

THE PHILOSOPHY OF A MEMPHITE PRIEST.¹

BY JAMES HENRY BREASTED.

THERE is in the British Museum,² a sadly damaged stone, which in the opinion of the present writer contains the oldest known formulation of a philosophical *Weltanschauung*.³

It is a rectangular slab of black granite, 0,92×1,375 m, and the inscribed surface is considerably smaller, being 0,688×1,32 m, thus occupying only the upper three quarters of the stone, as it lies upon the long edge. The inscription consists of two horizontal lines at the top and beneath these, sixty-one vertical lines. It has suffered a fourfold defacement: (1) the name of king Shabaka in the s_3 - R^f ring has been everywhere (three times) chiseled out; (2) the name of Set, as a typhonic god, has everywhere (at least thirteen times) been chiseled out⁴; (3) a deep rectangular hole

¹ Professor Breasted has discussed the significance of the inscription on the Memphite slab for the history of philosophy in an article that appeared in *The Monist*, Vol. XII., No. 3, under the title "The First Philosopher."

² No 135*.

³ It was early published by Sharpe (*Insc.* I, 36-38) but so badly as to be unusable. The first two lines were copied from Sharpe by Rougé and employed for historical purposes (*Mél. d'Arch. Eg.* I, pp. 12 and 20 ff.); Goodwin made a Latin translation from Sharpe's faulty text (*Mél. Eg.* 3rd. ser. I, 247) but since then, with the exception of a few phrases from Sharpe translated by Renouf (*Hilbert, Lectures* 1879, pp. 150 and 220), it has been entirely neglected, until it was again published a few weeks ago by Messrs. Bryant and Read (*PSBA.* March, 1901).

I had already made a copy of the monument for the Berlin dictionary, before I saw their copy; a comparison of their plate with mine will explain the necessity of another publication; for example, their plate numbers the lines backward, many of Sharpe's errors remain uncorrected, the lacunae have by no means been exhausted and there is no distinction made between the gaps made intentionally by the scribe, and those due to wear or mutilation. The authors deserve much credit for devoting themselves to such a task, amid the duties of business life, and that they have not fully appreciated its extreme difficulty, is quite pardonable. Their essay on the monument does them great credit. It therefore seemed imperative to immediately put as full a text as possible before students of Egyptian thought and religion. This unexpectedly early publication of my plate therefore makes it impossible to present with it the full study of the document, and especially of *cognate material*, both Egyptian and Greek, which I had contemplated. What I have to offer therefore is only an account of the stone itself, and a rapid sketch of the more important ideas of the remarkable inscription which it bears.

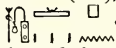

⁴ Incidentally, this shows that the hostility toward Set must have begun after the eighth century B. C.

about $0,12 \times 0,14$ m. has been chiseled in the centre of the stone, with rough channels some $0,25$ m. to $0,38$ m. in length, radiating from it; (4) the surface thus mutilated has been used as a nether millstone, the upper stone revolving about the central hole and crossing transversely the radiating channels, thus wearing off the surface of the stone and totally obliterating the inscription in a circle some $0,78$ m. across, around the central hole, with the exception of a few signs near the edge of the hole. In the plate, the first three mutilations, all due to the chisel, are represented by lined shading; the incidental wear, due to time and the upper millstone, is represented by dotted shading. The scale of the plate is 1:4 and palæographically the commoner signs are only roughly correct; for the inscription is excessively time-worn and so faint that either a squeeze or a photograph was out of the question, and I had not the appliances for a rubbing. The plate was therefore drawn from a hand copy, and then corrected before the original. All the rarer and more important signs however were drawn from the original. The inscription is, palæographically an exceedingly beautiful one, and worthy of the best age. The signs are in general very much like those reproduced in modern hieroglyphic type. All lacunae without exception were carefully measured and it is to be noted that all gaps in the plate not shaded by lines or dots, are original and intentional on the part of the scribe. The signs are *very* faint, and in badly worn places, reading is excessively difficult, being a matter of repeated and long examination. I spent several days on the lacunae, but I have no doubt that with a better light than it is possible to get in the museum gallery, more could in places be gotten out of them.

The line at the top contains the full titulary of king *S₃-b₃ k₃*, reading both ways from the middle; and the second line is the record of the king's renewal of the monument as follows: "His majesty wrote this document anew, in the house of his father Ptah, etc., his majesty having discovered it, a work of the ancestors, being eaten of worms; it was not legible from beginning to end. Then [he] wrote [this document¹] anew, more beautiful—than the one that was before (it), in order that his name might abide, and his monument be fixed in the house of his father, Ptah, etc., for all eternity, being a work of the Son of Re' [Shabaka], for his father Ptah, etc., in order that he might be given life eternally."


This record shows then, that our inscription is a copy by Shabaka of an older document on more perishable material; for the

¹ There is exactly room for this restoration, as at the beginning of the line.

king is particular not to call the older document a stela (*wd*), but refers to it simply as "this document or writing , " a term conveniently applicable alike to the new stela and the older wooden tablet, or whatever may have been the worm-eaten material of the older document. The fact that the latter had become "illegible from beginning to end," might cast suspicion upon the correctness and authenticity of the copy, but there are degrees of illegibility and the success of the renewal would indicate that the older document was not totally illegible, but only very difficult to read. There are evidences of such early loss however, like the omission of  at the head of l. 12*b*, and the gap in l. 61. But the regularity of the arrangement in ll. 3-7, and the continuity of the sense in ll. 13*a*-18*a*, show clearly that some gaps were intentional in the earlier original. In any case this superscription of itself proves that the remarkable ideas in our inscription are as old as the eighth century B. C., with strong presumption that they are older. The internal evidence that they are much older will be found below.


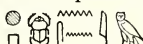
Of the sixty-one vertical lines under the above heading, only one third have survived entire, though scanty fragments of a few more are still legible. Under these circumstances one cannot determine at a glance, in which direction the lines should be read, for, as is well known, the general law that the animal-hieroglyphs shall all face toward the beginning of the inscription is sometimes violated in vertical line inscriptions. Only a careful examination of the ends and beginnings of contiguous lines can settle this question. We notice in l. 7 that its closing words are: "He judged Horus and Set;" now l. 8 begins: "He settled (?) their litigation," continuing with the appointment of Set as King of Upper and Horus as King of Lower Egypt. Looking in l. 8 at the mention of Set before Horus, preceding the mention of the two together in l. 9, we see clearly that ll. 10*a* and 10*b* headed by Set should precede l. 11*a* and 11*b* headed by Horus, and that both should precede l. 12*a* headed by both together. But it is to be noted that the horizontal lines divide the text into sections coherent in themselves; thus ll. 10*a* to 12*a* must be read together; ll. 10*b*-12*b* likewise; and similarly ll. 13*a*-18*a*; ll. 13*b*-18*b*, and ll. 13*c*-18*c*. The succession of ll. 13*c*-15*c* is very clear, as Messrs. Read and Bryant have noticed.¹


¹ After l. 18*a*, *b*, etc. the succession is not easily demonstrated owing to the wear of the millstone in the middle, and the fact that the fragments at top and bottom do not always belong

Ll. 21*b* and 22 are joined thus:  22

and the same phrase *in the middle* of l. 64 shows that the junction is correct. Again at the other end of the inscription, the following phrases occupying the end of one line and the beginning of another, must clearly be connected:





As regards *a*, the conclusion is much reinforced by the phrase , "thought of the heart," *in the middle* of ll. 58 and 56. The connection between the end of l. 58 and the beginning of l. 59 is equally clear, but the peculiar arrangement of the last words of l. 58 compel reference to the plate. The end of l. 60 connects clearly with l. 61, where  is plainly a relative

clause belonging to  (end of 61), though the meaning is uncertain. At the beginning of l. 62 I am not sure of the meaning, but connection with the end of l. 61 is clearly possible. Finally l. 62 narrates the drowning of Osiris, while in l. 63 Isis and Nephthys pull him ashore (*spr. sn sw r t*, "they bring him to the land"), a clear sequence of events; while l. 64 proceeds with the events following his death, which have been begun in l. 63.

The direction in which the lines should be numbered is therefore certain, and we have again before us a text with the signs facing backward instead of as usual toward the beginning of the inscription, as in the southern pylon inscription of Hatshepsut,

together, owing to the intervening horizontal line, now largely lost. L. 18*c* probably joins l. 19; in any case l. 19 was not cut by the horizontal line as is shown by l. 62, which corresponds with


it at top and bottom; but ll. 20 and 21 were cut by it, as all the lines introduced by  are so cut, and furthermore the end of l. 20*b* is in continuation of l. 19 and *not* of 20*a*, as is shown by comparison with ll. 62-63. Ll. 22-23 were probably not so cut, for l. 21*b* joins 22 as shown above.

Ll. 25-28 were cut by the horizontal line, as shown by the remains of . The proper succession of lines 8-24 is also clear from their content, as is shown further on.

¹The succession is here so patent that Messrs. Read and Bryant have inverted the order of these two lines in their translation, in order to accommodate them to their order, on the supposition that the *scribe* has inverted them.

the coronation inscription of Thutmose III. (both at Thebes) or the Dêr-el-Bahri texts of Hatshepsut. The fact that this peculiarity is so common in the eighteenth dynasty, together with the orthography and grammar of the inscription, which certainly cannot be later than the eighteenth dynasty, would indicate that our stela is an unaltered copy of a document at least as old as that period, while some points in orthography would indicate a much earlier date. Furthermore, it will be shown below that one of the chief ideas set forth in the document was current in the eighteenth dynasty; there are strong indications therefore, both in form, language, and content, that the inscription is to be dated in or *before* the beginning of the New Kingdom (about 1600 B. C.). Regarding the content of the document, let me repeat that what follows is a merely preliminary sketch to accompany the unexpectedly early publication of the text. I hope that a more elaborate study may follow, but at present I can only call attention to the most important of the remarkable ideas preserved to us in this ancient document, not attempting to treat more than incidentally its mythological content, nor to observe closely the order followed by the text. A consecutive translation will be found at the end. The stone once contained a complete exposition of the functions and qualities of Ptah, and it begins (l. 3) thus:

“This Ptah is he who is proclaimed under this great name.”


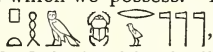
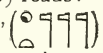
The word for “proclaim” or “publish” is , the only other occurrences of which are, so far as I know, in the coronation inscriptions of Hatshepsut, where it is used of the proclamation of her name as king. This is of course the meaning here also. Atum is his father (l. 6), “to whom the gods offered when he had judged Horus and Set.” After settling “their litigation, he set up Set as king of Upper Egypt in the Southland, from the place where he was born”; (cf. l. 10*a*) and Keb “set up Horus as king of Lower Egypt in the Northland, from the place where his father was drowned.” The dialogue accompanying these full lines now follows in the upper portions of the cut lines (10*a*–17*a*):


“Keb (to) Set, speech: ‘Hasten from the place wherein thou wast born.’

“Keb (to) Horus, speech: ‘Hasten from the place wherein thy father was drowned.’

“Keb (to) Horus and Set, speech: ‘I will judge you.’

“Keb (to) the ennead, speech: ‘I have assigned the inheritance to that heir, to the son of the first-born son.’”

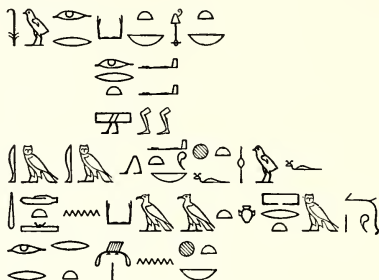
It is clear that "that heir" is Horus, for the accompanying half lines (10*b*-12*b*), after affirming that "it is evil for the heart of Keb that the portion of Horus should (only) be equal to the portion of Set," then state in accordance with the dialogue: "Keb gives his inheritance to Horus, he being the son of the first-born son." The pre-eminence of Horus is again indicated by the obscure lines 13*b* to 18*b*, each beginning with , and it is clearly stated (ll. 13*c*, 14*c*, 15*c*): "Horus stands on the earth, he is the uniter of this land, proclaimed under the great name *T3-tnn-rsi-i'nb.f*, lord of eternity. The double crown flourishes on his head; he is Horus, appearing as king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Uniter of the Two Lands at the stronghold, at the place¹ where the Two Lands are united." A new subject is now introduced with the same mechanical arrangement as before, viz., first the narrative in full lines (18*c*-19) and then the dialogue in half lines (20-21), the narrative (18*c*-19) related the drowning of Osiris, with the subsequent dialogue and offices of Horus, Isis, and Nephthys.² This narrative is resumed and partially repeated at the end of our inscription (ll. 62-64). From 25-35 the text again took up the conflict of Horus and Set, and then practically everything is lost, to the end of 47. The mythological references in the foregoing of course suggest many parallels in other texts, but these we here intentionally pass by, for it is in the last 15 lines of the inscription that we find enumerated the essential functions of Ptah which make the document, to my mind, the most remarkable monument of Egyptian thought which we possess. In l. 48 we have a title, probably to be read: , the meaning of which is of course doubtful.³ It is the title of a list of eight capacities or functions of Ptah, arranged in two fours. The upper four are nearly complete; of the lower four only traces remain. The Ptah-figures in the shrines are determinatives of the preceding designations of Ptah. The last of the upper four (l. 52*a*) reads: "Ptah, the great, is the heart and the tongue of the gods" (). This enigmatic utterance is, as we shall see, the text or theme of the

¹ This is undoubtedly a reference to , which first occurs in the Middle Kingdom.

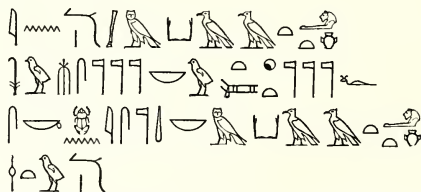
² The narrative continued through l. 22 at least, as a comparison with l. 64 shows.

³ It may mean: "Ptah is the being of the gods," for as he is later shown to be their intelligence and their medium of expression, he might easily be called their very being; but this is of course very doubtful. Another possible rendering is: "Ptah is the forms of the gods," meaning that the other gods are only different forms of his.

development in the following lines, and we shall best understand what is meant by it if we first turn to the clear passages of these frequently obscure lines. Ll. 57 (end)-58 are very explicit; they state:



“He¹ is the maker of every work, of every handicraft, the doing of the hands, the going of the feet; the movement of every member is according to his command,² (viz.) the expression (lit. ‘word’) of the heart’s thought, that cometh forth from the tongue and doeth the totality of everything.” Here it is clearly stated that everything first exists in the mind as thought, of which the “heart” is the seat; this thought becomes real and objective by finding expression, and of this the tongue is the channel. “Heart” is thus by metonymy the concrete term for “mind,” while in the same way “tongue” is the concrete term for “word” or “command,” the *expression* of the thought. Thus, *mind* and the *expression* of its content are denoted by “heart” and “tongue.” The ancient thinker leaves us in no doubt about this, for he again explicitly states (ll. 56-57):



“It is the tongue which repeats the thought of the heart; it (the heart) is the former of all gods, Atum and his ennead; at the

¹ This pronoun may refer to “heart,” but as “heart” is identified with Ptah, this will make no difference in the conclusion.

² Or, “according as he commands the word of the heart’s thought, that cometh forth,” etc.



find that it is not immaterial *mind* pure and simple, but rather the material source of ideas with which Ptah is identified. This is clearly stated in the following (l. 54):



“(He is) the one who makes to—(?)² that which comes forth from every body (thought)³, and from every mouth (speech) of all gods, of all people, of all cattle, and of all reptiles, which live,⁴ thinking and commanding everything that he wills.” Thought is frequently conceived as that which goes on in the “body,” as could be shown by many examples. The most convincing ones known to me are on the stela of Intef in the Louvre (C. 26, l. 15; it is the eighteenth dynasty):



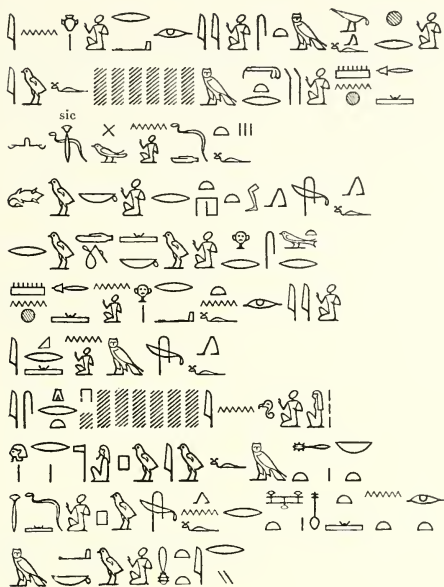
“One who knows what is in the body before anything passes out over the lips.” Furthermore, this example puts “body” and “lips” in a parallelism precisely like “body” and “mouth” in our inscription. The lost causative verb at the beginning is difficult to supply, but the concluding phrase proves all we have averred: the initiative thought, and the executive command are in every creature, even animals (!), the product of the god’s will. This is again clear in a phrase already quoted (l. 58): “The movement of every member is according to his command.” It is important for the date of our document to notice that this is an idea already current in the eighteenth dynasty. The court herald Intef, after recounting his excellent services to the king, says:⁵

¹ The lower end of the  is perhaps visible after 

² Causative verb lost.

³ *Wn m hnt* is an idiom for “come forth from.” ⁴ The participle agrees with the last noun.

⁵ Louvre Stela C. 26, ll. 22-24. This stela, as was long since evident from the inscription, belongs to the eighteenth dynasty; Intef was an officer of Thutmose III., for Mr. Newberry has discovered his tomb at Thebes.



“It was my heart which caused that I should do them (his services) by its guidance of my affairs (?), it being . . . an excellent witness. I did not transgress its¹ speech, I feared to overstep its guidance; I prospered therefore exceedingly; I was distinguished by reason of that which it caused that I should do; I was excellent through its guidance. ‘Lo,’ said the people, ‘it is an oracle² of the god, which is in every body; prosperous is he whom it hath guided to the propitious way of achievement.’ Behold, thus I was.”³

1 The pronoun “it” (Egyptian “he”) refers throughout to “heart.”

2 See my *New Chapter in the Life of Thutmose III.*, p. 22 (43).

3 There seems to be a similar idea in the strange words of the long text in Pahari's tomb:



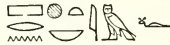
“Mayest thou spend eternity in gladness of heart, in the favor of the god who is in thee.” (Egypt. Exploration Fund 11th Mem., pl. IX, ll. 20-21). But it is a dead man to whom the words refer.

The universal prompting of the god is thus clearly recognised in the eighteenth dynasty. A man's heart is the seat of suggestion and guidance, and this *content* of his mind is "an oracle of the god which is in every body."¹ It is therefore particularly the *content* of the mind which is due to the god. But our priestly thinker goes even a step further than this, for he says (l. 54):








"The power of heart and tongue came into existence from him." The "power of the heart" probably does not mean here the capability of thinking; but, as the addition of tongue shows, it simply means that Ptah is the source of the power by which heart and tongue carry out the plans and ideas which he furnishes.

Of course, if Ptah is the suggester of every idea or plan, and at the same time furnishes the power to execute them, he is the author of all things, and this conclusion our document logically reaches (l. 58):



"Everything has come forth from him."³ This universal claim is now explained in detail, particularly with reference to the other gods (see plate II. 58-60): "Everything has come forth from him, whether offering, or food, or (l. 59) divine oblation, or any good thing. . . . since he formed the gods, he made the towns, he equipped the nomes, he placed the gods in their adyta (l. 60), he made their offerings flourish, he equipped their adyta, he made likenesses of their bodies to the satisfaction of their hearts, then the gods entered into their bodies, of every wood, of every costly stone, of every metal (?), and every thing." Similarly (l. 56) as above quoted: "He is the former of all gods, of Atum (and) his ennead." Now as Atum is the traditional father and creator of gods, this view of Ptah as their creator must be reconciled to the old mythical tradition. Hence, we find preceding the above statements of Ptah's creating and equipping the gods a marvellous explanation of it, which leads up to it. This explanation

¹ "Heart" and body are here used interchangeably as indicated above; this is probably because  or  is conceived as being in  | 

² The restoration of  is almost certain; for the sentence is really a relative clause: "by whose hand the power of heart and tongue came into existence," as is shown in the quotation below.

³ Or, "from it" (the heart).

begins by acknowledging Atum as creator of the gods, saying (l. 55):







“His ennead is before him, being the teeth and the lips, the phallus and hands of Atum. . . . [For] the ennead of Atum came into existence from his phallus, and his fingers;¹ the ennead being indeed the teeth and the lips in his mouth, which proclaims the name of everything, from which *Ssw* and *Tfnwt* came forth. This ennead so created seems now to have taken the next step (l. 56): ‘The gods formed the sight of the eyes, the hearing of the ears, the smelling of the nose, that they might furnish (lit., send up) the desire of the heart.’ That is, these senses render to the heart that which it desires. For the heart is the guiding and commanding intelligence to which the senses are merely servants (ll. 55–56): ‘It (the heart)² is the one that causes every successful issue to come forth; it is the tongue which repeats the thought of the heart; it (the heart) was the former of all gods, of Atum and his ennead, when every divine word even came into existence through the thought of the heart which the tongue commanded.’ Now as Ptah has already been identified (l. 52*a*) as the ‘heart’ of the gods, he is therefore their creator; thus paradoxical as it seems, Ptah is the one who formed the very god that begat him³ (Ptah). After this reconciliation our philosopher can proceed with unlimited claims for the ‘heart’ or ‘Ptah,’ and it is evident that the masc. pronoun from this point on refers to ‘heart,’ because ‘heart’ is ‘Ptah,’ the origin of everything. For even the works of men are primarily his; thus he is (l. 57): ‘The maker of every food offering and every oblation, by this word; the maker of that which is loved and that which is hated; he is the giver of life to him who bears peace, the giver of death to him who bears guilt.’ ”

Not satisfied with this development of the functions of Ptah, our Egyptian thinker must now elaborate the *theological* position of the god more fully still. We have already seen (l. 13) that Ptah is identified with Horus; he is now identified with Thoth (l. 59): “He is Thoth, the wise, greater is his strength than (that of) the gods; he united with Ptah, after he had made all things, every divine word; when he had formed the gods, had made the towns”

¹ This is undoubtedly a reference to the onanism of Atum.

² The example from the Intef-stela (Louvre C. 26) quoted above shows clearly that the “heart” may be thus referred to by a masc. pronoun.

³ This identification of Ptah, with the “mind” of the god who begat him, cannot but remind one of the New Testament λόγος; e. g.: ‘Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος: Οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. Πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν John i. 1–3.





(etc., as above). But it has already been stated in the inscription (l. 54) that: "Horus came into existence through him, Thoth came into existence through him, through Ptah, from whom the power of the heart and the tongue came into existence." This is close to affirmation that Horus is  and Thoth is . A glance at the preceding line (53) in the plate, where  and  stand in parallelism with  and  render this conclusion certain. We might arrange a mechanical equation thus:


$$\begin{array}{l} \begin{array}{l} \square \\ \square \\ \square \end{array} \begin{array}{l} \text{Ⲕ} \\ \text{Ⲕ} \\ \text{Ⲕ} \end{array} \text{ "Ptah" } = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \begin{array}{l} \text{Ⲕ} \\ \text{Ⲕ} \end{array} \text{ "heart" } = \begin{array}{l} \text{Ⲕ} \\ \text{Ⲕ} \end{array} \text{ "Horus" } \\ \begin{array}{l} \text{Ⲕ} \\ \text{Ⲕ} \end{array} \text{ "tongue" } = \begin{array}{l} \text{Ⲕ} \\ \text{Ⲕ} \end{array} \text{ "Thoth." } \end{array} \right.$$

Apparently both Horus and Thoth are conceived as emanations of Atum, for the obscure half line (53) probably states:¹ "He that became heart and he that became tongue are an emanation of Atum . . . their *Ki's* being this heart and this tongue," meaning the heart and tongue which he has just identified with Ptah in the preceding line (52). The identification of Thoth with tongue coincides with what we know of him elsewhere as the god of speech and writing; but Horus as heart or mind is, as far as I know, entirely new.

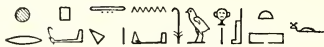
The text now (ll. 61-64) reverts to the Osiris myth, his drowning, the rescue of his body by Isis and Nephthys, its preparation for burial, his ascent to the gods, and his reception among them. Ptah is here brought in and left as Horus "in the presence of his father Osiris and the gods who are before him and behind him," with which words the inscription is concluded.

In estimating the above exposition of the main ideas of this stela, it must be remembered that these ideas are in a language little suited to the conveyance of philosophical notions; I have therefore tried to employ only the most unequivocal passages, leaving aside all the many passages of which several different, but all grammatically admissible versions might be made. It must be remembered also that the thinker using this language was as little skilled in such thought as his language was ill-suited to its expres-

¹The only uncertainty is in the rendering of the preposition *m* (before "heart" and "tongue"), which is like the cognate preposition  in Hebrew or  in Arabic, being used to introduce either a predicate or an instrument. Is the *m* in this passage a  instrumenti or a  essentiæ? I have rendered it as the latter, introducing the predicate; but it is quite possible to render it as the former, introducing the instrument, thus: "He that came into existence by the heart, and he that came into existence by the tongue," etc.

sion. And finally it is to be noted that modern study of the language has given us but slight acquaintance with Egyptian of this kind. I have tried to express in English the thoughts of the Egyptian in all their crudity, as he thought and expressed them. That they thus exhibit numerous paradoxes is only in harmony with what we know is everywhere common in Egyptian religious thought, thus illustrating again what is almost an axiom in modern anthropology, that the mind of early man unconsciously and therefore without the slightest difficulty entertains numerous glaring paradoxes. But in spite of all this, we have here, at an astonishingly early date, a philosophical conception of the world which is to some extent valid even at the present day. It may be summed up thus: assuming matter, all things first exist ideally in mind; speech or its medium, the tongue, constitutes the channel, as it were, by which these ideas pass into the world of objective reality. In that world, the thought impulses of all living creatures are due to the same mind that created such creatures; hence all products of the thought of such creatures are primarily due to the all-pervasive mind, and only secondarily to the living creatures concerned. Their works therefore form no exception to the postulate above assumed that all things first exist ideally in the mind of the god. To interweave these philosophical conceptions with the existent Egyptian mythology and pantheon was not an easy task and has resulted in much inconsequence and contradiction. Of course the original Ptah had no more connection with such philosophical notions than had the early Greek gods with the later philosophical interpretation of their functions and relations by the post-Christian Greek thinkers, whose manner of thinking on this subject indeed forms an exact parallel to the interpretation of Ptah in our inscription. And just as, to the Greek mind, the philosophical interpretation of a god was suggested by his place or function in mythic story, so in our inscription. Ptah, as shown by a thousand references, was the god of the architect and craftsman. That this was his place in the earliest times is shown (among other proofs) most strikingly by the hoary title of his high-priest:  "great in the execution of handiwork." Ptah, therefore, from the earliest times was known as the patron of the craftsmen, to whom he furnished plans and designs. It was but a step further to make him the author of *all* thoughts and plans, and from the architect of the craftsman's works he became the architect of the world. Indeed, it seems to me clear that the mind of our Egyptian priest, little

used as it was to abstractions, gained his above philosophical conception of the world by thinking about Ptah. The workshop of the Memphite temple, which produced statues, utensils, and offerings for the temple service, expands into a world, and Ptah, its lord, grows into the master-workman of the universal workshop. This is clear from the fact that our inscription actually regards the world more as a vast temple workshop and domain, producing offerings and utensils for the gods, under the guidance of Ptah. Like some thinkers of the present day, our Egyptian priest cannot get away from his ecclesiastical point of view. It was a point of view the evidences for which are particularly plentiful in the eighteenth dynasty. To quote only two: Amenhotep IV. (Amarna Boundary Stela ll. 2-3)¹ calls himself:



“The one who brings the earth to him (the god) that placed him on his throne.” Similarly Thutmose III. says (Brugsch, Thes. 1283-1284):



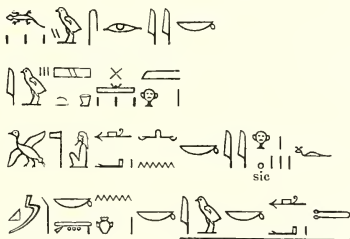
“I bring this land to the place where he (the god) is.” For king and priest alike the world is only a great domain of the god, but for the priest of Ptah it is not only his domain but also his workshop. And moving along this tangible line, our priest arrives finally at a great philosophical *Weltanschauung*.

I cannot forbear a short excursus here on what seems to me the real explanation of the most important religious movement in early Egypt, viz., that of Amenhotep IV. Continuing the above evidences of the Egyptian's attitude of mind toward the world, we see that even the temples symbolised this notion that the land was the god's domain, for the decorations represent the floor as the land and the roof as the sky, thus putting his domain into his house. Similarly all the king's victories and the list of his conquered towns are engraved on the temple walls; they are all the god's.² This view of things brings theological thinking into close and sensitive relationship with political conditions for the domain of the god so conceived is limited by the military and political power of the king. The god goes where Pharaoh's sword carries him. The advance of Pharaoh's boundary stelæ in Ethiopia and

¹ See also my *de Hymnis*, p. 32. See also speech of Ramses II. in the Kadesh-poem.

² It is hardly necessary to point out that the same view prevailed in Assyria.

Syria is the advance of the god's. Thutmose III. after his first campaign in Asia instantly gives three towns in the Lebanon to Amon, and enlarges the Theban temple of Amon. Now the theology of the time could not contemplate for 150 years the vast extension of the god's domain northward and southward without feeling its influence. Theological theory must inevitably extend the active government of the god to the limits of the domain whence he receives tribute. It can be no accident that we first find in Egypt the notion of a practically universal god, at the moment when he is receiving practically universal tribute from the world of that day. Furthermore, the *analogy* of the Pharaoh's power unquestionably operated powerfully with the Egyptian theologian at this time, as it had done in the past, furnishing him in tangible form the world-concept, the indispensable prerequisite to the notion of the world-god. Our Egyptian must see his *world* before he can see his *world-god*; that world conquered and organised and governed by the Pharaoh had now been before him for 150 years. Again, it is no accident therefore that the Egyptian's notion of a practically universal god arose at just this time, any more than is the rise of monotheism among the Hebrews accidental at a time when nations were being swallowed up in world-empires. Under Amenhotep VI. this newly extended government of the god is thus expressed:¹



¹ From my own copy of the great hymn, made the season after I published a commentary upon it (*De Hymnis in Solem sub Rege Amenophide IV. conceptis*, Berlin, 1894, see p. 47) from Bouriant's copy (*Miss.*, 1., pp. 2-5). I found out that the natives had hacked out about a third of it in just those places where Bouriant's copy is most faulty. We shall therefore always be obliged to depend upon Bouriant's inaccurate copy for a large part of this important monument, another illustration of the vital necessity of correct copying. The underlined passages are those now destroyed, for which we have only Bonriant. The character of this copy may be inferred from the following:

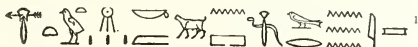


which corresponds to the second and third phrases above!



“How numerous are they which thou hast made, which are hidden before the face, O thou sole god, beside whom there is no other. Thou didst create the earth at thy desire, while thou wast alone: all people, (all) cattle large and small, all them that are on the ground, that go upon two (sic!) feet, those that are on high flying with their wings; the foreign lands: Syria and Kush, the land of Egypt. Thou settest every man into his place, thou makest their necessities; each one has his inheritance ($\left(\begin{smallmatrix} \text{---} \\ \text{---} \end{smallmatrix}\right)$), his lifetime is computed.” Then follow the differentiation of the races in color and speech, the maintenance of Egypt by a Nile from $\star \begin{smallmatrix} \text{---} \\ \text{---} \end{smallmatrix}$, and that of the foreigners by $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{---} \\ \text{---} \\ \text{---} \end{smallmatrix} \begin{smallmatrix} \text{---} \\ \text{---} \\ \text{---} \end{smallmatrix} \begin{smallmatrix} \text{---} \\ \text{---} \\ \text{---} \end{smallmatrix}$ “a Nile from heaven,” all of which is too long for quotation. The particular point to be observed is this: Syria on the north, Kush on the south, and Egypt in the midst, are exactly the domain of the Pharaoh, and it is over this that the hymn now extends the government of the god. This in brief is the kernel of an article I had contemplated; but of course the bulk of the evidence is omitted, together with the discussion of the particular measures taken by Amenhotep IV., like the introduction of Aton, the change of capital, and the extermination of other gods; lest the excursus should become too long. I desired

to take up Amenhotep IV. here only with regard to the extent of his god's domain. This side of the question, however, compels me to present one further remark. While believing that Amenhotep IV.'s theology is mainly due to the influence of the *political* conditions around him; there is some evidence that contemplation of the *natural* world was also an influence, though a minor one, in leading him to so extend the domain of his god. Thus he says to his god:



“Thy rays are in the midst of the sea;” showing that he had not failed to note the obvious universal sway of the sun. But as far back as the old kingdom they had viewed the sun from Punt to the slopes of Lebanon, yet no Egyptian extended his god's government thither, till the time when the Pharaoh's government was so extended.

Returning now to our inscription, it seems to me that its content justifies three important conclusions: First, that the early Egyptian did much more and much better thinking on abstract subjects than we have hitherto believed, having formed a philosophical conception of the world of men and things, of which no people need be ashamed. Second, it is obvious that the above conception of the world forms quite a sufficient basis for suggesting the later notions of *νοῦς* and *λόγος*, hitherto supposed to have been introduced into Egypt from abroad at a much later date. Thus the Greek tradition of the origin of their philosophy in Egypt undoubtedly contains more of truth than has in recent years been conceded. Third, the habit, later so prevalent among the Greeks, of interpreting philosophically the functions and relations of the Egyptian gods, thus importing a profound significance which they originally never possessed, had already begun in Egypt, centuries before the earliest of the Greek philosophers was born; and it is not impossible that the Greek practice of so interpreting their own gods received its first impulse from Egypt.

TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT.

[*The following translation contains all that is to be made out with certainty. A few obscure phrases are omitted, as well as the fragments around the left edge of the worn circle, which are too disconnected for*

¹From my own copy of the original (copy in *de Hymnis*, p. 39, is only from Bouriant).

rendering. The first two lines contain the subscription as given above (p. 324), and the text itself begins with line 3].

(3) This Ptah is he, who is proclaimed under this great name. (4) The Southland and the Northland are this Uniter, who appears as King of Lower Egypt. [(5) left blank]. (6) He that begat him is Atum, who formed the Nine Gods, (7) to whom the gods offered when he had judged Horus and Set. (8) He defended their litigation, in that he set up Set as King of Upper Egypt in the Southland, from the place where he was born, Sesu (?); whereas Keb, he set Horus as King of Lower Egypt in the Northland, from the place where his father was drowned; (9) at the division of the Two Lands. It is Horus and Set who stood on the ground (?); they joined the Two Lands at Enu (?); it is the boundary of the Two Lands.

(10a) Keb (to) Set, speech: "Hasten from the place, wherein thou wast born."

(11a) Keb (to) Horus, speech: "Hasten from the place wherein thy father was drowned."

(12a) Keb (to) Horus and Set, speech: "I will judge you."

(13a-17a) Keb (to) the gods: "I have assigned the inheritance to that heir, to the son of the first-born son."

(10b) (To) Set the Southland! It is evil to the heart of Keb, that the portion of Horus should be (only) equal to the portion of Set.

(11b) (to) Horus the Northland! It is Keb, who gives his inheritance to Horus, he being the son (12b) of his first-born son.

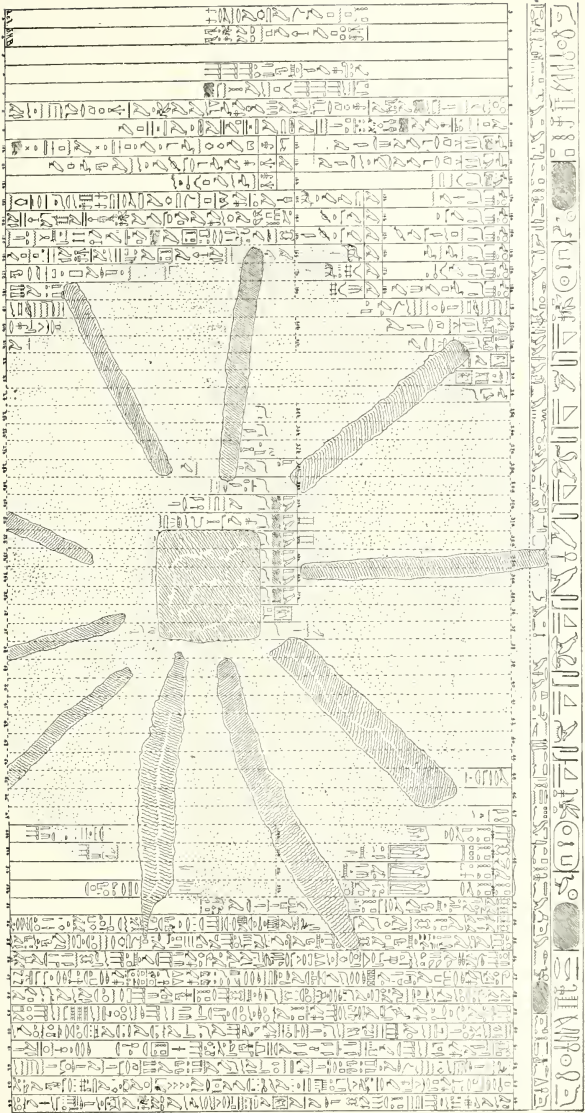
(13c) Horus stands on the earth, he is the uniter of this land, proclaimed under the great name, "Totenen south of his wall," lord of eternity. (14c) The double crown flourishes on his head; he is Horus, appearing as King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Uniter of the Two Lands at the stronghold, at the place where the Two Lands are united. (15c) Now when the—(?) and the column were at the front of the house of Ptah, Horus and Set were united, joined, they became brothers, they no longer strove together. (16c)

...united in the House of Ptah, in the place...wherein the Southland and the Northland join (?); it is this land. (Broken references to the Osiris-myth follow, and then comes the great central lacuna.)

.....

(48) Ptah is the Being of the gods (??)

(49a) Ptah upon the Great Throne is.....



(49b) fashioner of the gods.

(50a) Ptah-Nun is the father of Atum.

(50b) fashioner of the gods.

(51a) Ptah-Nekhabet is the mother who bore Atum.

(51b)

(52a) Ptah the Great is the heart and the tongue of the gods.

(52b) at the nose of Re every day.

(53) He that became heart, and he that became tongue are an emanation of Atum . . . their Ka's being this heart and this tongue.

(54) Horus came into existence through him, Thoth came into existence through him, through Ptah, from whom proceeded the power of the heart and the tongue . . . He is the one who makes to [lost causative verb] that which comes forth from every body (thought), and from every mouth (speech), of all gods, of all people, of all cattle, of all reptiles, which live, thinking and commanding [lit., "commanding the word of everything . . ."] everything that he wills.

(55) His Ennead is before him, being the teeth and the lips, the phallus and the hands of Atum . . . (For) the Ennead of Atum came into existence from his phallus and his fingers; the Ennead instead being the teeth and the lips in this mouth, which proclaims the name of everything; and from which Shu and Tefnut came forth.

(56) The gods fashioned the sight of the eyes, the hearing of the ears, and the smelling of the nose, that they might furnish the desire of the heart. It (the heart) is the one that bringeth forth every successful issue. It is the tongue which repeats the thought of the heart; it (the heart) is the fashioner of all gods, at the time when every divine word even came into existence by the thought (57) of the heart, and command of the tongue. It (the heart) is the maker of Ka's . . . the maker of every food-offering and every oblation, by this word, the maker of that which is loved and that which is hated; it is the giver of life to him who bears peace (the innocent), the giver of death to him who bears guilt. It (the heart) is the maker of all handiwork, and of every handicraft, the doing of the hands, the going of the feet; the movement of every member is according to its command (viz.,) the expression (lit. "word") of the heart's thought, that cometh forth from the tongue and doeth the totality of everything . . . Ptah-Totenen, he being the fashioner of the gods; everything has come forth from him, whether offering or food or (59) divine oblation, or any good thing.

He is Thoth, the Wise; greater is his strength than (that of)

the gods. He united with Ptah after he had made all things, every divine word; when he formed the gods, made the towns, equipped the nomes, placed the gods in their adyta, (60) made their offerings flourish, equipped their adyta, made likenesses of their bodies to the satisfaction of their hearts; then the gods entered into their bodies, of every wood, of every costly stone, of every metal (?) and everything that grows upon his . . . (?) (61) from which they come. It is he to whom all the gods sacrifice, their Ka's being united, associated with the Lord of the Two Lands. The divine storehouse of Totenen is the Great Seat attached to the heart of the gods who are in the house of Ptah, lord of life, lord . . . wherein the life of the Two Lands is made.

(62)¹. . . Osiris, he was drowned in his water; Isis and Nephthys saw; when they beheld him, they were of service to him. Horus gave command to Isis and Nephthys in Dedu, that they should save Osiris, and that they should prevent that he drown. (63) They went around . . . (?), they brought him to the land, he entered his secret structure in . . . of the lords of eternity, at the footsteps of him who rises in the horizon upon the highways of Re in the great seat. (64) He associates with the court, he becomes a brother to the gods.

Totenen-Ptah, lord of years, he hath become Osiris in the land, in . . . on the north side of this land. His son Horus comes to him, appearing as King of Upper Egypt, appearing as King of Lower Egypt, in the presence of his father, Osiris and the gods, his ancestors, who are behind him.

¹The *n* at the head of the line may be the negative as at the head of the duplicate line (19), so that we could render: "Osiris was *not* drowned in his water." The statements in ll. 8 and 11a, that he *was* drowned, would then probably indicate that he was merely nearly drowned.