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## An Identification of Two Egyptian Cosmologies in the Greek *Corpus Hermeticum* and in the Latin *Asclepius*

**Abstract:** It is evident that the influence of the Egyptian beliefs was relevant to the development of Hermetism. We can see it in the Greek treatises called *Corpus Hermeticum* and in a Latin dialogue – *Asclepius*, both of which display many elements of two Egyptian cosmologies: the Heliopolitan cosmology and the Hermopolitan one. The aim of this article is to show the analysis of chosen hermetic treatises in respect of their connection with the Egyptian religion.

**Key words:** *Corpus Hermeticum*, *Asclepius*, Egypt, Heliopolitan cosmology, Hermopolitan cosmology

There are many elements of the ancient Egyptian religion in the thirteen treatises of the Greek *Corpus Hermeticum* (C.H. I, II, III, IV, V, VI, IX, X, XII, XIII, XVI, XVII, XVIII) and in the Latin dialogue *Asclepius*. We can find them in the Egyptian cosmology and theology in the shape of the anthropomorphic “world” deities and of their earthly counterparts (animals, monuments). Each interlocutor (Hermes Trismegistus, Asclepius) in the particular dialogues and monologues shows the complexity of the micro- and macrocosm in the context of the Egyptian beliefs, which we see, for instance, in the etymology of the word Poimandres.

The prevalent side of the Egyptian elements in a particular hermetic treatise is a group of figures from Egyptian pantheon (e.g. Atum, Amon, Re, Shu, Aton, Isis,

Osiris), which are the essence of the Egyptian beliefs in the literature of the theoretical Hermetism that comprises two main cosmologies: the elder – Heliopolitan, and the younger – Hermopolitan.

## The Heliopolitan Cosmology

### The Solar and the Spiritual Deities

In the Egyptian religion the Sun was of major importance. While praying to their solar god Egyptians would turn themselves to the Sun or to its earthly equivalent. Generally, names of solar deities depend on the type of cosmology and of the cult that was changed or continued by a new pharaoh.

The solar god, called Atum, came from the Heliopolitan cosmology. His name means “complete”. Since the edition of *The Pyramid Texts*, Atum was identified with other solar god – Re (creator of gods and people), and since that time Atum became Atum-Re. Meanwhile in the time of the 18th dynasty, the son of king Amenhotep III (Echnaton), who was the high priest of Re in Heliopolis, when he became pharaoh he reformed the Egyptian religion for a short time establishing the common cult of the solar god Aton that had a really strong connection with the older solar god.<sup>1</sup>

Shu (the emptiness), the primary spiritual deity, also displays a connection with celestial deities. It is directly connected with the solar god Atum as his breath, successor and heir. Shu personifies the life-giving breath, it “brings the light to the darkness” and separates earth from heaven.

Atum, Re, Aton and Shu are then essential deities for their identification in hermetic texts.

The sources for the verification of the solar deities in the present essay are:

1. Etymology of the word ΠΟΙΜΑΝΔΡΗΣ, in the very first discourse called ἘΡΜΟΥ ΤΡΙΣΜΕΓΙΣΤΟΥ ΠΟΙΜΑΝΔΡΗΣ.
2. Treatise XVI – ΟΡΟΙ ΑΣΚΛΗΠΙΟΥ ΠΡΟΣ ΑΜΜΩΝΑ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΑ· περὶ θεοῦ· περὶ ὕλης· περὶ κακίας· περὶ εἰμαρμένης· περὶ ἡλίου· περὶ νοητῆς οὐσίας· περὶ θείας οὐσίας· περὶ ἀνθρώπου· περὶ οἰκονομίας τοῦ πληρώματος· περὶ τῶν ἐπὶ τὰ ἀστέρων· περὶ τοῦ κατ’ εἰκόνα ἀνθρώπου.<sup>2</sup>
3. Treatise XVIII – Περί τῆς ὑπὸ τοῦ πάθους τοῦ σώματος ἐμποδιζομένης ψυχῆς<sup>3</sup> and partly Treatise X.

<sup>1</sup> J. Lipińska, M. Marciniak: *Mitologia starożytnego Egiptu*. Warszawa 1977, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” XVI. In: *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. Ed. 5, v. D 1992 [TLG].

<sup>3</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” XVIII. In: *TLG*.

Ad. 1. The name Poimandres (in the treatise I) appears to have dual etymologies. The first explains the Greek origin of this name suggesting connotations with the verb ποιμαίνω (I am shepherd). The second is based on the connection of two nouns: ὁ ποιμήν (shepherd) + ὁ ἀνὴρ (man), that can be coined into ΠΟΙΜΑΝΔΡΗΣ. The second solution is more plausible because of the identification of “the shepherd” in *Corpus Hermeticum I* with “The Shepherd” of Hermas (the Christian apocalypse from around 200 CE), which in many places resembles the excerpts of *C.H. I*.

Recently, however, researchers have suggested a different theory of the origin of the name ΠΟΙΜΑΝΔΡΗΣ, inclining towards a Coptic origin of this word. ΠΟΙΜΑΝΔΡΗΣ was presented as a set of morphemes, according to Coptic nomenclature: π-ΕΙΜΕ-Ν-ΡΗ, where π is the definite article of *genus masculinum*; ΕΙΜΕ means “wisdom”, Ν- prefix of *genetivus possessivus*, ΡΗ – “the sun”, and analogously, the name of the solar god – Re. According to the Coptic version then, the word ΠΟΙΜΑΝΔΡΗΣ means “the wisdom of Re,” which is identical with the second *passus* of the first treatise, where we can read that Poimandres is ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς<sup>4</sup> (the mind of sovereignty<sup>5</sup>), if ὁ νοῦς is the equivalent of πεῖμε, and ἡ αὐθεντία represents the god Re. As we can see, there already appears an Egyptian solar deity in the first treatise of the theoretical Hermetism.

Ad. 2. The divinity of the sun of the Heliopolitan cosmology – Atum, “The All”, “The One”, can be seen in the passage of the *Corpus Hermeticum XVI*:

#### C.H. XVI

3 ἄρξομαι δὲ τοῦ λόγου ἔνθεν, τὸν θεὸν ἐπικαλεσάμενος τὸν τῶν ὅλων δεσπότην καὶ ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα καὶ περίβολον, καὶ παντὰ ὄντα τὸν ἕνα, καὶ ἕνα ὄντα τὸν παντὰ· τῶν πάντων γὰρ τὸ πλήρωμα ἓν ἐστὶ καὶ ἓν ἐνί, οὐ δευτεροῦτος τοῦ ἐνός, ἀλλ’ ἀμφοτέρων ἐνὸς ὄντος.<sup>6</sup>

This established, I shall open the discourse by invoking god, the master, maker, father and container of the whole universe, **the all who is one and the one who is all**. For the plenitude of all things is one and is in one, not because the one duplicates itself but because both are one.<sup>7</sup>

Except being “The One”, “The All” and “The Complete”, Atum seems to be identified also with the craftsman that creates the particular beings such as Shu – breath, Tefnut – humidity, Geb – earth, Nut – sky, Osiris, Isis, Seth and Nefytis. Activity of the solar god – the craftsman – connected with the creation of those beings of the macrocosm, is parallel with excerpts 4 and 5 of the Treatise XVI:

<sup>4</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” I. In: *TLG*.

<sup>5</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a new English translation with notes and introduction*. Cambridge 1992, p. 95.

<sup>6</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” XVI,3. In: *TLG*.

<sup>7</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 58.

## C.H. XVI

4 ἴδε οὖν ἐν τῇ γῇ πολλὰς πηγὰς ὑδάτων καὶ πυρὸς ἀναβρυούσας ἐν τοῖς μεσαιτάτοις μέρεσι, καὶ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τὰς τρεῖς φύσεις ὁρωμένας, πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος καὶ γῆς, ἐκ μιᾶς ρίζης ἡρτημένας ὅθεν καὶ πάσης ὕλης πεπίστευται εἶναι ταμειῖον, καὶ ἀναδίδωσι μὲν αὐτῇ τὴν χορηγίαν, ἀνταπολαμβάνει δὲ τὴν ἄνωθεν ὑπαρξιν.<sup>8</sup>

Look in the middlemost parts of the earth at the many founts of water and fire gushing forth. In the same place, one observes three natures, those of fire, of water and of earth, depending from one root. Hence, the earth has been believed to be a storehouse of all matter, sending forth supplies of matter and in return receiving substance from above.<sup>9</sup>

5 οὕτω γὰρ οὐρανὸν καὶ γῆν συνδεῖ ὁ δημιουργός, λέγω δὴ ὁ ἥλιος, τὴν μὲν οὐσίαν κατὰγων, τὴν δὲ ὕλην ἀνάγων καὶ περὶ αὐτὸν καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα ἔλκων καὶ ἀπὸ ἐαυτοῦ πάντα διδοὺς πᾶσι, καὶ τὸ φῶς ἀφθονον χαρίζεται. αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν οὗ ἀγαθαὶ ἐνέργειαι οὐ μόνον ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἀέρι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰς τὸν κατώτατον βυθὸν καὶ ἄβυσσον διήκουσιν.<sup>10</sup>

In this way, the craftsman (I mean the sun) binds heaven to earth, sending essence below and raising matter above, attracting everything toward the sun and around it, offering everything from himself to everything, as he gives freely of the ungrudging light. For it is the sun whence good energies reach not only through sky and air but even to earth and to the nethermost deep and abyss.<sup>11</sup>

The sun as a craftsman becomes the creator of the whole nature. Its power gives rise to the elements revolving around the energy of the sun, which penetrates them all the time. It is similar to Atum who is the only source (μία ρίζα) that gives birth to the divine Ennead (symbolizing the particular elements such as water/τὸ ὕδωρ – Tefnut, air/ἡ ἀήρ – Szu or earth/ἡ γῆ – Geb).

Ad. 3. Treatise XVIII, because of its one fragment, is connected to the culture of the 18th dynasty, and to the pharaoh Amenhotep IV (Echnaton) and the art of his period called The Amarna Art:

<sup>8</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” XVI,4. In: *TLG*.

<sup>9</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 59.

<sup>10</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” XVI,5. In: *TLG*.

<sup>11</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 59.

## C.H. XVIII

11 καὶ ὥσπερ ὁ ἥλιος τρόφιμος ὢν πάντων τῶν βλαστημάτων αὐτὸς  
 πρῶτος ἀνασχὼν τῶν καρπῶν τὰς ἀπαρχὰς καρποῦται  
 χερσὶ μεγίσταις ὥσπερ εἰς ἀπόδρεψιν τῶν καρπῶν χρώμενος ταῖς ἀκτίσι,  
 καὶ χεῖρες αὐτῷ αἱ ἀκτίνες τα τῶν φυτῶν ἀμβροσιωδέστατα πρῶτον  
 ἀποδρεπόμεναι, [...].<sup>12</sup>

The sun, nourisher of all that grows, harvests the first pick of crops as it first rises, **using its rays like great hands to gather in the crops, and the rays that are its hands** gather in the most ambrosial [effluence] of the plants, [...].<sup>13</sup>

The image of the sun – Aton, reaching down with the flames like hands, became the artistic motif of the Egypt in the time of Echnaton. We can admire it on the ramp block in Amarna, in the main hall of the great palace.

Atum, Re and, later, Aton are the solar deities of the Heliopolitan cosmology. Among its important elements is also Shu, “the breath” of the god, as exemplified in the Treatise X:

## C.H. X

5 οἱ δυνάμενοι πλέον τι ἀρύσασθαι τῆς θέας κατακοιμίζονται  
 πολλάκις [δ]ὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος εἰς τὴν καλλίστην ὄψιν ὥπερ Οὐρανὸς  
 καὶ Κρόνος, οἱ ἡμέτεροι πρόγονοι, ἐντετυχήκασιν.<sup>14</sup>

Those able to drink somewhat more deeply of the vision often fall asleep, moving out of the body toward a sight most fair, just as it happened to Ouranos and Kronos, our ancestors.<sup>15</sup>

In this particular case Walter Scott, important scholar of the Hermetism, suggests in his work<sup>16</sup> the identification of Greek deities with their Egyptian counterparts: Ouranos with Shu, Kronos with Seb, etc.

<sup>12</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” XVIII,11. In: *TLG*.

<sup>13</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 65.

<sup>14</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” X,5. In: *TLG*.

<sup>15</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> W. Scott: *Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings Which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*. Vol. 4. *Testimonia*. London 1968; cf. also B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 157.

## The Hermopolitan Cosmology

### Amon

According to Egyptian mythology Amon/Amun (which means “Hidden” or “Invisible”) occurs for the first time in an Egyptian text called *The Pyramid Texts*. And there he and his female equivalent Amaunet are parts of the Great Ogdoad of Hermopolis. The Greeks identified him with Zeus because of their identical domination over the spiritual sphere. We can find this Egyptian god as “King Ammon” (Greek ΑΜΜΩΝ, Latin *Hammon*) in three hermetic treatises: XVI, XVII and *Asclepius*. For the first time the word “Ammon” is presented in the title of the Treatise XVI:

ΟΡΟΙ ΑΣΚΛΗΠΙΟΥ ΠΡΟΣ ΑΜΜΩΝΑ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΑ·

περὶ θεοῦ· περὶ ὕλης· περὶ κακίας· περὶ εἰμαρμένης· περὶ ἡλίου· περὶ νοητῆς οὐσίας· περὶ θείας οὐσίας· περὶ ἀνθρώπου· περὶ οἰκονομίας τοῦ πληρώματος· περὶ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀστέρων· περὶ τοῦ κατ’ εἰκόνα ἀνθρώπου.<sup>17</sup>

Definitions of Asclepius to **King Ammon**:

on god, matter, vice, fate, the sun, intellectual essence, divine essence, mankind, the arrangement of the plenitude, the seven stars, and mankind according to the image.<sup>18</sup>

It is the only phrase in the whole *Corpus Hermeticum*, where an interlocutor speaks to Ammon directly, by his name. The other texts contain the apostrophe to the Ammon only by the imperative form such as: ὦ βασιλεῦ, just like in the Treatise XVII:

... εἰ δὲ νοεῖς, ἔστιν, ὦ βασιλεῦ, καὶ σωματῶν ἀσώματα.<sup>19</sup>

If you think about it, **O King**, incorporeals also exist among the corporeals.<sup>20</sup>

Treatise XVI does not give any concrete information about the character of Ammon. He is just the listener of particular definitions that are given by Asclepius. In the Treatise XVII however, he shows himself as an interlocutor, discussing about the corporeal and incorporeal beings. The Treatise XVII is finished with the following words:

<sup>17</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” XVI. In: *TLG*.

<sup>18</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 58.

<sup>19</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” XVII. In: *TLG*.

<sup>20</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 62.

“Ωρα ἐστίν, ὃ προφήτα, περὶ τὴν τῶν ξένων ἐπιμέλειαν γενέσθαι· τῇ δὲ ἐπιούσῃ περὶ τῶν ἐξῆς θεολογήσομεν.<sup>21</sup>

It is time that I attend to my guests, O prophet; tomorrow we shall theologize further.<sup>22</sup>

The most important element of the phrase above is “prophet” – ὁ προφήτης. Brian Copenhaver provides an explanation of this word in this particular treatise:

[...] ‘prophetes’ and related words occur [...] only once in the Greek treatises. In non-biblical Greek or Hellenistic and Roman times, the range of the word reflected the syncretism of intellectual culture. Since the fifth century BCE, ‘prophetes’ and its cognates had applied honorably to oracles, e.g., of Dodona, of Delphi and of Zeus Ammon in Lybia, but by the second century CE Lucian was using it pejoratively of the ‘goes’ (wizard), Alexander of Abonoteichos. Long before Lucian’s day, in an inscription of the later third century BCE from Canopus, ‘prophetes’ translated *hmnr*, the title of the class of Egyptian priests of high rank, who were appointed by the king and who may have been called prophets by association with Ammon’s oracle.<sup>23</sup>

We can therefore say that King Ammon in the Treatise XVII is talking to a second interlocutor (perhaps to Tat), who probably is the prophet of the god Amon. Can we identify the god Amon with King Ammon or are they two different persons? We can find the answer in the Latin dialogue *Asclepius*, dedicated to a person called Asclepius by Hermes Trismegistus:

Quo ingresso Asclepius et Hammona interesse suggessit. Trismegistus ait: «Nulla invidia Hammona prohibet a nobis; etenim ad eius nomen multa meminimus a nobis esse conscripta, sicuti etiam ad Tat amantissimum et carissimum filium multa physica exoticaque quam plurima. Tractatum hunc autem tuo scribam nomine. Praeter Hammona nullum uocassis alium, ne tantae rei religiosissimus sermo multorum interuentu praesentique uioletur. Tractatum enim tota numinis maiestate plenissimum inreligiosae mentis est multorum conscientia publicare.» Hammone etiam adytum ingresso sanctoque illo quatuor uirorum religione et diuina dei completo praesentia, competenti uenerabiliter silentio ex ore Hermi animis singulorum mentibusque pendantibus, diuinus Cupido sic est orsus dicere.<sup>24</sup>

When Tat came in, Asclepius suggested that Hammon also join them. Trismegistus said: “No jealousy keeps Hammon from us; indeed, we recall hav-

<sup>21</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” XVII. In: *TLG*.

<sup>22</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 62.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, pp. 208–209.

<sup>24</sup> A.J. Festugière, A.D. Nock: *Corpus Hermeticum. Tome XIII–XVIII. Asclepius*. Texte établi par A.D. Nock et traduit par A.J. Festugière. Paris 1992, p. 297.



ing written many things in his name, as we have also written so much on physical and popular topics for Tat, our dearest and most loving son. But this treatise I shall write in your name. Call no one but most reverent discourse on so great a subject, for the mind is irreverent that would make public, by the awareness of the many, a treatise so very full of the majesty of divinity.” When Hammon had also come into the sanctuary, the reverence of the four men and the divine presence of god filled that holy place; duly silent, the minds and thoughts of each of them waited respectfully for a word from Hermes, and then divine love began to speak.<sup>25</sup>

As we can see from above, the four interlocutors are not godlike beings but four men (*quattuor viri*), who are in the temple with a god that could be Cupid. Another evidence that confirms the humanity of Ammon is passus 32:

Uides ergo, o Asclepi, in quibus constituti quae tractemus aut quae audemus adtingere. Sed tibi, deus summe, gratias ago, qui me uidendae diuinitatis liminasti lumine. Et uos, o Tat et Asclepi et Hammon, intra secreta pectoris diuina mysteria silentio tegite et taciturnitate celate. [...] Et sic contingit hominibus, ut quasi per caliginem, quae in caelo sunt, uideamus, quantum possibile est per condicionem sensus humani. Haec autem intentio peruidendis tantis angustissima est nobis, latissima uero, cum uiderit, felicitate conscientiae.<sup>26</sup>

So you see the depth of the subject we deal with, Asclepius, and what we venture to achieve. But to you, supreme god, I give thanks for enlightening me with the light by which divinity can be seen. And you, Tat and Asclepius and Hammon, hide these divine mysteries among the secrets of your heart and shield them with silence. [...] And thus it comes about that we humans see the things that are in heaven as if through a mist, to the extent that we can, given the condition of human consciousness. When it comes to seeing great things, our concentration is quite confined, but once it has seen, the happiness of our awareness is vast.<sup>27</sup>

Here Trismegistus as the author of these words is presenting himself and his disciples as human beings, because in the world hierarchy they are on the lowest level (*in quibus constituti – dans quels bas-fonds installés*<sup>28</sup>). He is talking about the great god (*deus summus*), who has sent a revelation to him, then he is speaking with the gathered people (Tat, Asclepius and Ammon). Moreover, Trismegistus is saying that “we – people” do not have appropriate cognitive abilities, so his words confirm the humanity of Hermes Trismegistus and his disciples (including King Ammon).

<sup>25</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 67.

<sup>26</sup> A.J. Festugière, A.D. Nock: *Corpus Hermeticum...*, pp. 341–342.

<sup>27</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 87.

<sup>28</sup> A.J. Festugière, A.D. Nock: *Corpus Hermeticum...*, pp. 341–342.

As was stated earlier, we meet the Egyptian Amon directly, by his name, in three particular hermetic treatises. There is a passus, however, where we can indirectly experience the presence of this Egyptian god (as something hidden, invisible). It is a fragment of *Corpus Hermeticum V* ΕΡΜΟΥ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΑΤ ΥΙΟΝ ὅτι ἀφανὴς θεὸς φανερώτατός ἐστιν:<sup>29</sup>

C.H. V.

Ι Καὶ τόνδε σοι τὸν λόγον, ὦ Τάτ, διεξελεύσομαι, ὅπως μὴ ἀμήτορ ἦς τοῦ κρείττονος θεοῦ ὀνόματος. σὺ δὲ νόει πῶς τὸ δοκοῦν τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀφανὲς φανερώτατόν σοι γενήσεται.<sup>30</sup>

This discourse I shall also deliver to you in full, O Tat, lest you go uninitiated in the mysteries of the god who is greater than any name. You must understand how something that seems invisible to the multitude will become entirely visible to you.<sup>31</sup>

According to the title and the first words of Trismegistus, we could say that it is a discourse about an invisible and powerful god, about a god inaccessible for the typical men. According to the meaning of the name Ammon, this discourse is then about the Egyptian god – hidden, invisible, whose prophet was Trismegistus himself – the master of Ammon.

The evidence gives us the reason to think that the King Ammon and Ammon (as a god) are two different beings.

## Thoth

Thoth is a deity without a certain origin. The center of his cult was called Hermopolis. He was a very important god in the Egyptian religion. Because of the strong connection between the sun and the moon Thoth was always close to the Atum-Re like a vizier beside the pharaoh: he represents the sun on the sky and looks after the justice and the harmony on earth. Generally, he is also known as the inventor of letters and as an author of the books of magic. Greeks in the Hellenistic period began to identify him with their own god – Hermes.

Thoth is not only connected with the Hermes Trismegistus or Tat in the hermetic treatises, but he can be identified in the fragments of the particular hermetic treatises, which formally do not have anything in common with that Egyptian god. These very good examples are *Corpus Hermeticum I* and *Corpus Hermeticum VI*:

<sup>29</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” V. In: *TLG*.

<sup>30</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” V, I. In: *TLG*.

<sup>31</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 18.

C.H. I.

9 ὁ δὲ Νοῦς ὁ θεός, ἀρρενόθηλυσ ὢν, ζῶν καὶ φῶς ὑπάρχων, ἀπεκύησε λόγῳ ἕτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν, [...].<sup>32</sup>

The mind who is god, being androgyne and existing as life and light, by speaking gave birth to a second mind, a craftsman [...].<sup>33</sup>

An extremely important phrase here is ὁ Νοῦς ὁ θεός [...] ἀπεκύησε λόγῳ [...], which means “the mind who is god [...] by speaking gave birth.” Thoth was the god of the word. This particular passus then could be describing him. Moreover, Eve Reymond, the researcher of the temple in Fayum, proves this theory thanks to the papyrus from the Neit’s temple: “Reymond reproduces a papyrus from the temple of Neit in Dime of the first century CE which attributes to Thoth or Khnonsu ‘the Power of Word from divine words’.”<sup>34</sup>

C.H. I.

15 καὶ διὰ τοῦτο παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς ζῶα διπλοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον.<sup>35</sup>

Because of this, unlike any other living thing on earth, mankind is twofold – in the body mortal but immortal in the essential man.<sup>36</sup>

Quite often in the interpretation of the passus above researchers refer to Zosimos, an Egyptian, who around 300 CE wrote in Greek on, among other matters, alchemy and theology. Copenhaver quotes a fragment of Zosimos’ work:

[...] the carnal Adam named Thoth according to his exterior frame... As for the man who is within Adam, the spiritual man... I do not know his special name... his common name is Light.<sup>37</sup>

Thoth then, is the carnal man/the mortal man/the Primal Man. His inside, however, is the Light, which we can understand when we read the Coptic text called *The Gospel of Thomas*, passus 24:

ΠΕΧΕ ΝΕΦΑΘΗΣ ΧΕ ΜΑΤΣΕΒΟΝ' ΕΠΤΟΠΟΣ ΕΤΚΗΜΑΥ ΕΠΕΙ ΤΑΝΑΓΚΗ  
ΕΡΟΝ ΤΕ ΕΤΡΩΙΝΕ ΝΣΩΦ' ΠΕΧΑΦ'ΝΑΥ ΧΕ ΠΕΤΕΥΝ ΜΑΛΧΕ ΠΜΟΦ  
ΜΑΡΕΦ'ΣΩΤΗ ΟΥΝ ΟΥΟΕΙΝ' ΨΟΟΠ'ΗΦΟΥΝ ΠΝΟΥΡΗΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΑΥΩ ΦΡ  
ΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΕΠΚΟΜΟΣ ΤΗΡΦ' ΕΦΤΗΡ ΟΥΟΕΙΝ' ΟΥΚΑΚΕ ΠΕ.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” I,9. In: *TLG*.

<sup>33</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, p. 104.

<sup>35</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” I,15. In: *TLG*.

<sup>36</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, p. 109.

<sup>38</sup> B. Layton, T. Lambdin: “The Gospel according to Thomas”. In: J.M. Robinson: *The Coptic Gnostic Library. A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codex*. Vol. 2. Leiden–Boston–Köln 2000, p. 64.

His disciples said to him: “Show us the place where you are, since it is necessary for us to seek it”. He said to them: “Whoever has ears, let him hear. **There is a light within a man of light, and he lights up the whole world. If he does not shine, he is darkness.**<sup>39</sup>

#### C.H. IV

1 Ἐπειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός, οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγῳ, ὥστε οὕτως ὑπολάμβανε ὡς τοῦ παρόντος καὶ αἰὲ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἐνὸς μόνου, τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα.<sup>40</sup>

Since the craftsman made the whole cosmos by reasoned speech, not by hand, you should conceive of him as present, as always existing, as having made all things, as the one and only and as having crafted by his own will the things that are.<sup>41</sup>

Besides the obvious fragment talking about creation of the world by the word of the craftsman, which corresponds to the biblical tradition and to the *Corpus Hermeticum I*, we should focus on the epithet of god the creator – εἷς μόνος. According to the inscription on the tomb from the 3rd century BCE, it is a title of Thoth. The tomb text characterizes the twice-great Thoth as One and Only. A similar epithet – in the following form: τὸ ἐν καὶ μόνον, we find in *C.H.IV*. 5 and 8; *C.H.X*. 14; *C.H. XI*. 5 and 11.

## Ogdoad

First of all, the Ogdoad means eight beings creating the pantheon of the primal gods in the Hermopolitan cosmology. Secondly, it is a set of the eight astral spheres of different stars.

Hermopolis was the most important cult center that created its own mythical conception of the world creation and was called the City of the Eight – the city of the eight primal gods. The astral aspect is connected with Gnostic cosmology, that shows the seven spheres holding the Gnostic who wants to reach the eighth level – the Ogdoad.

“The motif” of the Ogdoad occurs only in the first hermetic<sup>42</sup> treatise, as the, so-called, Region of the Ogdoad:

<sup>39</sup> J.M. Robinson: *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. New York 1990, p. 129.

<sup>40</sup> “Corpus Hermeticum” IV,1. In: *TLG*.

<sup>41</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 15.

<sup>42</sup> Its name also occurs in *C.H.XIII*, 15 but this fragment refers only to the *C.H.I*, 26. The analogous text is the hermetic discourse of the Nag Hammadi Library called “The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth”.

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26 καὶ τότε γυμνωθεὶς ἀπὸ τῶν τῆς ἀρμονίας ἐνεργημάτων γίνεται ἐπὶ τὴν ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν, τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν ἔχων, καὶ ὑμνεῖ σὺν τοῖς οὖσι τὸν πατέρα· συγχαίρουσι δὲ οἱ παρόντες τῇ τοῦτου παρουσίᾳ, καὶ ὁμοιωθεὶς τοῖς συνοῦσιν ἀκούει καὶ τινων δυνάμεων ὑπὲρ τὴν ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν φωνῇ τινι ἡδεῖα ὕμνουσῶν τὸν θεόν· καὶ τότε τάξει ἀνέρχονται πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, καὶ αὐτοὶ εἰς δυνάμεις ἑαυτοὺς παραδιδόασιν, καὶ δυνάμεις γενόμενοι ἐν θεῷ γίνονται. τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ ἀγαθὸν τέλος τοῖς γινώσιν ἐσχηκόσι, θεωθῆναι.<sup>43</sup>

And then, stripped of the effects of the cosmic framework, the human enters the region of the Ogdoad; he has his own proper power, and along with the blessed he hymns the father. Those present there rejoice together in his presence, and, having become like his companions, he also hears certain powers that exist beyond the ogdoadic region and hymn god with sweet voice. They rise up to the father in order and surrender themselves to the powers, and, having become powers, they enter into god. This is the final good for those who have received knowledge: to be made god.<sup>44</sup>

The region or the nature of the Ogdoad could refer to the higher/eighth level that the Gnostic wants to reach or to the city of Hermopolis itself, connected with the Ogdoad because of the etymology of the village's present name, Ashmouein, which probably has a Coptic origin, as explained by Jean-Pierre Mahé:

[...] la ville que les Grecs nommèrent Hermopolis fut ainsi appelée Ashmouein, c'est-à-dire **ϣμοϣν**,<sup>45</sup> le chiffre huit, en l'honneur des huit anciens dieux qui y furent d'abord vénérés.<sup>46</sup>

Having analysed a selection of theoretical hermetic texts from both an etymological and literary perspective, we may conclude that the theory about connecting Egyptian rites with Hermetism is correct. Naturally, besides the two cosmologies discussed here we can conduct an analysis of hermetic texts in the context of other Egyptian elements such as Imhotep, Agathodemon, the spiritual beings or even the earthly gods, which would provide an excellent complementation to the present interpretation.

<sup>43</sup> "Corpus Hermeticum" I, 26. In: *TLG*.

<sup>44</sup> B. Copenhaver: *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum...*, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> W. Crum: *A Coptic Dictionary*. Oregon 2005, p. 566.

<sup>46</sup> J.P. Mahé, P.H. Poitier: *Écrits gnostiques. La bibliothèque de Nag Hammadi*. Paris 2007, p. 939.