

## The Fourth Book

### "The Key"

1. Yesterday's Speech, O Asclepius, I dedicated to thee, this day's it is fit to dedicate to Tat, because it is an Epitome of those general speeches that were spoken to him.
2. God therefore, and the Father, and the Good, O Tat, have the same Nature, or rather also the same Act and Operation.
3. For there is one name or appellation of Nature and Increase which concerneth things changeable, and another about things unchangeable, and about things unmoveable, that is to say, Things Divine and Human; every one of which, himself will have so to be; but action or operation is of another thing, or elsewhere, as we have taught in other things, Divine and Human, which must here also be understood.
4. For his Operation or Act, is his Will, and his Essence, to Will all Things to be.
5. For what is God, and the Father, and the Good, but the Being of all things that yet are not, and the existence itself, of those things that are!
6. This is God, this is the Father, this is the Good, whereunto no other thing is present or approacheth.
7. For the World, and the Sun, which is also a Father by Participation, is not for all that equally the cause of Good, and of Life, to living Creatures: And if this be so, he is altogether constrained by the Will of the Good, without which it is not possible, either to be, or to be begotten or made.
8. But the Father is the cause of his Children, who hath a will both to sow and nourish that which is good by the Son.

9. For Good is always active or busy in making; and this cannot he in any other, but in him that taketh nothing, and yet willeth all things to be; for I will not say, O Tat, making them; for he that maketh is defective in much time, in which sometimes he maketh not, as also of quantity and quality; for sometimes he maketh those things that have quantity and quality and sometimes the contrary.

10. But God is the Father, and the Good, in being all things; for he both will be this, and is it, and yet all this for himself (as is true) in him that can see it.

11. For all things else are for this, it is the property of Good to be known: This is the Good, O Tat.

12. Tat: Thou hast filled us, O Father, with a sight both good and fair, and the eye of my mind is almost become more holy by the sight or spectacle.

13. Trismegistus: I Wonder not at It, for the Sight of Good is not like the Beam of the Sun, which being of a fiery shining brightness, maketh the eye blind by his excessive Light, that gazeth upon it; rather the contrary, for it enlighteneth, and so much increaseth the light of the eye, as any man is able to receive the influence of this Intelligible clearness.

14. For it is more swift and sharp to pierce, and innocent or harmless withal, and full of immortality, and they that are capable and can draw any store of this spectacle, and sight do many times fall asleep from the Body, into this most fair and beauteous Vision; which thing Celius and Saturn our Progenitors obtained unto.

15. Tat: I would we also, O Father, could do so.

16. Trismegistus: I would have could, O Son; but for the present we are less intent to the Vision, and cannot yet open the eyes of our minds to behold the incorruptible, and incomprehensible Beauty of that Good: But then shall we see it, when we have nothing at all to say of it.

17. For the knowledge of it, is a Divine Silence, and the rest of all the Senses; For neither can he that understands that understand anything else, nor he that sees that, see any thing else, nor hear any other thing, nor in sum, move the Body.

18. For shining steadfastly upon, and round about the whole Mind it enlighteneth all the Soul; and loosing it from the Bodily Senses and Motions, it draweth it from the Body, and changeth it wholly into the Essence of God.

19. For it is Possible for the Soul, O Son, to be Deified while yet it Lodgeth in the Body of Man, if it Contemplate the Beauty of the Good.

20. Tat: How dost thou mean deifying, Father!

21. Trismegistus: There are differences, O Son, of every Soul.

22. Tat: But how dost thou again divide the changes?

23. Trismegistus: Hast thou not heard in the general Speeches, that from one Soul of the Universe, are all those Souls, which in all the world are tossed up and down, as it were, and severally divided? Of these Souls there are many changes, some into a more fortunate estate, and some quite contrary; for they which are of creeping things, are changed into those of watery things and those of things living in the water, to those of things living upon the Land; and Airy ones are changed into men, and human Souls, that lay hold of immortality, are changed into Demons.

24. And so they go on into the Sphere or Region of the fixed Gods, for there are two choirs or companies of Gods, one of them that wander, and another of them that are fixed. And this is the most perfect glory of the Soul.

25. But the Soul entering into the Body of a Man, if it continue evil, shall neither taste of immortality, nor is partaker of the good.

26. But being drawn back the same way, it returneth into creeping things. And this is the condemnation of an evil Soul.

27. And the wickedness of a Soul is ignorance; for the Soul that knows nothing of the things that are, neither the Nature of them, nor that which is good, but is blinded, rusheth and dasheth against the bodily Passions, and unhappy as it is, not knowing itself, it serveth strange Bodies, and evil ones, carrying the Body as a burthen, and not ruling, but ruled. And this is the mischief of the Soul.

28. On the contrary, the virtue of the Soul is Knowledge; for he that knows is both good and religious, and already Divine.

29. Tat: But who is such a one, O Father!

30. Trismegistus: He that neither speaks, nor hears many things; for he, O Son, that heareth two speeches or hearings, fighteth in the shadow.

31. For God, and the Father, and Good, is neither spoken nor heard.

32. This being so in all things that are, are the Senses, because they cannot be without them.

33. But Knowledge differs much from Sense; for Sense is of things that surmount it, but Knowledge is the end of Sense.

34. Knowledge is the gift of God; for all Knowledge is unbodily but useth the Mind as an Instrument, as the Mind useth the Body.

35. Therefore both intelligible and material things go both of them into bodies; for, of contraposition, That is Setting One against Another, and Contrariety, all Things must Consist. And it is impossible it should be otherwise,

36. Tat: Who therefore is this material God?

37. Trismegistus: The fair and beautiful world, and yet it is not good; for it is material and easily passible, nay, it is the first of all passible things; and the second of the things that are, and needy or wanting somewhat else. And it was once made and is always, and is ever in generation, and made, and continually makes, or generates things that have quantity and quality.

38. For it is moveable, and every material motion is generation; but the intellectual stability moves the material motion after this manner.

39. Because the World Is a Sphere, that is a Head, and above the head there is nothing material, as beneath the feet there is nothing intellectual.

40. The whole universe is material; The Mind is the head, and it is moved spherically, that is like a head.

41. Whatsoever therefore is joined or united to the Membrane or Film of this head, wherein the Soul is, is immortal, and as in the Soul of a made Body, hath its Soul full of the Body; but those that are further from that Membrane, have the Body full of Soul.

42. The whole is a living wight, and therefore consisteth of material and intellectual.

43. And the World is the first, and Man the second living wight after the World; but the first of things that are mortal and therefore hath whatsoever benefit of the Soul all the others have: And yet for all this, he is not only not good, but flatly evil, as being mortal.

44. For the World is not good as it is moveable; nor evil as it is immortal.

45. But man is evil, both as he is moveable, and as he is mortal.

46. But the Soul of Man is carried in this manner, The Mind is in Reason, Reason in the Soul, the Soul in the Spirit, the Spirit in the Body.

47. The Spirit being diffused and going through the veins, and arteries, and blood, both moveth the living Creature, and after a certain manner beareth it.

48. Wherefore some also have thought the Soul to be blood, being deceived in Nature, not knowing that first the Spirit must return into the Soul, and then the blood is congealed, the veins and arteries

emptied, and then the living thing dieth: And this is the death of the Body.

49. All things depend of one beginning, and the beginning depends of that which is one and alone.

50. And the beginning is moved, that it may again be a beginning; but that which is one, standeth and abideth, and is not moved,

51. There are therefore these three, God the Father, and the Good, the World and Man: God hath the World, and the World hath Man; and the World is the Son of God, and Man as it were the Offspring of the World.

52. For God is not ignorant of Man, but knows him perfectly, and will be known by him. This only is healthful to man; the Knowledge of God: this is the return of Olympus; by this only the Soul is made good, and not sometimes good, and sometimes evil, but of necessity Good.

53. Tat: What meanest thou, O Father.

54. Trismegistus: Consider, O Son, the Soul of a Child, when as yet it hath received no dissolution of its Body, which is not yet grown, but is very small; how then if it look upon itself, it sees itself beautiful, as not having been yet spotted with the Passions of the Body, but as it were depending yet upon the Soul of the World.

55. But when the Body is grown and distracteth, the Soul it engenders Forgetfulness, and partakes no more of the Fair and the Good, and Forgetfulness is Evilness.

56. The like also happeneth to them that go out of the Body: for when the Soul runs back into itself the Spirit is contracted into the blood and the Soul into the Spirit; but the Mind being made pure, and free from these clothings; and being Divine by Nature, taking a fiery Body rangeth abroad in every place, leaving the Soul to judgment, and to the punishment it hath deserved.

57. Tat: Why dost thou say so, O Father, that the Mind is separated from the Soul, and the Soul from the Spirit? When even now thou saidst the Soul was the Clothing or Apparel of the Mind, and the Body of the Soul.

58. Trismegistus: O Son, he that hears must co-understand and conspire in thought with him that speaks; yea, he must have his hearing swifter and sharper than the voice of the speaker.

59. The disposition of these Clothings or Covers, is done in an Earthly Body; for it is impossible, that the mind should establish or rest itself, naked, and of itself; in an Earthly Body; neither is the Earthly Body able to bear such immortality; and therefore that it might suffer so great virtue the Mind compacted as it were, and took to itself the passible Body of the Soul, as a Covering or Clothing. And the Soul being also in some sort Divine, useth the Spirit as her Minister and Servant, and the Spirit governeth the living thing.

60. When therefore the Mind is separated, and departeth from the earthly Body, presently it puts on its Fiery Coat, which it could not do having to dwell in an Earthly Body.

61. For the Earth cannot suffer fire, for it is all burned of a small spark; therefore is the water poured round about the Earth, as a Wall or defence, to withstand the flame of fire.

62. But the Mind being the most sharp or swift of all the Divine Cogitations, and more swift than all the Elements, hath the fire for its Body.

63. For the Mind which is the Workman of all useth the fire as his instrument in his Workmanship; and he that is the Workman of all, useth it to the making of all things, as it is used by man, to the making of Earthly things only; for the Mind that is upon Earth, void, or naked of fire, cannot do the business of men. Nor that which is otherwise the affairs of God.

64. But the Soul of Man, and yet not everyone, but that which is pious and religious, is Angelical and Divine. And such a Soul, after it is

departed from the Body, having striven the strife of Piety, becomes either Mind or God.

65. And the strife of Piety is to know God, and to injure no Man, and this way it becomes Mind.

66. But an impious Soul abideth in its own essence, punished of itself, and seeking an earthly and human Body to enter into.

67. For no other Body is capable of a Human Soul, neither is it lawful for a Man's Soul to fall into the Body of an unreasonable living thing: for it is the Law or Decree of God, to preserve a Human Soul from so great a contumely and reproach.

68. Tat: How then is the Soul of Man punished, O Father; and what is its greatest torment.

69. Hermes: Impiety, O my Son; for what Fire hath so great a flame as it? Or what biting Beast doth so tear the Body as it doth the Soul.

70. Or dost thou not see how many evils the wicked Soul suffereth, roaring and crying out, I am Burned, I am Consumed, I know not what to Say, or Do, I am Devoured, Unhappy Wretch, of the Evils that compass and lay-hold upon me; Miserable that I am, I neither See nor Hear anything.

71. These are the voices of a punished and tormented Soul, and not as many; and thou, O Son, thinkest that the Soul going out of the Body grows brutish or enters into a Beast: Which is a very great Error, for the Soul punished after this manner.

72. For the Mind, when it is ordered or appointed to get a fiery Body for the services of God, coming down into the wicked Soul, torments it with the whips of Sins, wherewith the wicked Soul being scourged, turns itself to Murders, and Contumelies, and Blasphemies, and divers Violences, and other things by which men are injured

73. But into a pious Soul, the Mind entering, leads it into the Light of Knowledge.

74. And such a Soul is never satisfied with singing praise to God, and speaking well of all men; and both in words and deeds, always doing good in imitation of her Father.

75. Therefore, O Son, we must give thanks, and pray, that we may obtain a good mind.

76. The Soul therefore may be altered or changed into the better, but into the worse it is impossible.

77. But there is a communion of Souls, and those of Gods, communicate with those of men; and those of men, with those of Beasts.

78. And the better always take of the worse, Gods of Men, Men of brute Beasts, but God of all: For he is the best of all, and all things are less than he.

79. Therefore is the World subject unto God, Man unto the World and unreasonable things to Man.

80. But God is above all, and about all; and the beams of God are operations; and the beams of the World are Natures; and the beams of Man are Arts and Sciences.

81. And Operations do act by the World, and upon man by the natural beams of the World, but Natures work by the Elements, and man by Arts and Sciences.

82. And this is the Government of the whole, depending upon the Nature of the One, and piercing or coming down by the One Mind, than which nothing is more Divine, and more efficacious or operative; and nothing more uniting, or nothing is more One. The Communion of Gods to Men, and of Men to God.

83. This is the Bonus Genius, or good Demon, blessed Soul that is fullest of it! And unhappy Soul that is empty of it!

84. Tat: And wherefore Father?

85. Trismegistus: Know Son, that every Soul hath the Good Mind; for of that it is we now speak, and not of that Minister of which we said before, That he was sent from the Judgment.

86. For the Soul without the Mind, can neither do, nor say any thing; for many times the Mind flies away from the Soul, and in that hour the Soul neither seeth nor heareth, but is like an unreasonable thing; so great is the power of the Mind.

87. But neither brooketh it an idle or lazy Soul, but leaves such a one fastened to the Body, and by it pressed down.

88. And such a Soul, O Son, hath no mind, wherefore neither must such a one be called a Man.

89. For man is a Divine living thing and is not to be compared to any brute Beast that lives upon Earth, but to them that are above in Heaven, that are called Gods.

90. Rather, if we shall be bold to speak the truth, he that is a man indeed, is above them, or at least they are equal in power, one to the other, For none of the things in Heaven will come down upon Earth, and leave the limits of Heaven, but a man ascends up into Heaven, and measures it.

91. And he knoweth what things are on high, and what below, and learneth all other things exactly.

92. And that which is the greatest of all, he leaveth not the Earth, and yet is above: So great is the greatness of his Nature.

93. Wherefore we must be bold to say, That an Earthly Man is a Mortal God, and That the Heavenly God is an Immortal Man.

94. Wherefore, by these two are all things governed, the World and Man; but they and all things else, of that which is One.