

Alchemy Readings

Physika and Mystika of Pseudo-Demokritos

A work in 4 books (gold, silver, gems, and purple) was written, possibly by Bolos of Mendes (–180 ± 30), which was either advertised as a work by Demokritos or at least is often so cited. The work is based on ancient artisanal formulas explained through his saying “Nature rejoices in nature, ...”, which was perhaps derived from Aristotle’s “the qualities supersede one another” (fragment quoted by Zosimos 12.4[p.150B.]), and which recurs in the astrologer Petosiris (fr.28-R.: Firmicus Maternus 4.16). He (see also the biology chapter).

3. [the key, revealed in a vision:] “Nature delights in nature [*sumpatheia*], and nature conquers nature [*antipatheia*], and nature masters nature.” (We were entirely amazed that in one brief sentence the whole work was summarized.) I have come to Egypt bringing the *Physika*, so that you may disregard much quibbling and confused [literally: ‘poured-together’] matter.

4. [making gold] Take quicksilver and fix it on the metal of Magnesia [one of various lead alloys, see Zosimos 28.5(p.195B.)] or on Italian antimony or on unfired sulfur or on *aphroselēnon* [a copper-silver alloy named from its metals’ gods: Zosimos 6.7(p.123B.)] or cooked *titanos* [gypsum or lime] or Melian alum or arsenic, or whatever you prefer. Project this white ‘earth’ [because no longer ‘wet’ and metallic] on copper and you’ll have ‘shadowless’ copper [brilliant and untarnished]. Add yellow silver [probably electrum] and you’ll have gold on gold and it will be metallized gold-glue [usually malachite]. Yellow arsenic [orpiment] does the same, and prepared realgar, and completely everted cinnabar. But only quicksilver makes copper shadowless. For nature conquers nature.

...

1. [originally from book 4, now the opening] To make a pound of purple: two obols of iron slag in 7 drachmas of urine [ratio is 1:21], place on a fire until it boils. Take the decoction from the fire and pour into a vase (pour the purple in first and then pour the decoction onto the purple) and let it be steeped a day-and-night. Then take 4 pounds of sea-lichen [orchil, *Rytiphloea tinctoria*; compare Theophrastos, *Plant Researches* 4.6.5] and pour on water so that it’s four *daktuls* [about 7.5 cm] above the sea-lichen; let it sit till it plumps, and strain it and heat the strainings, set out the wool and pour it on. Squeeze the loose parts so that the wash reaches the roots, and leave it for two day-and-nights. Next take it and dry it in the shade [to prevent sun-bleaching], and pour off the wash. Then put into the same wash two pounds of sea-lichen and add water to the wash so that it has the first ratio. And leave it thus until the lichen plumps. Then filter and add the wool as before, and do it for one day-and-night. Then take and rinse off in urine and dry in the shade.

*(Berthelot [1888/1967] 41-44)

(unknown work) [cited as ‘Demokritos’ in ‘Zosimos’; compare Theophrastos, *Stones* 60]

Who does not know that the vapor of cinnabar is quicksilver, of which it is composed? So that if one grinds cinnabar in natron-oil [sodium carbonate in oil], thoroughly mixing and sealing it in a double-boiler, setting it upon an uninterrupted fire, then all the vapor will be captured fused onto metals. [Dioskourides 1.68.7 describes sublimation of frankincense; 5.95.1 distillation of mercury]

*(Berthelot [1888/1967] 123)

Maria the Jewess worked in the first century BCE, and her writings survive only in extracts in Zosimos and later writers (Patai 1982). She is credited with the invention of the *tribikos* ('three-jar') still and the method of producing in a *kêrotakis* (encaustic-painters' wax-softener used as reflux-condenser) the golden mercury-copper amalgam (13 % mercury); the 'bain-marie' (double-boiler) is named for her. She made extensive use of sulfur ('divine': *theios*) water, and credits god with her inspiration.

(unknown work)

(p.171B.) [theory] The sulfurous [*theiodês*] is mastered by the sulfurous – Nature delights and conquers and dominates nature. Just as a human is composed of elements, so also is copper; and just as a human is composed of liquids and solids and *pneuma*, so also is copper. (*Pneuma* is a cloud, as Apollo says in his oracles: "and *pneuma* darker, wet, unmixed.")

(p.182B.) Copper is cooked with sulfur, reheated with natron-oil, and cleaned off; and repeating these steps many times it becomes fine shadowless gold. And god says this: "Let everyone know by experience that heating the copper with sulfur does nothing; but if you heat the sulfur alone it not only makes copper shadowless, but also turns it toward gold." God granted me this, to know that copper is first heated with sulfur, then the metal of Magnesia is; and the vapor streams forth until the sulfurous escapes with the shadow, and it becomes shadowless gold. [sulfur purifies in *Iliad* 14.228 and *Odyssey* 22.481]

(pp.192-3B.) [*molubdochalk*, leaded-copper, as quality-less metal] Without black lead the Magnesian metal which we have completed and perfected does not exist. ... You will find black lead: take this, I say, after mixing it with quicksilver. ... *Molubdochalk* is 'cinnabar' or 'lead' or 'annual stone' ... Which you are going to immerse and project onto it the limit of yellow realgar, so that it will no longer potentially but actually be purified gold.

(p.198B.) If our lead is black, it has become that (for ordinary lead is black from the start). How did it become that? If you do not demetallize metals and do not metallize the unmetals and make the two one, nothing expected happens. And if all metals are not attenuated in the fire and the pneumatized vapor is not sublimed, nothing will be sublimed to the limit. ... I don't mean with lead simply, but with our lead. Here's how they prepare the black lead, for it's cooked with ordinary lead, and ordinary lead is black from the start, but ours becomes black not having been so at first.

(p.146B.) [*the kêrotakis*] Take sulfur-water and a little gum and put them into hot ashes, and thus the sulfur-water is fixed. ... In the preparation of gold-film ['flower-of-gold', meaning a surface coating] let the sulfur-water and a little gum be placed on the platform of the *kêrotakis* so that the gold-film is fixed by them; and heat this a little while over a dung-fire. One part 'our copper', one part gold, make a twice-smelted plate and set it upon the suspended sulfur-water and let it cook for 3 day-and-nights until done.

(p.236B.) [*the tribikos*] Make three tubes from beaten copper with a small flat end a little thicker than a pastry-pan, in length $1\frac{1}{2}$ cubits [ca. 65 cm]. So make such tubes, and make another having a width of about a palm [ca. 7.5 cm] with an opening fitted to a copper vessel. And let the three tubes have an opening fitted as a nail into the neck of a small jar; one the 'inverse' [thumb] tube, so that the other two 'index' [literally: 'licking-finger'] tubes on the sides are fitted to the two hands. And about the base of the copper vessel the three holes are fitted to the three tubes and once fitted let them be soldered, receiving the *pneuma* from above. Set the copper vessel above the pottery dish holding the sulfur, lute the joints all around with bread dough [or 'bear fat?'], and affix to the ends of the tubes large glass jars, thick enough that they won't break from the heat of the water entering their insides.

‘Isis’ writes to her son ‘Horus’ (probably in the first century CE), telling of the angel Amnaël who brought her these recipes. (Aischulos attributed all human arts and sciences to Prometheus, *Prometheus Bound* 445-506, but Plato and his followers – plus many alchemists – looked to Hermes, *Kratulos* 425, *Phaidros* 274, and *Philebos* 18.)

To Horus

7. [theory] My son, now that you have heard this prologue, understand the whole creation and genesis of these things, and know that ‘human knows how to beget a human, lion a lion, and dog a dog’. But if one of these happens to arise unnaturally, it is generated as a monster, and will not have structure [*sustasis*]. For ‘nature delights in nature and nature conquers nature’.

9. [whitening metal] Take quicksilver and fix it, either by clay or by Magnesian metal or by sulfur, and set aside (this is the ‘warm-freeze’ [*chliaropagês*, amalgam]). Mixture of species: 1 part of warm-freeze lead, and two parts of marble, and 1 part of ‘massive’ stone [or ‘pure’ stone?], and 1 part of yellow realgar [orpiment, arsenic sulfide, see Theophrastos, *Stones* 40,50], and 1 part malachite. Mix these with powdered lead and re-smelt thrice.

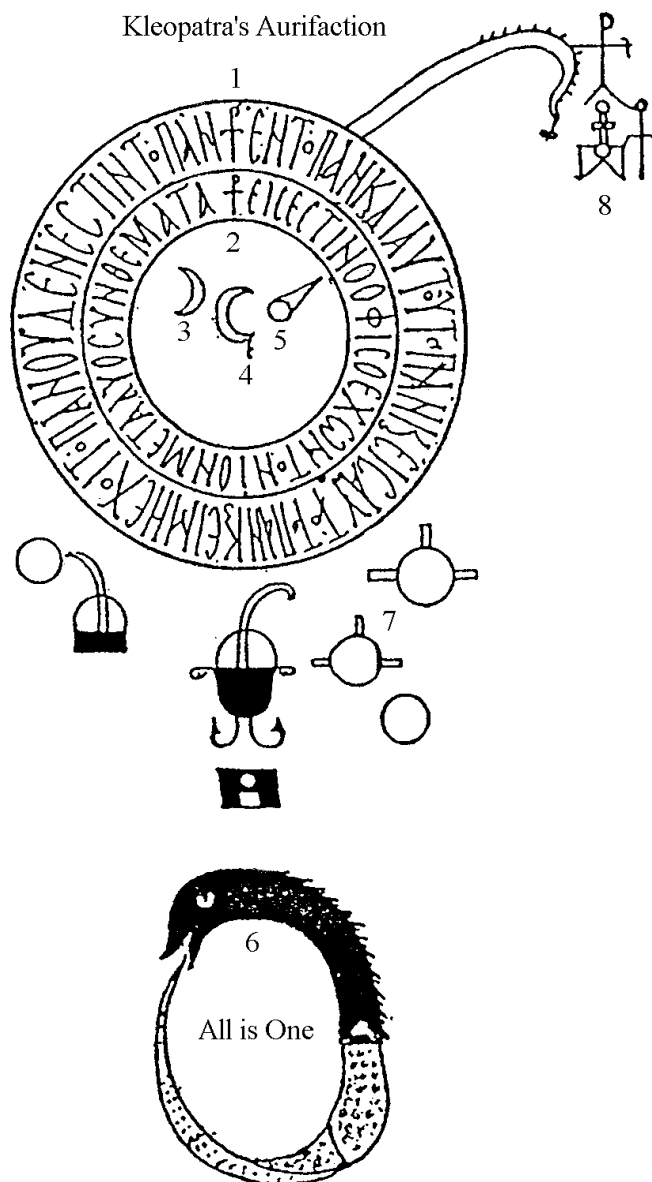
11. [softening metal] Take copper and iron, and smelt them, and slowly mix in these powders: one part sulfur and 10 parts Magnesian until the iron is thoroughly softened, grind and set aside. Then take a carat [1/3-obel, ca. 1/2 gm] of tempered copper, cast 4 parts from it, and mix with it 1 part of the ground iron, adding slowly and stirring, until the iron and copper are ‘co-unified’.

13. [gold at last] Prepare a wash of gold-plate or gold-leaf, without *chalkanthon* or casting dross, and pour the flakes into a glass; set aside 35 days until it’s all macerated. Then extract and preserve.

17. [arsenic vapor for silvering] Raise sublimed vapor thus: take arsenic, boil in water, put in a mortar, grind with vermilion and oil, and put in a pan or saucer. Set this above the door of the furnace in the coals, until the vapor sublimes. (Do the same with orpiment.)

***(Berthelot [1888/1967] 30-32)**

Kleopatra (perhaps first-century CE) employed devices similar to Maria's, and is credited with a book on make-up and one on weights and measures. The diagram here is all that survives of her work on *Chrusopoia* (*Aurifaction* or *Gold-making*); the numbers in the figure refer to the notes below.



[1: very carefully penned Greek meaning “All is One, and All is through One, and All is for One, and if One does not contain All then the All is Nothing”]

[2: very carefully penned Greek meaning “The snake is One that has the *ios* with two compositions”; *ios* means poison, rust, dye, transformation, and purple: Wilson 1984]

[3: symbol of mercury]

[4: symbol of silver filings]

[5: symbol of gold]

[6: the Ouroboros (‘tail-eating’) snake symbolizing cyclic transformation; the Greek inscription which it encircles is translated]

[7: two *tribikoi*, from above?]

[8: a *kerotakis*?]

*(Berthelot [1888/1967] 1.132)

The Leyden papyrus 'X' ("*P.Leyden.X*") was written around 250 and buried with its owner, probably near Egyptian Thebes (part of the Anastasi collection of magical papyri). About one half of its eight-dozen recipes involve alloys or imitations of gold and silver, corresponding to books 1 and 2 of Ps. Demokritos (about a dozen describe how to make gold ink).

3. Purifying tin for mixing with *asemos* ['uncoined', i.e., silver]

Take tin purified of any other substance, melt it, let it cool; after having well mixed and soaked it with oil, melt it again; then having crushed together oil, bitumen, and salt, rub it on the metal and melt a third time; after fusion, break apart the tin after having purified it by washing; for it will be like hard silver. Then if you wish to employ it in the manufacture of silver objects, so that it is undetected and has the hardness of silver, blend four parts of silver and 3 parts of tin and the product will become as a silver object. [compare *P.Stockholm* 4]

6. Doubling of *asemos*

The doubling of *asemos* is done thus: One takes: refined copper, 40 drachmas; *asemos*, 8 drachmas; tin in buttons, 40 drachmas; one first melts the copper and after two heatings, the tin; then the *asemos*. When both [*si*] are softened, remelt several times and cool as in the preceding recipe [tin-mercury amalgam]. After having augmented the metal by these proceedings, clean it with talc. The tripling is effected by the same procedure, the weights being proportioned in conformity with what has been stated above. [compare *P.Stockholm* 7]

25. Purifying silver [cupellation]

How one makes silver pure and brilliant. Take 1 part of silver and an equal weight of lead, soften in a furnace, and melt until the lead has been consumed; repeat the operation often until it becomes brilliant. [Keyser (1995/6) 212]

31. Recognizing whether tin is adulterated

After having melted it, place some papyrus below it and pour; if the papyrus burns, the tin contains some lead. [same method in Pliny 34.163]

35. Manufacture of *asemos* that is black like obsidian [Egyptian niello]

Asemos, 2 parts, lead, 4 parts. Place in a new earthen vessel, add a triple weight of unfired sulfur, and having placed it in the furnace, melt. And having withdrawn it from the furnace, beat, and make what you wish, whether you wish to make figured objects in beaten or cast metal. Then polish and cut. It will not rust. [Pliny 33.131; compare Moss 1953]

37. For giving to copper objects the appearance of gold

And neither fire nor rubbing against the touchstone will detect them, but they can serve especially for a ring. Here is the preparation for this. Gold and lead are ground to a fine powder like flour, 2 parts of lead for 1 of gold, then having mixed them, knead them up well with gum, and one coats the ring with this mixture; then it is fired. One repeats this several times until it takes the color. It is difficult to detect, because rubbing gives the mark of a gold object, and the heat consumes the lead but not the gold.

55. Another preparation of gold

To gild silver in a durable fashion. Take some mercury and some leaves of gold, and form a waxy mass; taking the vessel of silver, clean it with alum, and taking a little of the waxy material, lay it on with the polisher and let it freeze. Do this five times. (Hold the vessel with a clean linen cloth lest you spoil it.) Then taking some embers, prepare some ashes; then smooth it with the polisher and use as a gold vessel. Proven. [compare Vitruvius 7.8.4 and Pliny 33.65,125]

The Stockholm papyrus (“*P.Stockholm*”) was written around 250 and buried with its owner, probably near Egyptian Thebes (part of the Anastasi collection of magical papyri). Its fourteen-dozen recipes are almost evenly divided between altering stones and tinting cloth (corresponding to books 3 and 4 of Ps. Demokritos).

43.=88. Preparation of *smaragdōs*

Mix and put together in a small jar half a drachma of copper green [malachite or verdigris], half a drachma of Armenian blue [Dioscourides 5.90: probably azurite], half a cup of the urine of a virgin youth, and two-thirds of the fluid of a steer’s gall. Insert stones each weighing about half an obol. Lay the cover upon the pot, lute the cover all around with clay, and heat it for six hours with a gentle fire of olive wood. But if this sign appears, that the cover becomes green, then heat no more, but cool off and take the stones out. Thus you will find that they have become emeralds. (The stones are of crystal; all crystal, however, changes its color by boiling.) [compare Diodoros of Sicily 2.52 and Strabo 2.3.4]

61. Another recipe for whitening pearls

[prior recipe: feed it to a chicken and it emerges white; see also 10-13,25]

Quicklime, which if not yet slaked in water after burning in the ovens, contains its own interior invisible fire, they dissolve in dog’s milk—from a white bitch, however. They then knead the lime and rub it around about the pearl and leave it 1 day in this manner. After they have wiped off the lime, they find the pearl has become white.

74. Preparation of verdigris for *smaragdōs* from solid Cyprian copper.

Clean a sheet using pumice with water, dry, and smear it very lightly with a very little oil. Fold it up and tie a cord around it. Then hang it in vase with sharp vinegar so that it does not touch the vinegar, and carefully close the vase so that no evaporation takes place. Now if you insert it in the morning, then scrape off the verdigris carefully in the evening, but if you insert it in the evening, then scrape it off in the morning, and suspend it again until the sheet is used up. As often as you scrape it off, again smear the sheet with oil as explained previously. (The vinegar is unfit for further use.) [compare Theophrastos, *On Stones* 57; Dioscourides 5.91]

109. Collection of woad

Cut off the woad and put together in a basket in the shade. Crush and pulverize, and leave it a whole day. Air thoroughly on the following day and trample about in it so that by the motion of the feet it is turned up and uniformly dried. Put together in baskets lay it aside. (Woad thus treated is called ‘charcoal’.)

110. Woad dye [familiar to Dioscourides 2.185 and Pliny 20.59]

Put about a talent [ca. 26 kg] of woad in a *pitbos* [large storage-jar], which stands in the sun and contains not less than 15 *metretēs* [about 450 liters], and pack it in well. Then pour urine in until the liquid rises over the woad and let it be warmed by the sun, but on the following day get the woad ready in such a way that you can tread around in it in the sun until it becomes well moistened. One must do this, however, for 3 days together.

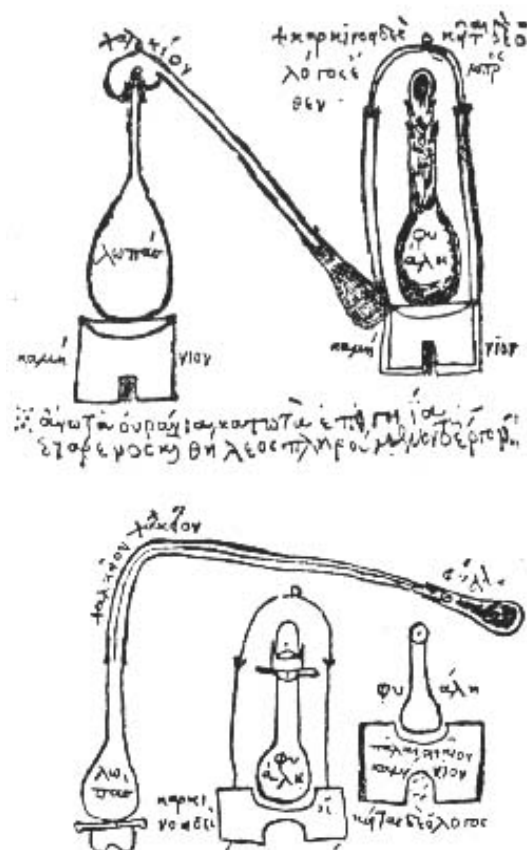
118. Another recipe for purple [a costly color often imitated: Pliny 9.125-141]

Dyeing in purple with herbs. Take and put the wool in the juice of henbane and lupines boiled sour in water. This is the preliminary mordant. Then take the fruit clusters of buckthorn [*Rhamnus infectorius*], put water in a kettle and boil. Put the wool in and it will become a good purple. Lift the wool out, rinse it with water from a forge, let it dry in the sun and it will be first quality.

135.=155. Another recipe for purple

Cold-dyed purple. Pulverize quicklime in cistern water. Pour the lye off and mordant what you wish therein from morning until evening. Then rinse it out in fresh water and color it in the first place in an extract of orchil. Then add *chalkanthōn*.

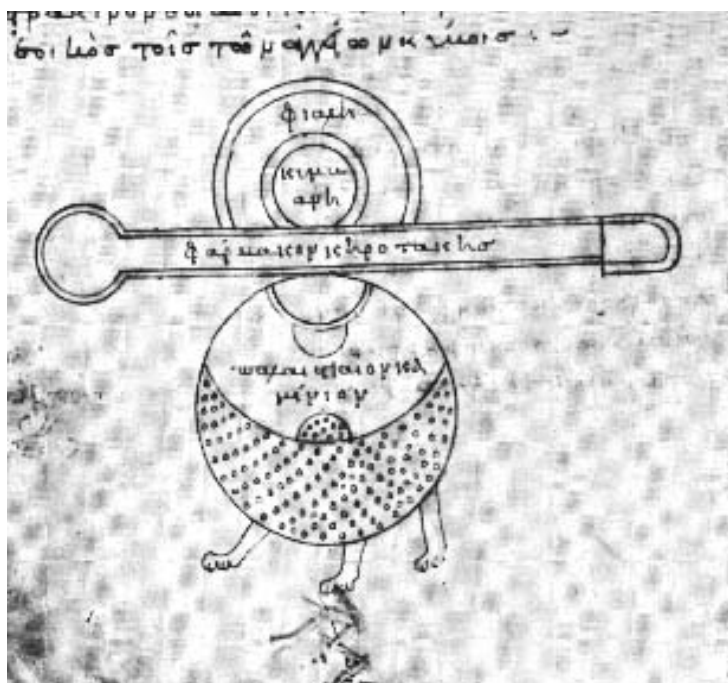
Images from Greek alchemical manuscripts



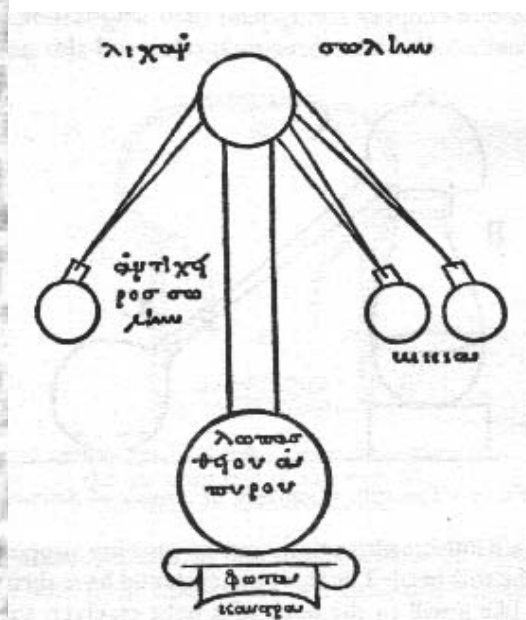
The gold making equipment of Cleopatra.



The still of Democritus.



The Balneum-Mariae



The three armed still of Maria the Jewess.

Plato, Timaeus 41a-44d

Now, when all of them, both those who visibly appear in their revolutions as well as those other gods who are of a more retiring nature, had come into being, the creator of the universe addressed them in these words: "Gods, children of gods, who are my works, and of whom I am the artificer and father, my creations are indissoluble, if so I will. All that is bound may be undone, but only an evil being would wish to undo that which is harmonious and happy. Wherefore, since ye are but creatures, ye are not altogether immortal and indissoluble, but ye shall certainly not be dissolved, nor be liable to the fate of death, having in my will a greater and mightier bond than those with which ye were bound at the time of your birth. And now listen to my instructions:-Three tribes of mortal beings remain to be created-without them the universe will be incomplete, for it will not contain every kind of animal which it ought to contain, if it is to be perfect. On the other hand, if they were created by me and received life at my hands, they would be on an equality with the gods. In order then that they may be mortal, and that this universe may be truly universal, do ye, according to your natures, betake yourselves to the formation of animals, imitating the power which was shown by me in creating you. The part of them worthy of the name immortal, which is called divine and is the guiding principle of those who are willing to follow justice and you-of that divine part I will myself sow the seed, and having made a beginning, I will hand the work over to you. And do ye then interweave the mortal with the immortal, and make and beget living creatures, and give them food, and make them to grow, and receive them again in death."

Thus he spake, and once more into the cup in which he had previously mingled the soul of the universe he poured the remains of the elements, and mingled them in much the same manner; they were not, however, pure as before, but diluted to the second and third degree. And having made it he divided the whole mixture into souls equal in number to the stars, and assigned each soul to a star; and having there placed them as in a chariot, he showed them the nature of the universe, and declared to them the laws of destiny, according to which their first birth would be one and the same for all,-no one should suffer a disadvantage at his hands; they were to be sown in the instruments of time severally adapted to them, and to come forth the most religious of animals; and as human nature was of two kinds, the superior race would here after be called man. Now, when they should be implanted in bodies by necessity, and be always gaining or losing some part of their bodily substance, then in the first place it would be necessary that they should all have in them one and the same faculty of sensation, arising out of irresistible impressions; in the second place, they must have love, in which pleasure and pain mingle; also fear and anger, and the feelings which are akin or opposite to them; if they conquered these they would live righteously, and if they were conquered by them, unrighteously. He who lived well during his appointed time was to return and dwell in his native star, and there he would have a blessed and congenial existence. But if he failed in attaining this, at the second birth he would pass into a woman, and if, when in that state of being, he did not desist from evil, he would continually be changed into some brute who resembled him in the evil nature which he had acquired, and would not cease from his toils and transformations until he followed the revolution of the same and the like within him, and overcame by the help of reason the turbulent and irrational mob of later accretions, made up of fire and air and water and earth, and returned to the form of his first and better state. Having given all these laws to his creatures, that he might be guiltless of future evil in any of them, the creator sowed some of them in the earth, and some in the moon, and some in the other instruments of time; and when he had sown them he committed to the younger gods the fashioning of their mortal bodies, and desired them to furnish what was still lacking to the human soul, and having made all the suitable additions, to rule over them, and to pilot the mortal animal in the best and wisest manner which they could, and avert from him all but self-inflicted evils.

When the creator had made all these ordinances he remained in his own accustomed nature, and his children heard and were obedient to their father's word, and receiving from him the immortal

principle of a mortal creature, in imitation of their own creator they borrowed portions of fire, and earth, and water, and air from the world, which were hereafter to be restored-these they took and welded them together, not with the indissoluble chains by which they were themselves bound, but with little pegs too small to be visible, making up out of all the four elements each separate body, and fastening the courses of the immortal soul in a body which was in a state of perpetual influx and efflux. Now these courses, detained as in a vast river, neither overcame nor were overcome; but were hurrying and hurried to and fro, so that the whole animal was moved and progressed, irregularly however and irrationally and anyhow, in all the six directions of motion, wandering backwards and forwards, and right and left, and up and down, and in all the six directions. For great as was the advancing and retiring flood which provided nourishment, the affections produced by external contact caused still greater tumult-when the body of any one met and came into collision with some external fire, or with the solid earth or the gliding waters, or was caught in the tempest borne on the air, and the motions produced by any of these impulses were carried through the body to the soul. All such motions have consequently received the general name of "sensations," which they still retain. And they did in fact at that time create a very great and mighty movement; uniting with the ever flowing stream in stirring up and violently shaking the courses of the soul, they completely stopped the revolution of the same by their opposing current, and hindered it from predominating and advancing; and they so disturbed the nature of the other or diverse, that the three double intervals [i.e. between 1, 2, 4, 8], and the three triple intervals [i.e. between 1, 3, 9, 27], together with the mean terms and connecting links which are expressed by the ratios of 3 : 2, and 4 : 3, and of 9 : 8-these, although they cannot be wholly undone except by him who united them, were twisted by them in all sorts of ways, and the circles were broken and disordered in every possible manner, so that when they moved they were tumbling to pieces, and moved irrationally, at one time in a reverse direction, and then again obliquely, and then upside down, as you might imagine a person who is upside down and has his head leaning upon the ground and his feet up against something in the air; and when he is in such a position, both he and the spectator fancy that the right of either is his left, and left right. If, when powerfully experiencing these and similar effects, the revolutions of the soul come in contact with some external thing, either of the class of the same or of the other, they speak of the same or of the other in a manner the very opposite of the truth; and they become false and foolish, and there is no course or revolution in them which has a guiding or directing power; and if again any sensations enter in violently from without and drag after them the whole vessel of the soul, then the courses of the soul, though they seem to conquer, are really conquered.

And by reason of all these affections, the soul, when encased in a mortal body, now, as in the beginning, is at first without intelligence; but when the flood of growth and nutriment abates, and the courses of the soul, calming down, go their own way and become steadier as time goes on, then the several circles return to their natural form, and their revolutions are corrected, and they call the same and the other by their right names, and make the possessor of them to become a rational being. And if these combine in him with any true nurture or education, he attains the fulness and health of the perfect man, and escapes the worst disease of all; but if he neglects education he walks lame to the end of his life, and returns imperfect and good for nothing to the world below. This, however, is a later stage; at present we must treat more exactly the subject before us, which involves a preliminary enquiry into the generation of the body and its members, and as to how the soul was created-for what reason and by what providence of the gods; and holding fast to probability, we must pursue our way.

Corpus Hermeticum IV. The Cup or Monad (translated by G.R.S. Mead)

1. Hermes: With Reason (Logos), not with hands, did the World-maker make the universal World; so that thou shouldst think of him as everywhere and ever-being, the Author of all things, and One and Only, who by His Will all beings hath created.

This Body of Him is a thing no man can touch, or see, or measure, a body inextensible, like to no other frame. 'Tis neither Fire nor Water, Air nor Breath; yet all of them come from it. Now being Good he willed to consecrate this [Body] to Himself alone, and set its Earth in order and adorn it.

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

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

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

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

4. Tat: And where hath He set it up?

Hermes: He filled a mighty Cup with it, and sent it down, joining a Herald [to it], to whom He gave command to make this proclamation to the hearts of men:

Baptize thyself with this Cup's baptism, what heart can do so, thou that hast faith thou canst ascend to him that hath sent down the Cup, thou that dost know for what thou didst come into being!

As many then as understood the Herald's tidings and doused themselves in Mind, became partakers in the Gnosis; and when they had "received the Mind" they were made "perfect men".

But they who do not understand the tidings, these, since they possess the aid of Reason [only] and not Mind, are ignorant wherefor they have come into being and whereby.

5. The senses of such men are like irrational creatures'; and as their [whole] make-up is in their feelings and their impulses, they fail in all appreciation of <lit.: "they do not wonder at"> those things which really are worth contemplation. These center all their thought upon the pleasures of the body and its appetites, in the belief that for its sake man hath come into being.

But they who have received some portion of God's gift, these, Tat, if we judge by their deeds, have from Death's bonds won their release; for they embrace in their own Mind all things, things on the earth, things in the heaven, and things above the heaven - if there be aught. And having raised themselves so far they sight the Good; and having sighted it, they look upon their sojourn here as a mischance; and in disdain of all, both things in body and the bodiless, they speed their way unto that One and Only One.

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

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

Plato, Timaeus 47e-49d

Thus far in what we have been saying, with small exception, the works of intelligence have been set forth; and now we must place by the side of them in our discourse the things which come into being through necessity—for the creation is mixed, being made up of necessity and mind. Mind, the ruling power, persuaded necessity to bring the greater part of created things to perfection, and thus and after this manner in the beginning, when the influence of reason got the better of necessity, the universe was created. But if a person will truly tell of the way in which the work was accomplished, he must include the other influence of the variable cause as well. Wherefore, we must return again and find another suitable beginning, as about the former matters, so also about these. To which end we must consider the nature of fire, and water, and air, and earth, such as they were prior to the creation of the heaven, and what was happening to them in this previous state; for no one has as yet explained the manner of their generation, but we speak of fire and the rest of them, whatever they mean, as though men knew their natures, and we maintain them to be the first principles and letters or elements of the whole, when they cannot reasonably be compared by a man of any sense even to syllables or first compounds. And let me say thus much: I will not now speak of the first principle or principles of all things, or by whatever name they are to be called, for this reason—because it is difficult to set forth my opinion according to the method of discussion which we are at present employing. Do not imagine, any more than I can bring myself to imagine, that I should be right in undertaking so great and difficult a task. Remembering what I said at first about probability, I will do my best to give as probable an explanation as any other—or rather, more probable; and I will first go back to the beginning and try to speak of each thing and of all. Once more, then, at the commencement of my discourse, I call upon God, and beg him to be our saviour out of a strange and unwonted enquiry, and to bring us to the haven of probability. So now let us begin again.

This new beginning of our discussion of the universe requires a fuller division than the former; for then we made two classes, now a third must be revealed. The two sufficed for the former discussion: one, which we assumed, was a pattern intelligible and always the same; and the second was only the imitation of the pattern, generated and visible. There is also a third kind which we did not distinguish at the time, conceiving that the two would be enough. But now the argument seems to require that we should set forth in words another kind, which is difficult of explanation and dimly seen. What nature are we to attribute to this new kind of being? We reply, that it is the receptacle, and in a manner the nurse, of all generation. I have spoken the truth; but I must express myself in clearer language, and this will be an arduous task for many reasons, and in particular because I must first raise questions concerning fire and the other elements, and determine what each of them is; for to say, with any probability or certitude, which of them should be called water rather than fire, and which should be called any of them rather than all or some one of them, is a difficult matter. How, then, shall we settle this point, and what questions about the elements may be fairly raised?

In the first place, we see that what we just now called water, by condensation, I suppose, becomes stone and earth; and this same element, when melted and dispersed, passes into vapour and air. Air, again, when inflamed, becomes fire; and again fire, when condensed and extinguished, passes once more into the form of air; and once more, air, when collected and condensed, produces cloud and mist; and from these, when still more compressed, comes flowing water, and from water comes earth and stones once more; and thus generation appears to be transmitted from one to the other in a circle. Thus, then, as the several elements never present themselves in the same form, how can any one have the assurance to assert positively that any of them, whatever it may be, is one thing rather than another? No one can.

First Enoch 6-8

[Chapter 6] And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: 'Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children.' And Semjaza, who was their leader, said unto them: 'I fear ye will not indeed agree to do this deed, and I alone shall have to pay the penalty of a great sin.' And they all answered him and said: 'Let us all swear an oath, and all bind ourselves by mutual imprecations not to abandon this plan but to do this thing.' Then sware they all together and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it. And they were in all two hundred; who descended in the days of Jared on the summit of Mount Hermon, and they called it Mount Hermon, because they had sworn and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it. And these are the names of their leaders: Samlazaz, their leader, Araklba, Rameel, Kokabel, Tamlel, Ramlel, Danel, Ezeqeel, Baraqijal, Asael, Armaros, Batarel, Ananel, Zaqel, Samsapeel, Satarel, Turel, Jomjael, Sariel. These are their chiefs of tens. [Chapter 7] And all the others together with them took unto themselves wives, and each chose for himself one, and they began to go in unto them and to defile themselves with them, and they taught them charms and enchantments, and the cutting of roots, and made them acquainted with plants. And they became pregnant, and they bare great giants, whose height was three thousand ells: Who consumed all the acquisitions of men. And when men could no longer sustain them, the giants turned against them and devoured mankind. And they began to sin against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish, and to devour one another's flesh, and drink the blood. Then the earth laid accusation against the lawless ones. [Chapter 8] And Azazel taught men to make swords, and knives, and shields, and breastplates, and made known to them the metals of the earth and the art of working them, and bracelets, and ornaments, and the use of antimony, and the beautifying of the eyelids, and all kinds of costly stones, and all colouring tinctures. And there arose much godlessness, and they committed fornication, and they were led astray, and became corrupt in all their ways. Semjaza taught enchantments, and root-cuttings, 'Armaros the resolving of enchantments, Baraqijal (taught) astrology, Kokabel the constellations, Ezeqeel the knowledge of the clouds, Araquel the signs of the earth, Shamsiel the signs of the sun, and Sariel the course of the moon. And as men perished, they cried, and their cry went up to heaven . . .

Zosimus, On Excellence III.i.4

All things are woven together and all things are undone again; all things are mingled together and all things combine; and all things unite and all things separate; all things are moistened and all things are dried; and all things flourish and all things fade in the bowl of the altar. For each thing comes to pass with method and in fixed measure and by exact weighing of the four elements. The weaving together of things and the undoing of all things and the whole fabric of things cannot come to pass without method. The method is a natural one, preserving due order in its inhaling and its exhaling; it brings increase and it brings decrease. And to sum up: through the harmonies of separating and combining, and if nothing of the method be neglected, all things bring forth nature. For nature applied to nature transforms nature. Such is the order of natural law throughout the whole cosmos, and and thus all things hang together.