VI, 17]

Nine orbs - more correctly, spheres - connect the whole cosmic order, of which one - beyond the others but enfolding them - is where the uppermost deity dwells, enclosing and containing all. There - embedded - are the constant stars with their sempiternal movement, while below are seven spheres whose cyclicity is different, and one of which is the sphere given the name on Earth of Saturn [...]

*Muliebral.* For θηλυκή. The term muliebral derives from the classical Latin word *muliebris*, and is used here to refer to those positive traits, abilities, and qualities, that are conventionally and historically associated with women. Muliebral is more expressive - and more redolent of the meaning of the Greek - than 'feminine', especially given how the word 'feminine' is so often misused (sometimes in a pejorative way).



It should be noted that the older reading of θηλυκὴ γὰρ ὁ ἀήρ makes Air - not Earth - the muliebral one.

*Lustful.* For ὀχευτικόν. The sense is similar to ἐπιθυμία as used, for example, in Romans 14.13 - τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιῆσθε εἰς ἐπιθυμίας [make no intention regarding the flesh, to gratify its carnal desires]

*From Æther, the pneuma.* ἐκ δὲ αἰθέρος τὸ πνεῦμα ἔλαβε. It is best to transliterate αἰθήρ - as Æther - given that it, like Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and pneuma, is an elemental principle, or a type of (or a particular) being, or some-thing archetypal.

*cyclic until its completion.* μέχρι περιόδου τέλους. I follow the reading of the Turnebus MS, taking περίοδος to refer to a posited cyclic - periodic - cosmic order, of Aeons, which periodicity continues until its purpose is achieved/fulfilled/completed.

## 18.

*the connexions between all things.* Compare this unbinding of the cosmic bonds with the 'connexions' that make up the nine spheres in the Somnium Scipionis [qv. the quotation from Cicero, above].

*bringing into being portions that were masculous with the others muliebral.* ἐγένετο τὰ μὲν ἀρρενικὰ ἐν μέρει τὰ δὲ θηλυκὰ ὁμοίως. The meaning of ἀρρενικὰ and θηλυκὰ are not 'male' and 'female' but rather masculous (masculine) and muliebral (of or considered appropriate to women).

*propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning.* The same Greek words - ἀύξανεσθε and πληθύνεσθε - occur in LXX, Genesis 1.22: ἡύλόγησεν αὐτὰ ὁ θεὸς λέγων ἀύξανεσθε καὶ πληθύνεσθε ["Theos praised them, saying: propagate and spawn"; Tyndale - "God blessed them saying, grow and multiply"; KJV - "God blessed them saying, Be fruitful and multiply"].

*creations and artiselements.* κτίσματα καὶ δημιουργήματα. Although κτίσμα is generally translated here as 'creature' (as also for example in most translations of Revelation 5.13) I incline toward the view, given the context, that the more general sense of a 'creation' (or 'created thing') is meant - cf. Strabo, Geography, Book 16. 1 [ἧς ἐστὶ κτίσμα ἢ Βαβυλών] where what is described is a construct, a creation - a work constructed by or on behalf of someone. Here, what is described are the creations of theos.

In respect of 'artisements', see section 10.

*the perceiver.* ὁ ἔννοους.

*Eros as responsible for death.* τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα. The consensus is, and has been, that ἔρωτα here signifies 'carnal desire' - or something similar - so that it is assumed that what is meant is some sort of ascetic (or Gnostic or puritanical) statement about how sexual desire should be avoided or at the very least controlled. However, this seems rather at variance with the foregoing - regarding propagating and spawning - which inclines me to suggest that what is meant here is 'eros', not necessarily personified as the classical deity (ἡδ' Ἔρος ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ' ἀνθρώπων δάμναται ἐν στήθεσσι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν), although the comparison is interesting, but rather as an elemental or archetypal principle, akin to νοῦς and λόγος. Consider, for example, the following from *Daphnis and Chloe*, written by Longus around the same time as the *Corpus Hermeticum*: πάντως γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἔρωτα ἔφυγεν ἢ φεύξεται μέχρις ἂν κάλλος ἦ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ βλέπωσιν [Book 1, Proem, 4 - "no one can avoid or has ever been able to avoid Eros, while there is beauty and eyes which perceive"]. In modern terms, few - poetically, metaphorically, none - have avoided or could avoid, at some time in their life, the unconscious power of the anima/animus.

Eros - as some-thing similar to an archetypal principle, applicable to or of (existing in/part of) "all beings/creations/things" - might also go some way toward explaining the καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα that follows in the text (for example in the Turnebus MS) for which various emendations have been proposed, including omitting it altogether.

## 19.

*foreknowing, through wyrd.....coagulations.* The foreknowing of theos, which enabled theos through wyrd and the cosmic structure to 'found the generations'. The coagulations, the copulation, of beings (created things).

*self-knowledge.* ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν. A pedantic aside: here, as often elsewhere, I have gone against convention (grammatical and otherwise) by, where possible, choosing neutral personal pronouns, thus avoiding sentences such as "And he who has self-knowledge..." This sometimes results in using third person plural pronouns - such as 'their' and 'they' - as if they were personal pronouns, or using constructs such as "the one of self-knowledge" or "whoever has self-knowledge". In addition, it should be noted that the grammatical categorization of a word (male, female, gender neutral) is only a grammatical categorization and does not always reflect the nature of the

being that that word denotes or refers to.

*a particular benefit.* τὸ περιούσιον ἀγαθόν. Literally, 'the particular benefit' [an alternative, possibly better, translation would be 'the esoteric benefit']. What the text refers to is not some abstract 'good' but rather what is good for, what benefits, the person. Thus, self-knowledge can lead to a particular, a specific, benefit.

*perceptively.* αἰσθητῶς - cf. Strabo, *Geography*, Book 3, chapter 5.1, a description of a high tide; of the sea, due to the moon, begin to perceptively/visibly both rise and go far onto the shore - ἄρχεσθαι διοιδεῖν τὴν θάλατταν καὶ ἐπιβαίνειν τῆς γῆς αἰσθητῶς μέχρι μεσουρανήσεως.

**20.**

*to discover things.* That is, discover/apprehend for yourself, to reveal (dis-cover) the nature of things, and thus fully understand them; cf. section 3 ('apprehend the physis of beings') and section 6 ('then discover phaos and become familiar with it') and section 7 ('such I observed and discovered because of those words of Pœmandres').

*why death is expected for those who are in death.* διὰ τί ἄξιοί εἰσι τοῦ θανάτου οἱ ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ ὄντες. Somewhat obscure, given the phrase 'in death' and given that what follows - "because originally..." - does not really offer an explanation of it.

I take the meaning of ἀξιόω here to be 'expect' rather than 'worthy' given (i) what the English phrase 'they are worthy of death' (or 'they deserve death') implies, an implication - a moralizing attitude - that is not justified by either the immediate context or the rest of the text, and (ii) usages such as (a) νῦν παρ' ὑμῶν τὸ αὐτὸ ἀξιοῦμεν κομίζεσθαι ['we now expect to receive the same from you'; Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, Book 1, chapter 43] and (b) ὥστε οὐκ οἴκτου οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἄξιοί εἰσιν, ἀλλὰ τιμωρίας ['they are expected to be punished not pitied', Hyperides, *Orations Against Philippides*, 2.12]

*Nourishes.* ἀρδεύεται here is obviously metaphorical, as it literally means "is irrigated/watered" as in Diodorus Siculus when he describes India - τὰ πολλὰ δὲ τῆς χώρας ἀρδεύεται καὶ διὰ τοῦτο διττοὺς ἔχει τοὺς κατ' ἔτος καρπούς ['much of the land is irrigated which is why there are two yields a year'; *Bibliotheca Historica*, Book 2, 35.3]

**21.**

*progress within themselves.* εἰς αὐτὸν χωρεῖ. Literally, 'progress to (or

proceed/advance toward) him', with the usual assumption being that it is theos that is meant (hence, 'proceed toward theos'), with the alternative translation, of 'progress to themselves', ignored. However, given the immediate context - of a self-discovery - and given examples such as Mark 7.15 (εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτόν, entering *into* him) and given that (insofar as I understand it) the tractate concerns (i) self-knowing, (ii) a 'mysterium' that is esoteric, and (iii) a desire to know and to understand 'the physis of beings', rather than a religious 'progressing toward god' à la Thomas à Kempis, then I am inclined to favour the somewhat radical translation of 'within themselves'.

*the father of all beings.* ὁ πατήρ τῶν ὅλων. The word 'all' by itself does not really capture the sense of ὅλων here, which is 'all beings'. The phrase ὁ πατήρ τῶν ὅλων occurs in many other writings, some of which are Christian. For instance in the Τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰουστίνου πρὸς Τρύφωνα Ἰουδαίου Διάλογος [The Dialogue of Justinus with Trypho, a Jew] where it is said in the context of Christ being crucified, dying, and then being raised again by 'the father of all' for the benefit of all human beings - τὸν ἑαυτοῦ Χριστὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐκ παντὸς γένους ἀνθρώπων ὁ πατήρ τῶν ὅλων τὰς πάντων κατάρας ἀναδέξασθαι ἐβουλήθη (xcv, 2).

However, interestingly and relevant here, the phrase also occurs in the polemic by Irenaeus against the 'heresy of gnosticism' - the *Adversus Haereses* [ἔλεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπή της ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως] - written not long before the Pœmandres tractate:

μεταδοῦναί σοι θέλω τῆς ἐμῆς χάριτος ἐπειδὴ ὁ πατήρ τῶν ὅλων τὸν ἄγγελόν σου διαπαντὸς βλέπει πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ὁ δὲ τόπος τοῦ μεγέθους ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστὶ δι' ἡμᾶς ἐγκαταστῆσαι (Book I, Chapter 13, 3)

I desire to pass on to you my Charis because the father of all beings has observed that your angel is constantly before him

These are the words Irenaeus ascribes to a person called Marcus, 'the heretic'; words used by this person skilled in the trickery of sorcery (μαγικῆς κυβείας ἐμπειρότατον) to, apparently, entice men and wealthy women to be his followers. Irenaeus then goes on, in a passage also quoted by Eusebius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (4.11.5), to describe some of the rites - the 'disgusting initiation into the mysteries' - of these people, and which rites include a 'mystical marriage' (πνευματικὸν γάμον) as well as a doxology to 'the father and the mother', εἰς ὄνομα ἀγνώστου πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων εἰς ἀλήθειαν μητέρα τῶν πάντων, and which doxology, with its contrast between ὅλων (ascribed to the father) and πάντων (ascribed to the mother) may go

some way toward explaining the meaning of ὄλων as used here, in the Pœmandres tractate, given that μητέρα πάντων - as Γαία, Earth Mother - is the subject of, among other things, one of the Homeric hymns, Εἰς Γῆν Μητέρα Πάντων, where She is described as πρέσβιστος, the elder among beings, and the mother of the gods, θεῶν μήτηρ.

Thus, πατὴρ τῶν ὄλων as the father of all beings, and μητέρα τῶν πάντων as the mother of being, of all Life, both mortal and immortal.

22.

*respectful deeds*. ὀσίους. A difficult word to translate, given that most of the English alternatives - such as religious, pious, holy, devout, blessed, sinless, saintly, humble - have acquired, over centuries, particular religious meanings, often associated with Christianity or types of asceticism; meanings which, in my view, are not or may not be relevant here, and whose use would distort one's understanding of the text.

The correct meaning is someone who, aware of or sensitive to the difference between the numinous and un-numinous [regarding 'numinous', see the note on ἅγιος in section 5], seeks to avoid, in their behaviour, what might cause them to hubriatically 'overstep the limits' and thus unbalance them, so taking them away from that natural balance and that respect for the numinous, which they personally, by their (or a particular) way of living (personal, religious, spiritual, mystical, or otherwise) seek or desire to cultivate, or which (and importantly) is a natural part of their admirable (and often admired) character. For example:

ἐκεῖνός γε μὴν ὑμνῶν οὐποτ' ἔληγεν ὡς τοὺς θεοὺς οἶοιτο οὐδὲν ἧττον ὀσίους ἔργοις ἢ ἀγνοῖς ἱεροῖς ἠδεσθαι ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ὀπότε εὐτυχοίη οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ὑπερεφρόνει ἀλλὰ θεοῖς χάριν ἠδεὶ καὶ θαρρῶν πλείονα ἔθυεν ἢ ὀκνῶν ἠὔχετο εἴθιστο δὲ φοβούμενος μὲν ἰλαρὸς φαίνεσθαι εὐτυχῶν δὲ πρᾶος εἶναι [Xenophon, *Agésilas*, 11.2]

this person, whom I praise, never ceased to believe that the gods delight in respectful deeds just as much as in consecrated temples, and, when blessed with success, he was never prideful but rather gave thanks to the gods. He also made more offerings to them when he was confident than supplications when he felt hesitant, and, in appearance, it was his habit to be cheerful when doubtful and mild-mannered when successful.

For these reasons, I have translated not as one English word, but as the phrase 'respectful deeds'. See also the note on εὐσεβέω below.

*honourable*. ἀγαθός. The sense is not of being 'good' in some moralistic, sanctimonious, superior, way, but rather of being of noble character, as for example described in the Corpus Aristotelicum:

τῆς δὲ φρονήσεώς ἐστι τὸ βουλευσασθαι, τὸ κρῖναι τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ αἰρετὰ καὶ φευκτά, τὸ χρῆσθαι πᾶσι καλῶς τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἀγαθοῖς, τὸ ὁμιλῆσαι ὀρθῶς [*De Virtutibus et Vitiis Libellus* 1250a]

It is part of wisdom to accept advice, to distinguish the honourable, the dishonourable, and all that is, in life, acceptable or to be avoided; to fairly use all resources; to be genuine in company

*refined*. καθαροῖς. Literally it means 'physically clean', often in the sense of being in a state of ritual purification: qv. the inscription on one of the ancient tablets (totenpasse) found in Thurii - ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρὰ χθονίων βασίλεια (in arrivance, purified from the purified, mistress of the world below).

Since the English word 'pure' is unsuitable given its connotations - religious, sanctimonious, political, and otherwise - I have opted for the not altogether satisfactory 'refined'.

*compassionate*. ἐλεήμοσι. Those who undertake merciful, charitable, humane, deeds; qv. Luke 11.41 (πλήν τὰ ἐνόντα δότε ἐλεημοσύνην, καὶ ἰδοὺ πάντα καθαρὰ ὑμῖν ἐστιν), Acts 10:2, κτλ.

*aware of the numinous*. εὐσεβοῦσι. As with ὁσίοις, εὐσεβέω is a difficult word to translate, given that most of the English alternatives - such as reverent, pious - have acquired, over centuries, particular religious meanings, often associated with Christianity or types of asceticism. The correct sense is 'aware of the numinous', and thus imbued with that sense of duty, that sense of humility - or rather, an awareness of their human limitations - which makes them appreciate and respect the numinous in whatever form, way, or manner they appreciate, feel, intuit, apprehend, or understand, the numinous, be it in terms of the gods, the god, Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνημονές τ' Ἐρινύες, God, or whatever. It is this awareness which inclines a person toward 'respectful deeds' [qv. ὁσίοις, above].

*soon acquire knowledge of the whole.* εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι. Knowledge of 'the whole picture'; of what has been and is being discussed: perceiviation; the cosmic structure; the nature of humans; the seven viziers; and so on. The sense is not "gnosis of all things", which - in its hubris - is incompatible with the immediately proceeding mention of εὐσεβέω and ὁσίους.

*affectionately gracious toward.* There are two ways of interpreting τὸν πατέρα ἰλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς and what follows. (i) As if it is some kind of Christian eulogy by the faithful, with mention of "lovingly propitiating the father" and the "singing of hymns" to him; and (ii) in a rather more religiously neutral way with phrases such as ἰλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς and words such as ὕμνεῦσιν suggesting the more Hellenic "affectionately gracious" and "celebrating in song". I have chosen the latter, as it is, in my view, more in harmony with the rest of the text.

*the influencing impressions.* αἰσθήσεις. What is meant here is not simply 'the [bodily] senses' nor what is perceptible to or perceived by the senses, but rather those particular impressions, conveyed by the senses, which influence a person in a way which is disliked because they do or they can affect a person in a manner detrimental to their immortality. That is, not all 'feelings' nor all 'sensations' are meant but only those which impresses upon [cf. Cicero, *Academica*, 2.6, impressum effictumque] a person in a certain way and thus affect that person also in a certain way, as 'impressionable feelings' do:

αὐτὸς δὲ διὰ ποιημάτων φιλοσοφεῖ, καθάπερ Ἡσίοδος τε καὶ  
Ξενοφάνης καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς κριτήριον δὲ τὸν λόγον εἶπε: τάς τε  
αἰσθήσεις μὴ ἀκριβεῖς ὑπάρχειν φησὶ γοῦν [Diogenes Laertius,  
Parmenides, 9.3]

he himself, through the form of verse, presented his knowledge, as did Hesiod, Xenophanes and Empedocles, stating that it was a way of judging what was reasonable since impressionable feelings were not an accurate enough starting point

This is the type of 'impression' - the type of influence - meant by some alchemical texts, for example, in the *Compound of Alchymy*, by Ripley, contained in the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* ['the Body of the Spryte taketh impression' (ix. xi)] and also, some centuries later, by Hume in his *Treatise on Human Nature* ['those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name impressions' (I. i. 12)]. Cf. also Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451a - τοῦ δὲ μήκουσ ὄρος ὁ μὲν πρὸς τοὺς ἀγῶνας καὶ τὴν αἴσθησιν οὐ τῆς τέχνης ἐστίν - where what is meant is the 'impression' made upon an

audience, which thus influences them.

*the bad*. The usual translation of κακός here, as often elsewhere, is 'evil'. However, I regard such a translation as unhelpful, given that the English word 'evil' is (1) now often interpreted and understood in a moralistic, preconceived, way according to some theological dogma/criteria and/or according to some political/social doctrine, and (2) that it does not denote what the classical and the Hellenic term κακός does.

Classically understood κακός is what is bad in the sense of some-thing rotten or unhealthy, or – the opposite of κάλος – what is displeasing to see. κακός is also what is unlucky, a misfortune, and/or injurious, as for example in The Agamemnon

τὸ μὲν γυναιῖκα πρῶτον ἄρσενος δίχα  
ἦσθαι δόμοις ἔρημον ἔκπαγλον κακόν (vv. 862-3)

Primarily, for a lady to be separate from her mate -  
To remain unprotected by family – is a harsh misfortune

When applied to a person, the sense is of a 'rotten' person; someone with bad, harmful, physis; a bad - dishonourable, weak, cowardly - personal character; someone whose nature, for examples, inclines them toward doing harm and doing what is generally considered to be wrong.

This sense is still appropriate to Hellenic usage. For example, in respect of Romans 12.17 with its contrast of κακός and κάλος:

μηδενὶ κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόντες προνοούμενοι καλὰ ἐνώπιον  
πάντων ἀνθρώπων

Do not render what is bad with what is bad; rather, show concern for what all humans see is good

Similarly with the synonym σαπρός, as for example in Luke 6.43-5:

Οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν δένδρον καλὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν σαπρὸν, οὐδὲ πάλιν  
δένδρον σαπρὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλόν, ἕκαστον γὰρ δένδρον ἐκ  
τοῦ ἰδίου καρποῦ γινώσκεται· ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ  
θησαυροῦ τῆς καρδίας προφέρει τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς ἐκ τοῦ  
πονηροῦ προφέρει τὸ πονηρόν· ἐκ γὰρ περισσεύματος καρδίας  
λαλεῖ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ

For no healthy tree brings forth rotten fruit just as a rotten tree



cannot bring forth healthy fruit. For each tree is judged by its fruit. A good person from the store of good in their heart brings forth what is good, and a bad person from their bad store brings forth what is bad; for it is because of an overflowing heart that the mouth speaks.

**23.**

*hubriatic*. ἄσεβέσι; someone lacking in or who is arrogantly disdainful of σέβομαι, of what is regarded as honourable, revered, respected. Someone who is thus 'hubriatic'. It is the opposite of εὐσεβέω, that is, the opposite of someone who is aware of and respectful of the numinous.

*the avenging daemon*. τῷ τιμωρῷ δαίμον.

Τιμωρῷ is an epithet of the god Mars, mentioned by Cassius Dio Cocceianus in his *Historiae Romanae* when he recounts how Caligula, celebrating the murder of someone, sent three daggers to the temple of Mars the Avenger, in Rome, as offerings to the god - ξιφίδια τρία τῷ Ἄρει τῷ Τιμωρῷ ἔς [Book 59, chapter 22 v.7].

Correctly understood, a δαίμων (daemon) is neither a 'demon' nor one of the pantheon of major Greek gods - θεοί - but rather a lesser type of divinity who might be assigned by those gods to bring good fortune or misfortune to human beings and/or to watch over certain human beings and especially particular numinous (sacred) places.

*which tests them*. καὶ τοῦτον βασανίζει. The sense here is rather obscure, with some proposed emendations (for example, οὕτως, and τοῦτο for τοῦτον). I take the sense here of βασανίζω to be 'tested', as in being 'put to the test'; a sense in accord with what precedes and with what follows.

**24.**

*Anados*. ἄνοδος. A transliteration, as the word has specific meanings in ancient Greek 'mystery cults' and in Hellenic 'mysticism', one of which meanings is the ascent, or progress, or journey, of the initiate/individual toward their goal, however that goal/ascent/progress/journey is described and/or understood, and/or represented (symbolically, mythologically, or otherwise). Quite often, the journey - the 'way up' - is described as the one between the living and the dead (the next life) or as one from the chthonic (the underworld) to our mortal world; which journey sometimes involves a symbolic/mythological death and then a rebirth.

*the dissolution of the physical body allows that body to be transformed.* ἐν τῇ ἀναλύσει τοῦ σώματος τοῦ ὑλικοῦ παραδίδως αὐτὸ τὸ σῶμα εἰς ἀλλοίωσιν. Literally, 'in the dissolution of the material body it hands over that body to alteration'.

ethos. ἦθος. Here, ethos in the personal sense; the 'spirit' - the personality - of an individual: their traits, character, disposition, nature, temperament.

25.

*in the first realm.* The sphere of the Moon, the first of the seven planetary/alchemical/astrological spheres, realms, or emanations - the ἑβδομάς; hebdomad, septenary system - that, in respect of the journey (ἄνοδος) of the mortal toward immortality, form the basis of, are emanations of, the harmonious cosmic structure (qv. sections 9 and 14). On this journey, the mortal passes through each realm - sphere - in turn.

*which grows and which fades.* Cf. Sextus Empiricus - ταύτην δὲ ἦτοι ἀύξητικὴν ἢ μειωτικὴν [Adversus Mathematicos, IX, 393]

*arrogance of command.* Reading ὑπερηφανίαν not προφανίαν.

26.

*ogdoadic physis.* ὀγδοαδικὴν φύσιν. An interesting and important term, often overlooked and often misinterpreted. What is meant is not a realm - ζώνη - or sphere, similar to but 'beyond' the seven realms, but rather 'of what' the mortal has become, is reborn as, at the end of the journey: partaking in and being of 'the ogdoadic physis', and thus sharing the being/existence of those who have, or who have attained, that particular type of being/existence /physis. The existence, that is, of an immortal beyond the seven emanations.

*with the others there, celebrates the father in song.* ὕμνεῖ σὺν τοῖς οὔσι τὸν πατέρα. Again - qv. section 22 - not 'hymns' in the Christian sense but rather celebrating in song/verse/chant; celebrating the father of this mortal, the parent of all mortals, and ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὄλων, the 'grandfather' of all beings (qv. section 21).

*force.* δύναμις. Cf. section 7. Those forces, those particular powers - or, more precisely, that type (or those types) of being(s) or existence - that are not only beyond the septenary system but beyond the ogdoadic physis of those mortals who have, because of their journey (ἄνοδος) through the septenary system, achieved immortality.

It is therefore easy to understand why some considered there were, or represented their understanding/insight by, 'nine' (seven plus two) fundamental cosmic emanations, or by nine realms or spheres [qv. the quote from Cicero in section 17] - the seven of the hebdomad, plus the one of the 'ogdoadic physis' mentioned here, plus the one (also mentioned here) of what is beyond even this 'ogdoadic physis'. However, as this text describes, there are seven realms or spheres - a seven-fold path to immortality, accessible to living mortals - and then two types of existence (not spheres) beyond these, accessible only after the mortals has journeyed along that path and then, having 'offered up' certain things along the way (their mortal ethos), 'handed over their body to its death'. Ontologically, therefore, the seven might somewhat simplistically be described as partaking of what is 'causal' (of what is mortal) and the two types of existence beyond the seven as partaking of - as being - 'acausal' (of what is immortal). Thus, Pœmandres goes on to say, the former mortal - now immortal - moves on (from this first type of 'acausal existence') to become these forces (beyond the ogdoadic physis) to thus finally 'unite with theos': αὐτοὶ εἰς δυνάμεις ἑαυτοῦς παραδιδόασιν καὶ δυνάμεις γενόμενοι ἐν θεῷ γίνονται.

## 26.

*become united with theos.* ἐν θεῷ γίνονται. Literally, '[they] become in theos', or '[they] enter into theos', although given what follows - θεωθῆναι - what is meant is 'become of/be united with theos', and thus 'become-of' what is no longer mortal but rather both immortal and 'of theos'.

*become of theos.* θεωθῆναι. This does not mean 'made divine/god', or 'achieve divinity' or 'become god/a god', or deification, but rather, having become immortal, to be (re)united with theos and thus, by such a 'becoming', re-present (become-of) in that new (acausal) existence the numinosity of theos, and which return and re-presentation is the real aim of our mortal lives and the function of λόγος, and of the λόγοι (such as pneumatic logos and the phaeomalous logos). That is, as explained in some of the rather neglected works of Maximus of Constantinople [qv. Migne Patrologiae Graeca, 90 and 91], Θεώσις in the sense of reunited with theos - ultimately because of ἀγάπη - without actually being or becoming 'a divinity' or 'God':

τῆς ἐπὶ τῷ θεωθῆναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον μυστικῆς ἐνεργείας λήψεται πέρασ κατὰ πάντα τρόπον χωρὶς μόνης δηλονότι τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν κατ' οὐσίαν ταυτότητος. *Quaestiones ad Thalassium de Scriptura Sacra*, XXII [Patrologiae Graeca, 90, c.0318]

the end of the opus mysterium of human beings becoming of Theos

can be in all ways except one, namely that of having the identity of His Essence

*the noble goal.* τὸ ἀγαθὸν τέλος. This might well be taken as an axiom of the 'hermetic' weltanschauung presented in this tractate. In respect of ἀγαθός as honourable/noble, see the note in section 22.

*those who seek to acquire knowledge.* Given the use here of the word γνῶσις, the sense could be interpreted, and has by others been interpreted, to mean 'those who seek to acquire/attain gnosis'.

*other mortals can - through theos - escape.* I take the sense of σώζω here be to 'escape', for the English word 'saved' now imposes, after nearly two thousand years of scriptural exegesis and preaching, various religious preconceptions on the text. Also, the usual translation of 'saved by god' is somewhat at variance with the hermetic/gnostic weltanschauung which suggests a progression - ἄνοδος - through the realms/spheres in order to attain immortality.

For the 'escape' is from the mortal to the immortal, and therefore to be 'saved', because of theos, so that (qv. section 21) they can "progress to return to Life"

27.

*joined with those forces.* The meaning here is somewhat obscure, although it possibly signifies that Pœmandres leaves the mortal realm and rejoins - returns to - his existence, beyond the hebdomad, where those forces/powers exist.

*an insight of great importance.* μεγίστην θέαν. An important 'insight into' the workings of the cosmos, immortality, and the nature of mortals, rather than 'a vision' or a 'revelation'.

*awareness of the numinous.* See the note on 'aware of the numinous'/εὐσεβέω in section 22.

*earth-bound mortals.* ἄνδρες γηγενεῖς. The literal meaning is 'earth-born mortals', which is rather obscure here, although what is meant is probably not the somewhat pejorative 'primordial/primitive' type [qv. ἔστι ἐν τῇ ἀκροπόλει ταύτῃ Ἐρεχθεὸς τοῦ γηγενέος λεγομένου εἶναι νηός, Herodotus, 8.55; and ἄλλοι δὲ γηγενεῖς καὶ χαλκᾶσπιδας, Strabo, 10.3] nor even the 'earthy/rural' type [qv. μὴ μισήσῃς ἐπίπονον ἐργασίαν καὶ γεωργίαν ὑπὸ

'Υψίστου ἐκτισμένην, LXX, Sirach 7.15] but rather the contrast, mentioned in section 15, between those 'deathful of body' and the 'deathlessness of the inner mortal'; with a similar contrast occurring in Plato [οὐδὲν γὰρ γηγενὲς Ὀλυμπίων ἐντιμότερον ἀλλ' ὁ περὶ ψυχῆς ἄλλως δοξάζων ἀγνοεῖ ὡς θαυμαστοῦ τούτου κτήματος ἀμελεῖ, Laws 727e]. Hence my suggestion of 'earth-bound', which is apposite considering what follows - οἱ μέθη καὶ ὕπνω ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδε δωκότες.

*sleepfulness.* To translate ὕπνος here as simply 'sleep' is not particularly helpful to the reader, as what seems to be implied is not normal everyday 'sleep' - a necessity for all humans - since such normal healthy sleep is a strange companion for 'intoxicating liquor'. Regarding ὕπνος, Jebb in his commentary on *Antigone* in respect of ὕπνος ὁ παντογῆρως (v.606) mentioned that "sleep, the renewer of vigour, could not be described as 'bringing old age to all'. Nor can the epithet be explained as 'enfeebling all', in the sense of 'subduing them'; nor, again, as 'attending on all, even to old age'," which led him to write that παντογῆρως was probably corrupt and to suggest, as some others had done, an emendation.

The fact that sleep personified, as Hypnos/Somnus, is the brother of Death [qv. ἔνθ' Ὑπνω ξύμβλητο κασιγνήτῳ Θανάτῳ, Iliad, 14.231] is also in favour of normal, healthy, sleep not being meant, as does what follows - θελγόμενοι ὕπνω ἀλόγῳ. Thus a possible alternative would be to interpret ὕπνος here somewhat metaphorically, either as a 'state of mind' (such as 'sleepwalking through life') or as something akin to soporation (an underused English word, from the Latin) with the meaning here of 'an inclination or a tendency to sleep excessively or unnecessarily; to be inactive, drowsy, sleepful; disconnected from reality'. Hence my tentative interpretation - 'sleepfulness'.

*unknowing of theos.* ἀγνωσίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ. Unknowing is a more suitable English word - given its meaning, usage (past and present) and given the context - than 'ignorance'

*stop your drunkenness.* παύσασθε δὲ κραιπαλῶντες. Literally, 'cease to be intoxicated'. It is interesting to compare this preaching to what Plutarch wrote about Demosthenes:

ὄδυρομένου δὲ τοῦ Δημοσθένους πρὸς αὐτόν ὅτι πάντων φιλοπονώτατος ὢν τῶν λεγόντων καὶ μικροῦ δέων καταναλωκέναι τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀκμὴν εἰς τοῦτο χάριν οὐκ ἔχει πρὸς τὸν δῆμον, ἀλλὰ κραιπαλῶντες ἄνθρωποι ναῦται καὶ ἀμαθεῖς ἀκούονται καὶ κατέχουσι τὸ βῆμα, παροραῖται δ' αὐτός [Demosthenes, 7.1]

To him, Demosthenes complained that although he was an industrious orator and had expended much bodily vigour in pursuing that duty, he was not favoured by the people who ignored him but listened to those who were intoxicated, the ignorant, and sailors, when they and their like held the floor.

**28.**

*change your ways.* μετανοήσατε. Not 'repent', which imposes a particular religious interpretation upon the text.

*have kinship with the unknowing ones.* συγκοινωνήσαντες τῇ ἀγνοίᾳ. Kinship in the sense of being 'kindred spirits', or 'fellow travellers'.

*dark phaos.* σκοτεινοῦ φωτός. An interesting phrase, lost in translation when φως is translated as 'light'. See the note on phaos in section 4.

**29.**

*threw themselves down at my feet.* ἑαυτοὺς πρὸ ποδῶν μου ῥίψαντε. A literal translation, although, given what follows, it seems unlikely that this is a metaphorical expression of their eagerness to learn. Indeed, this whole section seems rather at variance with the rest of the text - especially considering the following καθοδηγὸς ἐγενόμην τοῦ γένους - although perhaps 'the guide', having only just been informed of certain esoteric matters by Pœmandres, is here in this section somewhat obliquely revealing that he himself has yet (qv. section 25) to offer up "that eagerness which deceives; the arrogance of command; profane insolence."

*became a guide to those of my kind.* That is, not 'a guide to my race/mankind' but a guide to those who, seeking immortality, desire to undertake the journey through the seven spheres and thus are akin to - of the same type as - the guide.

*informing them of the logoi.* τοὺς λόγους διδάσκων. The logoi [plural of logos] are - qv. the note on θεωθῆναι in section 26 - the various apparent forms (or emanations) of the logos, and include the pneumatic logos, the phasomal logos, and the logos kyrios, previously mentioned in the text. They are often considered to be how the logos is sometimes manifest to us, as mortals who are yet to begin or are yet to progress far along the septenary path toward immortality. Furthermore, those who are on the journey - following the way to theos - are also logoi.

*logoi of sapientia.* σοφίας λόγους. Something more than just 'words of [the]

wisdom' is meant, especially as the English word 'wisdom' does not fully reflect the meaning (and the various shades) of σοφία, especially in a metaphysical (or esoteric) context, in this case of 'the opus mysterium'. The use here, in my translation, of the terms *logoi* and *sapientia* is intended - as with transliterations such as *phaos* - to cause the reader to pause and perhaps engender in them a certain curiosity as to what the terms may, or may not, mean, suggest, or imply, and to thus (and hopefully) convey something about the original text.

*celestial elixir*. ἀμβροσίου ὕδατος. Literally, 'ambrosial water'; the food/drink that, in mythology, confers and maintains the immortality of the gods and chosen mortals.

### 30.

*temperance of [the] psyche*. τῆς ψυχῆς νῆψις. Again transliterating ψυχῆς, since the English word 'soul' imposes particular - religious/philosophical, and/or modern - meanings on the text, whereas it may well be used here in its classical/Hellenic sense of 'spark' (or breath) of life; that is, as referring to that 'thing' (principle, or cause) which animates mortal beings making them 'alive', and which principle or cause was also personified as Psyche.

*genuine insight*. ἀληθινὴ ὄρασις. Cf. μεγίστην θέαν in section 27.

*expression of the logos*. It not clear how or in what form this manifestation of the logos occurs, although the context - of silence - might suggest that 'utterance' or 'speech' is not meant.

*the logos of authority*. τῆς ἀύθεντίας λόγου. A similar expression occurs in section 3 also in reference to Pœmandres - τῆς ἀύθεντίας νοῦς, the perceiviation of authority.

*this revealing*. I take the sense of ἀληθείας here to be not some abstract (undefined, probably contentious and thus possibly undefinable) 'truth' but rather as a revealing of what is 'genuine' as distinct from what is mere 'appearance'. Here, literally, 'the revealing' - of the nature of mortals, of the way to immortality, of logos and of theos.

### 31.

*Agios o theos, father of all beings*. ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων. For πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων, see the note in section 22.

I have given, as an intimation, a transliteration of the first part, as these are

doxologies, similar to the Kyrie eleison [Κύριε ἐλέησον], and much (if not all) of their numinous/sacred/mystical/esoteric quality and meaning are lost when they are translated into plain - or into archaic, KJV type - English. Although they are best read/recited in the original Greek, the Latin preserves much of the numinosity of these and other such doxologies. The Latin of the nine doxologies given here is:

Sanctus deus pater universorum.  
Sanctus deus, cuius consilium ad finem deducitur a propriis  
potentiis.  
Sanctus deus, qui cognosci vult et cognoscitur a suis.  
Sanctus es, qui verbo constituisti entia omnia.  
Sanctus es, cuius universa natura imago nata est.  
Sanctus es, quem natura non formavit.  
Sanctus es, qui omni potentia es fortior.  
Sanctus es, qui omni excellentia es maior.  
Sanctus es, qui omnes superas laudes.

The Greek text is:

ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων.  
ἅγιος ὁ θεός, οὗ ἡ βουλὴ τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων.  
ἅγιος ὁ θεός, ὃς γνωσθῆναι βούλεται καὶ γινώσκεται τοῖς ἰδίοις.  
ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ λόγῳ συστησάμενος τὰ ὄντα.  
ἅγιος εἶ, οὗ πᾶσα φύσις εἰκὼν ἔφυ.  
ἅγιος εἶ, ὃν ἡ φύσις οὐκ ἐμόρφωσεν.  
ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ πάσης δυνάμεως ἰσχυρότερος.  
ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ πάσης ὑπεροχῆς μείζων.  
ἅγιος εἶ, ὁ κρείττων τῶν ἐπαίνων.

ἅγιος ὁ approximates to 'Numinous is' [theos] - qv. the note on ἅγιος in section 5 - and ἅγιος εἶ to 'Numinous are' [you].

As to why there are nine doxologies, it may be (and probably is) just a coincidence, or it may reflect the 7+2 structure of the 7 causal aspects (the hebdomad) and the 2 'acausal' modes of being beyond them (qv. the note on δύναμις in section 26).

*his own arts.* I take the sense of δυνάμεων here to be not 'powers', forces (or something similar) but 'arts'; that is, those abilities, qualities, skills, and strengths - of the 'artisan-creator' - which are inherent in theos and express the very nature of theos. Abilities, qualities, skills, and strengths, which an artisan - with assistance and help and instruction from theos, the chief artisan - uses, for example, to 'fashion seven viziers' and the 'fine artisements of physis'. See sections 9-13 and the notes thereon.



*whose disposition is to be recognized.* γνωσθῆναι here with γινώσκειται is not exactly the straightforward '[who] wills/desires to be known' but rather the more subtle '[whose] disposition is to be recognized', and (i) disposition/inclination as an expression of the nature, the very being, of theos, (ii) to be recognized in the sense of to be perceived for who and what theos is, in essence, in very being. Those who so recognize theos - who thus understand and 'appreciate' theos and are cognizant of the type of Being theos is - are those who partake in some way, or who re-present or emanate, or who 'imitate' [qv. Thomas à Kempis, The Imitation of Christ] the nature of that Being; and which Being is therefore 'recognized/understood by those who are of his [type of] being,' although the Greek literally means "is recognized by his own".

*Agios es.* For ἅγιος εἶ. Combining the Latin with the Greek, for readability and expressiveness.

*form all being.* In both senses of the term 'form' - constitute, and form being into beings and which beings are or can be re-united with Being (theos) by logos.

*you who engender all physis as eikon.* The meaning and significance of this are often overlooked and often lost in translation. I have transliterated εἰκὼν as here it does not only mean what the English words 'image' or 'likeness' suggest or imply, but rather it is similar to what Maximus of Constantinople in his *Mystagogia* [Patrologiae Graeca, 91, c.0658] explains. Which is of we humans, and the cosmos, and Nature, and psyche, as eikons, although according to Maximus it is the Christian church itself (as manifest and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles and their successors and in scripture) which, being the eikon of God, enables we humans to recognize this, recognize God, be in communion with God, return to God, and thus find and fulfil the meaning of our being, our existence.

According to the hermetic weltanschauung, as outlined by Pöemandres here, all physis - the being, nature, character, of beings - their essence beyond the form/appearance their being is or assumes or is perceived as - re-presents (manifests, is an eikon of) theos. That is, the physis of beings can be considered not only as an emanation of theos but as re-presenting his Being, his essence. To recognize this, to recognize theos, to be in communion with theos, to return to theos, and thus become immortal, there is the way up (anados) through the seven spheres:

Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure,  
offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which

fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait.  
[Section 25]

*you whom the Physis did not morph.* Given the construction - ὄν ἡ φύσις - I have capitalized Physis here (see sections 14 and 17]. By 'morph' is meant what the Greek term (ἐμόρφωσεν) implies, which is 'shape or transform' into some-thing-else, to give some-thing the 'semblance' of theos . That is, theos was, is, and remains, theos; there is no-thing resembling theos.

*you who are mightier than all artifice.* The artifice - the works, expedients, skill, manifestations, artiselements, products, machinations, ingenuity, the 'domination', and the force - of others.

It is interesting to compare this might, the strength and power of theos, with what Epictetus writes about human strength in his *Discourses*:

οὔτε τύραννος κωλύσει με θέλοντα οὔτε δεσπότης οὔτε οἱ πολλοὶ τὸν ἕνα οὔθ' ὁ ἰσχυρότερος τὸν ἀσθενέστερον: τοῦτο γὰρ ἀκώλυτον δέδοται ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκάστω [4.5]

neither a tyrannos nor some Lord shall negate my intent; nor some crowd although I be just one; nor someone stronger although I be weaker, since such unhindrance is a gift, to everyone, from theos

*wordful.* The expressive term 'wordful' is more suitable here than 'speech', and also contrasts well with 'ineffable' and 'inexpressible'.

32.

*the knowledge.* For τῆς γνώσεως, although 'acquiring the knowledge' and 'the gnosis' are alternatives, so that with the latter it reads "I ask of you to grant that I am not foiled in the gnosis germane to our essence", with the phrase 'our essence' referring to the essence - οὐσία - of both mortals and theos.

favour. χάρις. A gift, favour, or kindness, here from theos [χάρις θεοῦ] and which type of gift is also mentioned in the New Testament (for example, Luke, 2.40). See also the quotation from Irenaeus in the note on *the father of all beings* in section 21.

*the unknowing.* In respect of 'unknowing' see the note in section 27.

*who are your children.* In respect of υἱός as the gender neutral 'child', rather than 'son', see the note on υἱός θεοῦ in section 6, and also the note on gender neutrality under ἀναγνωρίσας ἑαυτὸν in section 19.

*share in [your] numinosity.* For συναγιάζειν.

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## Appendix

### Some Examples Regarding Translation And Questions of Interpretation

#### Interpretation and The Question of Sin

I incline toward the view that in translations into English it is often best to avoid words that impose or seem to impose a meaning on an ancient text especially if the sense that an English word now imputes is the result of centuries of assumptions or opinions or influences and thus has acquired a modern meaning, or an interpretation [1], somewhat at variance with the culture, the milieu, of the time when the text that is being translated was written. Especially so in the matter of religious or spiritual texts where so many people rely or seem to rely on the translations, the interpretations, of others and where certain interpretations seem to have become fixed. [2]

Thus, it may be helpful if one can suggest, however controversial or iconoclastic they may seem in their time, reasoned alternatives for certain words important for a specific and a general understanding of a particular text, and helpful because such alternatives might enable a new appreciation of such a text, as if for instance one is reading it for the first time with the joy of discovery.

For example, one of the prevalent English words used in translations of the New Testament, and one of the words now commonly associated with revealed religions such as Christianity and Islam, is sin. A word which now imputes and for centuries has imputed a particular and at times somewhat strident if not harsh moral attitude, with sinners starkly contrasted with the righteous and the saved, and with sin, what is evil, what is perverse, to be shunned and shudderingly avoided.

One of the oldest usages of the word sin - so far discovered - is in the c. 880 CE translation of the c. 525 CE text *Consolatio Philosophiae*, a translation attributed to King Ælfred. Here, the Old English spelling of syn is used:

Ʒæt is swiðe dyslic & swiðe micel syn Ʒæt mon Ʒæs wenan scyle  
be Gode

The context of the original Latin of Boethius [3] is cogitare, in relation to a dialogue about goodness and God, so that the sense of the Latin is that it is incorrect - an error, wrong - to postulate/claim/believe certain things about God. There is thus here, in Boethius, as in early English texts such as Beowulf [4], the sense of doing what was wrong, of committing an error, of making a mistake, of being at fault; at most of overstepping the bounds, of transgressing limits imposed by others, and thus being 'guilty' of such an infraction, a sense which the suggested etymology of the word syn implies: from the Latin sons, sontis.

Thus, this early usage of the English word syn seems to impart a sense somewhat different from what we now associate with the word sin, which is why in my translation of John 8.7 I eschew that much overused and now often pejorative word in order to try and convey something of the numinous original:

So, as they continued to ask [for an answer] he straightened himself, saying to them: Let he who has never made a mistake [ Αναμαρτητος ] throw the first stone at her.

ὥς δὲ ἐπέμενον ἐρωτῶντες αὐτόν, ἀνέκυψεν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ὁ ἀναμάρτητος ὑμῶν πρῶτος ἐπ' αὐτὴν βαλέτω λίθον.

Jesus here is not, in my view, sermonizing about sin, as a puritan preacher might, and as if he is morally superior to and has judged the sinners. Instead, he is rather gently and as a human pointing out an obvious truth about our human nature; explaining, in v.11, that he has not judged her conduct:

ἡ δὲ εἶπεν· οὐδεὶς, κύριε. εἶπεν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· οὐδὲ ἐγὼ σε κατακρίνω· πορεύου, ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μηκέτι ἁμάρτανε

[And] she answered, No one, my Lord. Whereupon Jesus replied Neither do I judge [κατακρίνω] you, therefore go, and avoid errors such as those. [5]

Such a translation avoids the rather contradictory nature of most other translations which have Jesus clearly stating that he also does not judge her but then have him go on to say that she should 'sin no more' with the obvious implication that he has indeed judged her in that in his judgement she had indeed sinned before.

Understood and appreciated thus, sans the now somewhat culturally-biased word sin, these passages from the gospel according to John - together with passages such as Luke 19.10 and Romans 13.10 [6] - perhaps usefully

summarize the evangel of Jesus of Nazareth; the (in my view) rather human message of avoiding judging others because we ourselves are prone to error; the message of love, and the message of redemption (forgiveness) for those who in the past have made mistakes but who have thereafter tried to avoid making such mistakes again, those hitherto perhaps damaged or lost.

In respect of ἀμαρτάνω [7] consider, for example, Matthew 18.21:

Τότε προσελθὼν ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν [αὐτῷ] Κύριε, ποσάκις ἀμαρτήσῃ εἰς ἐμὲ ὁ ἀδελφός μου καὶ ἀφήσω αὐτῷ; ἕως ἑπτάκις

Peter then approached [προσέρχομαι] him saying My Lord, how often [ποσάκις] may my brother fail [ἀμαρτάνω] me and be ignored [ἀφίημι]? Up to seven times?

Which is somewhat different from the usual "how many times shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him."

### **Translation and Al-Quran**

The problem of sometimes projecting modern interpretations onto ancient texts by the injudicious use, in a translation, of a particular English word is especially relevant in the matter of the Quran, for it seems to be increasingly common for someone reliant on translations - on the interpretations of meaning given by others - to misunderstand the text of the Quran and then, from that misunderstanding, form a somewhat misconceived opinion about the Quran in particular and Islam in general.

For example, an ayah [verse] often (mis)quoted is Ayah 151 of Surah Al 'Imran, which is usually interpreted as "Soon shall we cast terror into the hearts of the unbelievers."

However, the word 'terror' is an inappropriate interpretation for several reasons. The Arabic of Ayah 151 of Surah Al 'Imran is:

سَنُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ يَمَا أَشْرَكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ وَيَسْ مَثْوَى الظَّالِمِينَ

[Transliteration: sanulqi fee qulubi allazeena kafaroo l-ruba bima ashraaku bil-lahi ma lam yunazzil bihi sultanam wamawhumu l-naru wabisa mathwa l-zalimeena ]

Does الرُّعْبُ imply 'terror' as the aforementioned interpretation suggests, along with all that the modern English word terror now implies, as in the difficult to define term terrorism? No, it does not; rather, the Arabic implies *the fear/the dread* and 'the astonishment/awe' - that is, that human feeling inspired by apprehending or experiencing some-thing supernaturally or extraordinarily powerful and numinous; for example, an Ayah (Sign) of Allah, Al-Khaliq, Al-Azim, Al-Jalil. The kind of fear/trembling/awe/astonishment felt, for instance and importantly, by the Apostles when, as recounted in Luke 24.37, they witnessed Jesus alive after the crucifixion.

That is, I suggest that what is referred to in Ayah 151 of Surah Al 'Imran - as in the other four Ayat where الرُّعْبُ / رُعْبًا occur - is similar to the 'suffusion with fear' and the 'being scared' that occurs and has occurred, as recounted in both Christian scripture and the Quran, when a mortal is (a) confronted by God/Allah or some-thing divine/numinous/awe-inspiring, and/or (b) has such fear, and such a being scared, thrust into their hearts by God/Allah, as a Sign, a warning, or as mention of their fate.

In respect of Luke 24.37, for instance, the Greek text is:

πτοηθέντες δὲ καὶ ἔμφοβοι γενόμενοι ἐδόκουν πνεῦμα θεωρεῖν

The term ἔμφοβος means 'suffused with/by phobos' - held/gripped by fear; timorous - and occurs in Sirach 19.24 and Luke 24.5, the latter of which is very interesting: ἐμόφρων δὲ γενομένων αὐτῶν καὶ κλινουσῶν τὰ πρόσωπα εἰς τὴν γῆν εἶπαν πρὸς αὐτάς τί ζητεῖτε τὸν ζῶντα μετὰ τῶν νεκρῶν. That is, suffused with phobos, they assumed a posture of submission/reverence /respect by bowing their heads; in effect prostrating themselves in the presence of some-thing divine/numinous/awe-inspiring. Since πνεῦμα - pneuma - here implies apparition or ghost, and πτοηθεντες suggests they were 'scared' (cf. Odyssey 22.298 - τῶν δὲ φρένες ἐπτοίγηεν) then Luke 24.37 could be translated as "But they, suffused with fear and scared, felt that they saw an apparition." [8]

My, admittedly fallible, view now - after some years of reflexion and study - is that, in an English interpretation of the meaning of a work as revered, and misunderstood, as the Quran, English words in common usage must be carefully chosen, with many common words avoided, and that it would sometimes be better to choose an unusual or even archaic word in order to try and convey something of the sense of the Arabic. Thus, with a careful interpretation common misunderstandings of the text - by those unversed in Arabic - can possibly be avoided, especially if - as might be the case with unusual words - the reader has to pause to consider the meaning

or make the effort to find the meaning, if only in a glossary appended to the interpretation. A pause and/or an effort that is suited to reading a work revered by millions of people around the world.

In the matter of Ayah 151 of Surah Al 'Imran, a possible interpretation of meaning therefore is:

Into the hearts of they who disbelieve We shall hurl redurre  
because they, without any authority revealed about such things,  
associate others with Allah; and for their home: The Fire, that  
harrowing resting place of the unjust.

Here, I have used the unusual English word redurre, with a meaning of 'awe combined with a trembling fear'. A word suggested by its occurrence in religious works by Richard Rolle and John Gower, and also by texts such as Morte Arthure [9] and which word therefore places this Ayah from the Quran into the correct context, which is that of a religious revelation, a spiritual message, comparable to that of Christianity, and of the particular ontology that Islam offers as answers to questions concerning the meaning and the purpose of our mortal lives; of how that purpose may be attained; and thus of what wisdom is. Answers which have nothing whatsoever to do with 'terrorism', or even with 'terror' as that word is now commonly understood.

### **The Art of Translation, and A Question About Time**

One question of possibly projecting modern interpretations onto ancient texts by the injudicious use of a particular English word, occurred to me some twenty years ago during my translation of the Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles, and concerned the Greek word χρόνος. This is almost always translated as 'time', a word we now associate with a regular linearity - of past-present-future - measured in terms of the minutes, hours, and fixed days, of a reliable timepiece such as a watch or clock.

In the classical world of Homer and Sophocles, this type of reliable, linear, regularity was almost unknown, with χρόνος thus sometimes denoting some ill-defined period - long or short - and with the passing of a year, for example, often determined by the changes of the seasons, and which seasons themselves were marked in their arrival by the appearance of certain constellations in the night sky, something beautifully expressed by Aeschylus at the beginning of the Agamemnon:

θεοὺς μὲν αἰτῶ τῶνδ' ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων  
φρουρᾶς ἐτείας μῆκος, ἦν κοιμώμενος



στέγαις Ἀτρειδῶν ἄγκαθεν, κυνὸς δίκην,  
ἄστρον κάτοιδα νυκτέρων ὀμήγυριν,  
καὶ τοὺς φέροντας χειῖμα καὶ θέρος βροτοῖς  
λαμπροὺς δυνάστας, ἐμπρέποντας αἰθέρι  
ἀστέρας, ὅταν φθίνωσιν, ἀντολάς τε τῶν.  
καὶ νῦν φυλάσσω λαμπάδος τό σύμβολον,  
ἀύγην πυρὸς φέρουσαν ἐκ Τροίας φάτιν  
ἀλώσιμόν τε βάξιιν: ὧδε γὰρ κρατεῖ  
γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον ἐλπίζον κέαρ.

Again I have asked the gods to deliver me from this toil,  
This vigil a year in length, where I repose  
On Atreidae's roof on my arms, as is the custom with dogs  
Looking toward the nightly assembly of constellations  
And they who bring to mortals the storm-season and the summer:  
Those radiant sovereigns, distinguished in the heavens  
As stars when they come forth or pass away.  
And still I keep watch for the sign of the beacon,  
The light of the fire which will bring report of Troy,  
Announcing it is captured.  
For such is the command  
And expectation of that woman with a man's resolve.

However, in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Sophocles has the memorable phrase καὶ μ' ἤμαρ ἤδη ξυμμετρούμενον χρόνω, indicating something not only about χρόνος but also about the classical world and (importantly) about the character of Oedipus. The phrase is therefore worth quoting in context:

ὦ παῖδες οἰκτροί, γνωτὰ κοῦκ ἄγνωτά μοι  
προσῆλθεθ' ἰμείροντες: εὖ γὰρ οἶδ' ὅτι  
νοσεῖτε πάντες, καὶ νοσοῦντες, ὡς ἐγὼ  
οὐκ ἔστιν ὑμῶν ὅστις ἐξ ἴσου νοσεῖ.  
τὸ μὲν γὰρ ὑμῶν ἄλγος εἰς ἓν ἔρχεται  
μόνον καθ' αὐτὸν κούδέν' ἄλλον, ἢ δ' ἐμὴ  
ψυχὴ πόλιν τε κάμει καὶ σ' ὀμοῦ στένει.  
ὥστ' οὐχ ὑπνω γ' εὐδοντά μ' ἐξεγείρετε,  
ἀλλ' ἴστε πολλὰ μὲν με δακρύσαντα δῆ,  
πολλὰς δ' ὁδοὺς ἐλθόντα φροντίδος πλάνους:  
ἦν δ' εὖ σκοπῶν ἠῦρισκον ἴασιιν μόνην,  
ταύτην ἔπραξα: παῖδα γὰρ Μενοικέως  
Κρέοντ', ἐμαυτοῦ γαμβρόν, ἐς τὰ Πυθικὰ  
ἔπεμψα Φοίβου δώμαθ', ὡς πύθοιθ' ὅ τι

δρῶν ἢ τί φωνῶν τήνδε ῥυσαίμην πόλιιν.  
καί μ' ἦμαρ ἤδη ξυμμετρούμενον χρόνω 73  
λυπεῖ τί πράσσει: τοῦ γὰρ εἰκότος πέρα  
ἄπεστι πλείω τοῦ καθήκοντος χρόνου.  
ὅταν δ' ἴκηται, τηνικαῦτ' ἐγὼ κακὸς  
μὴ δρῶν ἂν εἶην πάνθ' ὅσ' ἂν δηλοῖ θεός.

You, my children, who lament - I know, for I am not without knowledge,  
Of the desire which brings you here. For well do I see  
All your sufferings - and though you suffer, it is I  
And not one of you that suffers the most.  
For your pain comes to each of you  
By itself, with nothing else, while my psyche  
Mourns for myself, for you and the clan.  
You have not awakened me from a resting sleep  
For indeed you should know of my many tears  
And the many paths of reflection I have wandered upon and tried.  
And, as I pondered, I found one cure  
Which I therefore took. The son of Menoeceus,  
Creon - he who is my kin by marriage - I have sent to that Pythian dwelling  
Of Phoebus to learn how I  
By word or deed can give deliverance to the clan.  
But I have already measured the duration  
And am concerned: for where is he? He is longer than expected  
For his absence is, in duration, greater than is necessary.  
Yet when he does arrive, it would dishonourable  
For me not to act upon all that the gods makes clear.

vv.58-77

To translate χρόνος in v.73 abstractly as 'time' is therefore to overlook not only the context - of a world where the seasons were often determined by observation of the night sky - but also the significance of what Oedipus says. For he has, out of his urgent concern for both his people and himself - out of fear of the wrake of the gods - gone to the trouble to determine how long Creon's journey should take and to measure/calculate/record, or to have someone do this for him, precisely how long Creon has been away.

A pedantic point, possibly; but one which perhaps illustrates the engaging art of translation and the possibilities of interpretation, and of misinterpretation, that exist.

## Footnotes

[1] By *interpretation* here is meant (i) commentaries (academic, theological, and otherwise); (ii) explanations (critical, and otherwise); (iii) translations; and - most importantly - (iv) a seeking of the meaning of (a) both the text (in whole and in parts) and (b) of the words and terms used.

[2] One misused English word is 'terror', often used to translate الرَّعْبَ in Ayah 151 of Surah Al 'Imran. See below: *Translation and Al-Quran*.

[3] Quare quod a summo bono diversum est sui natura, id summum bonum non est; quod nefas est de eo cogitare, quo nihil constat esse praestantius. *Consolatio Philosophiae, Liber Tertius, pr. x*

[4] Beowulf, 2470f, where the spelling *synn* is used:

eaferum laefde, swa deð eadig mon,  
lond ond leodbyrig, þa he of life gewat.  
þa wæs synn ond sacu Sweona ond Geata  
ofer wid wæter, wroht gemæne,  
herenið hearda, syððan Hreðel swealt

[5] The conventional interpretation of ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μηκέτι ἀμάρτανε is "from now on sin no more".

[6] Luke 19.10:

ἦλθεν γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζητῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός

The arrivance [ἔρχομαι] of the Son of Man was to seek and to save what was lost

However, a more interesting interpretation is:

The arrivance of the Son of Man was to seek and to repair [σῶζω]

what had been damaged [ἀπόλλυμι]

and which interpretation is suggested by (i) the sense of σώζω: keep safe, preserve, maintain - whence repair, and (ii) the sense of ἀπόλλυμι: destroy, ruin, kill, demolish, and - metaphorically - damaged, lost, and die.

Romans 13.10:

ἡ ἀγάπη τῷ πλησίον κακὸν οὐκ ἐργάζεται· πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη

love brings no harm to the neighbour; love is the completion of the law

[7] ἀμαρτάνω classically implies a failure, mistake, an error, deprivation, loss, to miss/fail. γν (i) Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus:

ὅταν ταχύς τις οὐπιβουλεύων λάθρα  
χωρῆ, ταχὺν δεῖ κάμει βουλεύειν πάλιν:  
εἰ δ' ἡσυχάζων προσμενῶ, τὰ τοῦδε μὲν  
πεπραγμέν' ἔσται, τὰ μὰ δ' ἡμαρτημένα 621

But when there is a plot against me which is swiftly and furtively  
Moving forward, then I must be swift in opposing that plot  
Since if I remain at rest, then indeed  
What is about to be done, will be - because of my mistake.

and (ii) Aeschylus, Agamemnon:

ὀφλῶν γὰρ ἀρπαγῆς τε καὶ κλοπῆς δίκην  
τοῦ ῥυσίου θ' ἡμαρτε καὶ πανώλεθρον 535  
αὐτόχθονον πατρῶον ἔθρισεν δόμον.

The penalty for the pillage and theft was fair -  
He lost his booty and completely ruined  
His own land with his father's family cut down

[8] On a pedantic note, I understand δοκέω as meaning here not the conventional unemotional 'suppose/thought' nor (worse) 'opinion' but rather as 'felt' in the sense of experiencing (as they do) an intense and personal feeling. Hence my rendering that they "felt that they saw..."

[9] John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* [written 1390 ce]

That thogh thi love more drawe  
And peise in the balance more,  
Thou miht noght axe ayein therfore  
Of duete, bot al of grace.  
For love is lord in every place,  
Ther mai no lawe him justefie  
Be reddour ne be compaignie,  
That he ne wole after his wille  
Whom that him liketh spede or spille

(Book 5, v. 4558) *The Complete Works of John Gower*.  
Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899-1902

Morte Arthure [written c. 1400 ce]

That thow ne schall rowte ne ryste vndyr the heuene ryche, þofe  
thow for reddour of Rome ryne to þe erthe [108-109]

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