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THE WISDOM OF PLOTINUS

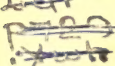
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THE WISDOM OF PLOTINUS

A METAPHYSICAL STUDY

By

CHARLES J. WHITBY

B.A., M.D., Cantab.

Author of "The Logic of Human Character"

Thus needs, that ye may apprehend, we speak:
Since from things sensible alone ye learn
That which, digested rightly, after turns
To intellectual.—

DANTE, *Paradise*. Canto iv., 40, 43
(Cary's Tr.)

Plotinus was a man of wonderful ability, and some of
the sublimest passages I ever read are in his works.—

S. T. COLERIDGE, *Table Talk*.

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TO MY FRIEND

J. R. E.,

WITH AFFECTIONATE REGARD

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PREFACE

THE temerity of this attempt at the re-statement—I will not say the resuscitation, for they have never died—of the doctrines of the most uncompromisingly-esoteric of idealists, in an age whose dominant conceptions are apparently so antithetic to those they embody, is by no means unrealised by its perpetrator. The task, however, was initiated, not deliberately, nor aggressively and by way of challenge to the confident agnosticism of contemporary opinion. In a sense, it can hardly be said to have been voluntarily undertaken at all. Casually introduced to the notice of the writer, at an age when his mind must have been peculiarly susceptible to their significance, the *Enneads* of Plotinus, as presented in the excellent French version of Bouillet,¹ took such a grip upon his imagination that for many months they seemed to have translated him bodily to the shining sphere of supersensual experi-

¹ To which and its voluminous commentary I hereby acknowledge my debt.

ence. Of this absorption, or withdrawal, the present monograph represents now, after the lapse of some years, to its author, not the coolly-conceived and methodically-executed record, but, as it were, the talisman, which, awakening, he found in his hand. For him, at least, the aspect it reveals is not that of a manufactured article, a fragment of research; it has, with all its defects, the qualities, too, of its mode of origin, the inevitableness of a piece of actual experience, something that has been lived out, and whose validity is therefore a permanently-established fact. If the work were to do again, it would, no doubt, be done differently, with more of academic method and a fuller reference to accredited authorities, but in these respects it hardly admits of any modification short of actual re-writing. And the change would not be entirely an advantage to the reader. Meanwhile, it may be claimed for this reconstruction of the doctrine of Plotinus, that it is based upon an analysis of the system as a whole; and inasmuch as he was an eclectic, deeply imbued with the lore of the great classic philosophers, having at his finger-tips the assimilated wisdom of Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Epicurus, and the Stoics, it may even be affirmed that in possessing a knowledge of the Neoplatonist system we virtually possess a skeleton key to the appreciation of both

ancient and modern metaphysic. Of ancient metaphysic, for the reason already stated; of modern, because, though, in the Science of Being, vast progress has doubtless been made since the days when Plotinus lived and taught at Rome and Alexandria, yet, upon the whole, it has been a progress which, leaving unmarred the grand outlines of the primitive scheme, has perforce contented itself with broadening and strengthening its logical foundations and enriching its bare and abstract austerity with all the fulness of concrete experience. To Plotinus thinkers so great, yet so diverse, as Hegel, Coleridge and Emerson have been proud to acknowledge their debt. Had it remained unacknowledged it might easily have been inferred by the student of their respective works. The modern theory of the Absolute, as represented in the masterly speculations of our own Dr. Bradley, amounts in fact to a reinstatement of the Plotinian theory of the Noumenal Universe. With a difference, no doubt; for, at first sight, the sensuous factors of experience, which Bradley includes, would in the Neoplatonist system appear to be excluded from the definition of Reality. But they are not really so excluded, only conceived as divested of the element of illusion which characterises them on the phenomenal plane. For Plotinus expressly states that, in the sphere of

true existence "thought" may equally be described as "clear sensation," just as, on the phenomenal plane, "sensation" is definable as "obscure thought." Symptoms have of late not been wanting of a revival of interest in the works of Plotinus and his Neoplatonist disciples, but with the exception of Dr. Bigg's volume on the subject, a work written from a theological rather than a free philosophical standpoint, I am not aware of the existence of any methodical exposition of the system. But if there be any truth in the assertion of Plotinus, that the contemplative faculty of individuals and of the race rises by a natural progression from the sensuous to the psychical, from the psychical to the spiritual plane, the appearance of this little work may prove not inopportune. Speculation has ever been the advance-guard of inductive science, and now that the latter has attained to the very verge of the material world, now that the elements themselves are being resolved into the semblance of unsubstantial accretions of the omnipresent ethereal or electrical medium, it would seem that the day is not far distant when the perennial controversy of materialism versus idealism shall have passed into the limbo of obsolete and meaningless things.

C. J. W.

BATH, 1908.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

SINCE this little book was published, and still more since I began to write it a good many years before that, a remarkable change in the attitude of public opinion towards transcendental speculations of this kind has come about. In the heyday of "agnosticism," to take seriously the doctrines of Neoplatonic idealism, to have faith in the possibility of a general revival of interest in such other-worldly points of view, argued an almost presumptuous audacity. So much so, indeed, that in writing the book I remember to have been oppressed by an atmosphere of coldly hostile opinion from which it was necessary to isolate myself by a constant effort of will. All the more gratifying is it therefore to find that my faith has been fully justified, not only by the kindly reception of my own modest work, but by other unmistakable signs of identical purport. It would no doubt be an exaggeration to claim that the philo-

sophy of Plotinus has become popular as yet ; but that, at least in the higher levels of the intellectual life of to-day, his name and his doctrines are " in the air " is, I think, incontestable. Only the other day, *apropos*, I believe, of Mr. McKenna's new translation of the *Enneads*, the *Daily Chronicle* gave a column to the subject. This is only one instance of many that are available, but what is more important is the change in the general relations of the two hostile camps of opinion—those who are in Disraeli's phrase on the side of or against " the angels." The former have, in military parlance, stolen the initiative ; it is the latter who are now on the defensive. It is a change of immense import, one altogether favourable to the appreciation of such a thinker as Plotinus.

C. J. W

BATH, 1919.

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Plotinus

To thee the solid universe appeared
A veil translucent to the strenuous gaze
Of Wisdom, pierced by coruscating rays
From some far source in dazzling light ensphered.
Thou wert as one who, when the mists had cleared,
Saw oversea the snow-clad mountains raise
Their peaks with dawn's effulgent hues ablaze,
And knew at once the land for which he steered.

Beyond that veil celestial shapes were seen
On works of awe and mystery intent,
Holding their course, majestic and serene,—
Archetypes of Beauty and the eternal Mind
Which in supernal rapture soared, and leant
On Love supreme, and thence their task divined.

The Wisdom of Plotinus

A METAPHYSICAL STUDY

Life of Plotinus. I. The philosopher whose gift to posterity forms the subject of this monograph was born (possibly at Lycopolis, in Egypt) in the year 205 or 206 A.D. in the reign of the Emperor Severus. The details of his origin are enveloped in mystery, but the fact that Eunapius and Suidas assert that he was of Egyptian parentage is worthy of recollection in view of his undoubted interest in, and familiarity with, Oriental Philosophy. It is, however, as the direct intellectual heir of Plato and Socrates, and as the apostle *par excellence* of the Platonic ideal of life and thought, that he stands out above all his contemporaries; and whatever his parentage, his genius was essentially Hellenic. At the age of twenty-seven he became a student of philosophy at Alexandria. The master whom he finally selected (after having expressed

dissatisfaction with the doctrines of several other professors) was Ammonius Saccas, a Platonist lecturer of great and probably deserved reputation, whose powers would seem to have been devoted entirely to the task of oral instruction, for he has left no literary traces.

The genius of Ammonius may, however, be inferred not only from the recorded approbation of his illustrious pupil, but also from the fact that having begun life as a porter on the quays he ended it as the most famous lecturer of his time. It is a noteworthy fact that he had at one time been a professed Christian, but had renounced that creed before Plotinus came under his instruction.

Plotinus remained at Alexandria (and remained a pupil of Ammonius) for eleven years; at the end of which time he joined the expedition of Gordian against the Persians, with a view, it is asserted, to acquiring familiarity with the wisdom of Persia and Hindustan. At the age of forty he settled in Rome, where he remained for twenty-six years, and where his active life, first as a lecturer, and, ten years later, when he was fifty years old, as an author commenced. His sole literary production is the philosophical treatise known as the "Enneads," a name derived from the fact that its six component fasciculi

are each subdivided into nine lesser parts or books. These Enneads, which were written down by Plotinus at irregular intervals during the last sixteen years of his life and entrusted to his friend, disciple and biographer, Porphyry, present in a highly unsystematic form the details of a philosophy which is nothing if not systematic, and were probably in great part an almost verbatim transcript of his own lectures. The friends of Plotinus at Rome were numerous, and included the Emperor Gallienus and his wife Salonina; and we are told that such was his repute for wisdom and probity that many boys and girls were (in the anticipation of their own death) committed to his care, as to a holy and divine guardian, by their parents. Moreover, it would seem that Plotinus proved himself worthy of the sacred trust thus reposed in him, and that he spared himself no pains in the matter, inasmuch as, although naturally averse to such practical interests, he endured even to go through the accounts of his wards' possessions, and was most accurate and business-like, saying that until they became philosophers their property and revenues ought to be kept intact and secure.

Plotinus died of some affection of the throat at the age of sixty-five or sixty-six in the year 269-70 A.D. Several miraculous attestations of the divine

favour enjoyed by Plotinus are alleged by his biographer, and he is said to have attained to beatific vision (of the One) four times during the six years (262-68) when Porphyry was with him at Rome.

**Ancient and
Modern
Methods.** 2. The reader of to-day who would profit by the study of Plotinus must renounce for a time that sceptical habit of mind which, having become well-nigh universal, may safely be trusted to re-assert itself in due season, and boldly confide himself to the genius of his author. In Philosophy as in Physical Science a great gulf divides the methods of our day from those of antiquity. To engage, therefore, in a rigid investigation of the so-called proofs adduced by Plotinus in favour of each successive proposition advanced in the *Enneads* would be an arduous and fruitless undertaking. The fundamental doctrines of Neoplatonism, as expounded by this philosopher, may be true or false in the main, or a mixture of truth and falsehood in about equal proportion, but the utmost that can be positively claimed on their behalf (and it is no despicable claim, assuredly) is that the lapse of more than sixteen centuries has failed to deprive them of genuine significance, or to produce an entirely-opposed but equally complete and coherent body of metaphysic.

Perhaps this undoubted fact of perennial significance is not altogether so surprising as at first sight (in view of the gigantic achievements of destructive criticism which divide us from the great free-thinkers of antiquity) might be supposed. It may safely be assumed that in each successive epoch of intellectual development special facilities and special difficulties, inseparable from the sum of conditions under which it was taken in hand, have attended the investigation of the master-problems of Philosophy, and that, consequently, the particular method adopted at any particular period by a mind of the first order in approaching and grappling with these problems will necessarily have been in great part determined (consciously or otherwise) by the circumstances of the time. Thus the central stream of human thought stands recorded in the writings of the great philosophers of all the historic ages, whose systems, viewed apart from the accident of the names of their authors, are found to succeed one another not arbitrarily, but (as Hegel¹ demonstrates) in an order predetermined and necessitated by the logical evolution of one central

The
Principal
Phases of
Thought.

Their
Necessity,

Logical
Sequence,

¹ *Logic of Hegel*, ch. 1, secs. 13, 14, 15 (Wallace).

idea. No system of thought which has once been recognised as the production of a genuine philosopher, and assigned a place in the central stream of intellectual development, can ever become entirely obsolete, for the simple reason (among others) that the mental growth of the individual being (broadly speaking) an abstract and summary of that of the race, there will always be found in a community virtual representatives of each one of the principal grades of intellectual progress.

3. The fundamental thought in the system of Plotinus is that of the demonstrable existence of an *Ideal Universe*, at the same time to be regarded as in the fullest sense of the word, an *actuality*,¹ constituting, moreover, the archetype or paradigm of the phenomenal order with which we are best acquainted.² This intelligible world, although absolutely withdrawn from all merely-sensuous observation, is nevertheless (as its name sufficiently indicates) considered in some degree subject to human investigation, and may, even in this life, be directly envisaged by those who have sufficiently developed the latent, but normal, powers of their spiritual being. The

¹ Enn. II, Lib. v, sec. 3.

² Enn. V, Lib. viii, sec. 8.

Intelligence or Intelligible World (for knowledge on this plane is to be regarded as identity of knowing subject with known object,¹ and it is therefore merely a matter of convenience which denomination we employ) is the second in dignity of three essential principles, known as the three Divine Hypostases. Hypostases, which together constitute the sum of supra-sensuous existence.² It is an axiom with Plotinus that every Being tends necessarily to produce an image of itself³ and the second and third of these three Divine Principles are accordingly to be viewed as manifestations of the power of the first and second respectively.

The first Divine Hypostasis is the prime source and principle of all being whatsoever and is designated indifferently the One or the Good. It is poetically likened by Plotinus to a stream which is its own source,⁴ whose derivative waves flow centrifugally in all directions, but which continues, nevertheless, to subsist immutably in and for itself. The first Divine Hypostasis transcends all known attributes, transcends even the idea of existence, and is known by its first image, the sphere of absolute reality or essence, the Intelligible Universe or the Universal

¹ Enn. II, Lib. ix, sec. 1.

² Enn. II, Lib. ix, sec. 1.

³ Enn. IV, Lib. v, sec. 7.

⁴ Enn. III. Lib. viii, sec. 9.

Intelligence. The forms of this Divine Universe are a manifestation of the creative power of the One, and the perfect harmony of their infinite variety is the seal of its presence among them.¹

The third in order of dignity of the Divine Hypostases of Plotinus is the Universal Soul, which is the image of the second, as that is the image of the first, but which differs from its principle (the Intelligence) in that its life is not perfectly impassive and (in a sense) immobile, but that it perpetually revolves about and within the sphere of Intelligence,² and hence aspires to and attains the Supreme Good not immediately, but (as it were) through the medium of the Beautiful.³

To illustrate (however imperfectly) his conception of the mutual relations of these three principles, Plotinus bids us imagine one circle enclosed by another and larger, but concentric, circle which revolves continually about it.⁴

The common centre of both represents the One, the motionless inner circle the Intelligence, and

¹ Enn. III, Lib. viii. sec. 10.

² Enn. II, Lib. ix, secs. 1, 2.

³ Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 16.

⁴ Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 16.

the uniformly revolving outer circle the Universal Soul. This illustration, although not without a certain metaphorical value, must not by any means be absolutely and literally interpreted, for in the first place the words external and internal have obviously here no definite validity, and in the second place it is, of the two, truer to speak of a superior principle as transcending and so including within itself its inferior principles, than conversely. For example it is truer (although true even then in a proximate and figurative sense only) to speak of the body as within the soul than the soul as within the body.¹ Moreover, the self-containedness and impassivity of the Intelligence (figured in the above illustration as immobility) is, as will subsequently be explained, not incompatible with intrinsic or essential movement.

Plotinus exhorts us to reverence our own personalities as "temples of the Gods," for in every individual microcosm all these three Divine principles are, he asserts, in some sort present; present, however, each one of them, in by no means the same degree of actualisation. The third, or lowest, principle only is commonly evolved within us in such measure that we can be truly said to possess it (manifesting itself

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. iii, sec. 22. Cf. Plato Tim. pp. 33, 34.

as the distinctively-human faculty of discursive reason or understanding) : the Divine Intelligence may with greater accuracy be regarded as possessing or overshadowing us, and it is only in exceptional individuals and under favourable circumstances that our minds are irradiated by its effulgence. As regards the first Divine Hypostasis (or supreme principle) its presence in our souls is to be regarded as constituting in the case of almost all of us throughout our terrestrial existence and in the most favoured cases for by far the greater part of it, a mere potentiality. Thus much of the doctrine of Plotinus with reference to these highest matters of inquiry it seemed necessary to explain at the outset. The reader is now prepared for a more detailed account of his system in the development of which, as would appear to be the method most conformable with the Neoplatonist idea, we shall commence (so to speak) at the base, and proceed towards the apex.

4. Accordingly we have first to explain
Matter. what this philosopher teaches concerning the material of which this phenomenal order is constructed, concerning the fundamental nature of matter. To speak of the *qualities* of matter would be a contradiction in terms, for in the view of Plotinus the distinguishing characteristic of matter is precisely to be devoid of all specific quality

and form.¹ Potentially, matter is the infinite sum of derivative being, but in act it is absolute nonentity—the infinite, the indefinite, the formless—abstractly conceivable only in virtue of a mental process which implies the suspension of true intellection and by Plotinus is characterised as inverted or “bastard” reasoning.²

Matter is capable of receiving a semblance of determinate existence by reflecting the forms derived by the universal soul from the intelligible universe, but in itself it remains unchanged and unchangeable. It is likened by Plotinus to a mirror in which we behold not objects themselves but merely the images or reflections of objects, the mirror meanwhile being unaffected by their presence.³ Further he explains that as the mirror in question though omnipresent is invisible (for it is just as truly nullipresent), we are naturally led to attribute reality to the illusive images we behold in it, that is to the fleeting phenomena of the sensible universe, which universe, in itself and regarded as a totality, holds an intermediate position between reality and negation. From the eternal incapacity of matter to acquire or even to participate in real existence follow as natural consequences the imperfections of the

The
Source of
Evil.

¹ Enn. II, Lib. iv, sec. 13. ² Enn. II, Lib. iv, sec. 12.

³ Enn. III, Lib. vi, sec. 7.

material universe, its inability to conform perfectly to the ideal or intelligible order. Hence in the system of Plotinus, which assigns to evil a merely-negative existence, matter, as the indigence of all positive qualities, that is of all good, is identified with evil.¹ On this view the possibility in general of the knowledge of evil (that is to say of subjection to fate or necessity) is alone attributable to the Deity, its actual experience by each one of us being ultimately due to a voluntary determination of the individual consciousness towards the material or sensuous plane²—a subject to which we shall presently return.

The Universe. 5. Plotinus taught that the material universe has been created only in the sense that it is to be regarded as the permanent act or image of the universal soul; that it has never had a beginning and will never come to an end,³ but exists perpetually as an organism of infinite complexity and grandeur, whose remotest parts are allied by an intimate bond of vital sympathy, or (as Kant in adopting the same truth has expressed it) are in thorough reciprocity of action.⁴

¹ Enn. II, Lib. iv, sec. 16. ² Enn. III, Lib. ii, sec. 7.

³ Enn. II, Lib. ix, sec. 3.

⁴ *Critick of Pure Reason* (F. Haywood), bk. II, chap. ii, sec. 3. **Principle of Co-existence.**

The Relation of the third Divine Hypostasis to the material universe next demands our attention.

The existence of the Universal Soul is essentially an active and eternal contemplation of the One as revealed in the sphere of Intelligence.¹ In virtue of this act of contemplation the Universal Soul may be said to inhabit the highest region of the sphere of Intelligence (or Spirit), and in virtue of its presence there and its assimilation of the perfect forms of the intelligible order, it partakes of the creative power of Intelligence. Now the Universal Soul is of the nature of Reason (*λόγος*),² that is to say, an indivisible, non-corporeal essence, whose property is to be present as a whole in each one of its parts or faculties.³ It is, in fact, the last reason of the intelligible and the first of the material order.⁴ When, therefore, Plotinus (speaking figuratively of course) asserts that the Universal Soul has two parts, a principal part which inhabits the sphere of Intelligence and an inferior part which proceeds towards the sensible world,⁵ what he intends to convey is that although the essential life of this

¹ Enn. II, Lib. ix, sec. 1.

² Enn. IV, Lib. iii, sec. 9.

³ Enn. IV, Lib. ix, sec. 8.

⁴ Enn. IV, Lib. vi, sec. 3.

⁵ Enn. III, Lib. viii sec. 2.

great Being is a contemplation and desire of a superior principle, and an attainment of that perfection exactly proportioned to the strength of its aspiration, still its powers are not exhausted by this effort, but rather are eternally replenished thereby, and spontaneously overflowing and becoming in their turn creative, are accordingly manifested in the wondrous beauty and infinite variety of the Material Universe.

The Natural or Generative Power which (thus generated) proceeds from the essence of Nature. the Universal Soul is often personified as Nature, and is in fact an image or act of the Principal Power, and, as such, an inferior principle. The life of Nature, like that of the Universal Soul itself, is essentially contemplative,¹ but with this difference, that the objects of Nature's contemplation are ideas not *as such*, not as independent and self-created, but as forms derived by the (principal power of the) Universal Soul from the bosom of the Divine Intelligence.² But these derivative forms, as manifestations of the "procession" of the Universal Soul, are in fact identical with its Natural or Generative Power—that is with Nature. In other words the direct object of the contemplation of Nature

¹ Enn. III, Lib. viii, sec. 2.

² Enn. III, Lib. viii, sec. 3.

is not the Divine Intelligence but Nature herself.¹ Hence the inferior creative power of Nature, and hence in part the imperfections of the Material Universe. The Universal Soul as such (its Principal Power or Essential Being) does not, however, incline towards the material plane, but subsisting impassively in the bosom of the Divine Intelligence creates, upholds, and beautifies the world through the medium of Nature.

**Germinal
Reasons or
Forms.** The immaterial germs (Plotinus calls them spermatic or germinal reasons²) of all possible created beings, past, present and future, subsist then harmoniously and simultaneously in the unity of Nature. As reasons they cannot be ascribed actual (spatial) extension, but they have different degrees of potential magnitude in virtue of which they impose upon matter (which, as we have seen, is the privation of all specific quality) images of that degree of extension which is analogically appropriate.³ In the same way the sequence of events is determined in accordance with causal and logical propriety. To **Evolution.** the Neoplatonist the modern doctrine of evolution would have presented few difficulties ;

¹ Enn. III, Lib. viii, sec. 2.

² λόγοι σπερματικοὶ ἢ γεννητικοί.

³ Enn. III. Lib. vi, secs. 16, 17, 18.

he would have defined it perhaps as the orderly manifestation under temporal and spatial conditions of eternal and universal principles. Professor Huxley, in an essay on the "Progress of Science," has in fact expressly characterised as "forms of evolution" (i.e. phases of the evolutionary idea) the emanistic theories which have played so great a part in Neoplatonic philosophy and in Gnostic theology.

The phenomenal world has then been created only in the sense that it owes its perpetual existence to that of a superior Being. Its creation results not from a voluntary determination, a deliberate purposive act, on the part of the Demiurge¹ but in virtue of the law which ordains that every real existence is manifested in part by the appearance of an image or copy of inferior substantiality.² For all things inferior to the First exist always in successive and immutable dependency. They have not been engendered at a determinate instant, and will never come to an end.³ The character of the material universe is due to the irradiation of matter (or

Inferiority
of the
Sensible
Universe.

¹ The Universal Soul, often personified by Plotinus under the name of Jupiter.

² Enn. IV, Lib. v, sec. 7, "Every Being has an act which is its image."

³ Enn. II, Lib. ix, sec. 3.

chaos) by the complex unity of forms or reasons derived by the Universal Soul from its contemplation of the sphere of essential reality and absolute perfection. By reason of the inability of matter to participate fully in the real (positive) qualities of existence it follows that the perfection of the Material Universe is inferior to that of the Universal Soul, and still more so to that of the Intelligible Universe.¹ Nevertheless it has that degree of perfection which is appropriate to a product of the concourse of liberty (reason) and necessity (or matter), and since its disposition serves to reveal the grandeur of the intelligible nature, it must not be lightly condemned or irreverently criticised.²

It is particularly to be remembered
 Its Essential Divinity. that the Soul which creates, upholds and administers the universe which we inhabit is not allied to it in the same way as, for example, a human soul to a human body—as the result, that is, of a voluntary inclination,³ and remains therefore, in itself, quite untrammelled by the bonds of necessity, to which individual souls have all by their own act in greater or less degree submitted.⁴ And since the universe as

¹ Enn. III, Lib. ii, secs. 1, 2.

² Enn. II, Lib. ix, sec. 8.

³ Enn. II, Lib. ix, sec. 4. ⁴ Enn. II, Lib. ix, sec. 7.

an organised Being (Nature) lives in and by the Universal Soul, it follows that the life in question, of the world considered as a totality, is essentially Divine and impassive.¹ By reason of the perfection of their movements, that is their conformity to the intelligible order, Plotinus even attributes immortality and a species of Divinity to the sun, the stars and (in a lesser degree) to the earth and the planets, and accredits them with the power of

And
Vital
Unity. modifying human destiny in sub-conscious
 response to incantations or prayers.²

For each of the celestial bodies is conceived not merely as constituting a passive element of the uniformity of Nature, but also as possessing an individual soul, which, like the Universal Soul of which it is a member, essentially pertains to and contemplates the intelligible order, but by its lower irrational or strictly natural soul (in virtue of which it has potential sensitivity) is in immediate vital or sympathetic relation with the rest of the material universe.³

¹ Enn. II, Lib. iii, sec. 9.

² Enn. II, Lib. i, sec. 4; Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 16.

³ Enn. II, Lib. iii, sec. 7, Everything is co-ordinated in the universe (*σύνταξις μία*). Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 32, It is necessary to concede that this universe is a single animal (*ζῶον ἓν*) which includes within itself all animals, and which has in it a single soul (*ψυχὴ μία*) which is com-

Individuality. 6. Before we proceed with the arguments by means of which Plotinus justifies the acquiescence of Divine Providence in the temporary existence of misery and injustice, it will be necessary to explain briefly his view of what constitutes individuality for animals and for men. It has already been stated that each of the three Divine Hypostases (the One, the Intelligence, and the Soul) is, in varying degrees of immanence and actuality, represented in the constitution of each particular microcosm, and this applies not merely to Humanity but to all things whatsoever.

Its Basis. But the faculty which essentially characterises an individual, a species, or a kind, is that which is present not merely as a latent possibility but in active and supreme reality, which, therefore, however much or little it may on occasion be modified by the influence of higher or lower faculties, is manifested more or less clearly in every action of the individual, or in the actions of every member of the species or kind. Needless to say, it is the possession of the reasoning faculty (or judgment)

In Man, which thus characterises Humanity,
Animals, the faculty of sensibility which consti-
Plants. tutes the animal, and the nutritive or

municated to all its parts, that is to all those beings which are parts of the universe.

vegetative principle which is *par excellence* the distinctive feature of the life of plants.¹ According, therefore, as the principal activity of a particular intelligence is manifesting itself in one or other of these three modes, will be the form in which we envisage its individuality upon the phenomenal plane of existence.

But the reasoning faculty, judgment or understanding (Plotinus calls it discursive reason) of man must be carefully distinguished from the pure reason which (in a fashion analogous to, but not identical with that in which the supreme Intelligence is related to the Soul of the Universe) illuminates and regulates its activity, and is actually possessed at all times by no merely-human individual and only occasionally by those who devote themselves to the intellectual life—who habitually contemplate the Idea.² Discursive reason is the faculty by means of which we formally consider and combine the diversity presented by sensation and imagination, thus forming concepts and judgments, which latter are or should be in their turn subjected to the regulative action of intelligence

¹ Enn. I, Lib. i, sec. 7.

² Enn. IV, Lib. iii, sec. 30; Enn. IV, Lib. iii, sec. 18; Enn. V, Lib. iii, sec. 3.

or pure reason.¹ By the use of this generic, dis-

The Goal of Reason. tinctively-human faculty of discursive reason (even in supposed independence of any higher principle) a certain degree of harmony is established among the chaos of sensations and images which present themselves in the course of our ordinary experience ; but in order to attain

Philosophy. to true wisdom, the objective truth which is the goal of the philosopher, we must not be content to allow our merely-formal judgments to be passively moulded by an immanent intelligence ; but by a supreme effort of contemplation must emancipate our consciousness from the trammels of subjectivity and emerge in the realm of the Absolute, the sphere of Concrete Reality, where thought and the thinker are one.²

Its Rewards. In the same proportion as we devote ourselves to this high endeavour, we shall alienate our consciousness from that merely-sensitive and nutritive activity in virtue of which we are allied to the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and subject, like them, to the laws of external necessity ; and in proportion to the success of this endeavour our life will be rational and self-determined.

¹ Enn. V, Lib. iii, secs. 2, 4.

² Enn. I, Lib. ii, sec. 4 ; Enn. VI, Lib. ii, sec. 21.

No accident can deprive the philosopher of the serene contemplation of Intellectual Beauty, nor are its inestimable privileges incompatible with an adequate discharge of the common duties of life, since, presumably, an actual economy of effort is in the long run effected in virtue of that superior enlightenment which distinguishes the true sage from those merely sagacious individuals whose actions are regulated by more or less worldly and fallible maxims derived from the use of the understanding or *unconverted* reason.

For the philosopher, then, it is obviously a matter of no great import whether or not the outward circumstances of his life be such as would be considered fortunate or otherwise by the vulgar, for he knows that poverty, sickness and the like are not substantial, but only apparent and ephemeral evils, and that, moreover, by patience and fortitude they can be transformed into solid advantages, can be made conducive to the soul's prosperity and edification.¹ It will be contended, doubtless (and with at least a show of justice), that for many, the vast majority of mankind, the consolations of philosophy, however highly they may be esteemed by their

¹ Enn. II, Lib. ix, sec. 9.

possessors, are practically unattainable, and that for them at least the existence of moral and physical evil are facts sufficiently real, involving an incalculable sum of anguish and misery. Doubtless the rational solution of the problem suggested by the surveyal of this anguish and misery is a task of immense difficulty, perhaps (as Plotinus himself admits) of inherent impossibility,¹ but, nevertheless and for obvious reasons, it must not be shirked by the philosopher who would justify his very existence or the claims of that faculty of insight upon which all philosophies are ultimately based. It has frequently been asserted (and not without reason) that metaphysical assumptions underlie the dogmata of materialism no less than those of the purest idealism, for, to quote a phrase, or rather a definition of Schopenhauer's, man is essentially a metaphysical animal. Certainly the problem of the nature and source of evil must have its true and rational solution, which presumably must be capable of at least approximate formulation in terms that shall be intelligible to the normal indi-

¹ "Our quaint metaphysical opinions in an hour of anguish are like playthings by the bedside of a child deadly sick." *Anima Poetae*. From the "Unpublished Note Books of Samuel Taylor Coleridge." How true and touching, and, coming from so ardent a metaphysician, how significant an admission is this.

vidual. The solution implied or indicated by the utterances of Plotinus in reference to this matter may be interpreted somewhat as follows.

7. In the first place we are called upon, in obedience no less to the dictates of reason than the consensus (or common-sense) of Humanity, to recognise as universal two contrasted modes or aspects of Being—the order of Providence or freedom, and the order of Necessity or limitation. To both of these orders we are each of us consciously allied and in separate relation to either our particular thoughts, words, actions, and experiences may be considered, and in the one case (as unconditioned) justified or condemned, in the other (as externally or internally determined) logically or causally explained. But although there is a sense in which, on the one hand, our individual freedom and responsibility and on the other our subjection to law may with approximate validity be interpreted as absolute (for this is clearly implied, although not, I think, explicitly stated, by Plotinus in the *Enneads*), still it is usual, and practically more convenient, in considering, for instance, the terrestrial existence of a particular individual, to regard his thoughts alone as essentially unconditioned (and these only in so far as they are in the truest sense

The
Problem
of Evil.

Freedom
v.
Necessity.

of the word intelligent), his physical experiences as partly fortuitous, and upon the whole subject to strict limitation, and his actions as alternating between freedom and necessity, limited as regards their execution, but morally free in so far as they are in conscious accordance with truly rational principles. From the common human standpoint the spontaneity of thought is more conspicuous than its regulation by and evolution in accordance with an internal and self-imposed necessity (the law "whose service is perfect freedom"), while the converse is true with regard to the external universe, whose essential Divinity is effectually concealed by the rigid uniformity of its phenomenal investiture. In the intelligible universe there is an absolute

reconciliation of these two extremes of Law and Freedom: everything is as it must be, and at the same time everything is as we would choose to have it. Every individual is in some sort the whole intelligible universe, but in entering upon material existence we so rupture the unity of our being and narrow the scope of its consciousness that the universal order to which we are allied and which is even in a sense our own creation, confronts our freedom

in the aspect of an external Necessity, blind, invincible, relentless.¹ But this

¹ Enn. III, Lib. iv, sec. 3; Enn. IV, Lib. vi, sec. 3.

external Necessity, although possessing for us as inhabitants of the material universe actual temporary validity, is nevertheless a manifestation of that intrinsic law which, no less than freedom, is the truth of our own existence, and is therefore in essence, not external, not hostile, not evil (as we name it) but rather a part of ourselves.

Illusion. If this view of the nature and origin of external Necessity be accepted, it follows that, in despite of all that the senses may argue and loudly assert to the contrary, the sufferings which we endure ourselves or witness in the lives of those about us owe what they have of substantiality to the occult will of the very person who endures them and that regarded merely as evils, fortuitous and supererogatory evils, they are illusory and unreal. Hence, too, it follows that such words as torture, desolation, injustice, ruin are not sterling coins impressed with the stamp of authentic Reason, but comparable rather to specimens of a paper currency hurriedly issued to meet the exigencies of a temporary emergency, words whose recognition and use is, for the philosopher at least, a merely provisional concession to the dictates of mundane expediency, or, which is the same thing, to the claims of sensibility and illusion.

The mental attitude of Plotinus has certainly

very little in common on this point with that of modern pessimism, but simply and crudely to have characterised his system as an optimistic one would practically have amounted to a gross misrepresentation. Plotinus does not deny or ignore the existence of suffering and evil any more than he denies the limitation of human faculty and human wisdom: he simply denies the ultimate reality of such evil, the transcendental validity of such limitation.

Granted that the order which obtains
Apparent in the material universe is such that
Injustice the apparently quite undeserved suffering
Exception. must frequently befall its conscious
 inhabitants in the course of a particular abstractly-
 contemplated existence, it still remains true that
 even from this point of view a certain rude justice
Justice is the rule. For consider in detail the
the Rule. facts of any particular isolated existence,
 and, conceding to the full its liability to become
 the victim of any of those accidents which are
 inevitable in an imperfect world, regulated with
 a view to universal rather than particular interests,
Accident. it will, nevertheless, be found that a
 substantial *Reason* (in the guise of a
 moral or physical weakness or delinquency) can
 usually be assigned for the occurrence of such or

such a misfortune to the individual in question.

Moreover (argues Plotinus) it is to be remembered in the first place that every sensitive inhabitant of the material plane has by its own act entered upon the state of sensitivity with all the liabilities involved,¹ and, secondly, that appearances notwithstanding, there is in the long run justice and nothing but Justice, inasmuch as every individual monad in the course of an infinite cycle of successive incarnations receives exact compensation for the good or bad qualities it displays.²

As for those who consider the existence of evil and suffering, even as the outcome of laws of an unimpeachable integrity, incompatible with belief in the benignity of Divine Providence, Plotinus has very little sympathy with their scruples. The conception of a creation so framed and ordered as to preclude for its inhabitants all possibility of acquiring the dignity inseparable from tragic experience is profoundly repugnant to the robust sanity, the austere but dominant aesthetic sense of this philosopher. His general attitude in regard to this tremendous, this crucial

¹ Enn. III, Lib. ii, sec. 7.

² Enn. III, Lib. ii, sec. 13.

problem of the justification or explication of evil, may best be indicated, however, by quoting from the *Enneads* a few of the pregnant sentences which bear upon the subject. Thus, after asserting that in cases where the moderately virtuous are ill-used by the vicious, it is usually because the former are in some respect the inferiors of their oppressors, he exclaims that "*God is not called upon to fight for cowards, for the law wills that in war one's life should be saved by valour, not by prayers.*"¹ Nor are we justly entitled to complain that the wicked have a richer crop if they cultivate the soil better than we who are virtuous.² We must not, he warns us, extend our demands upon the action of Providence to the extent of annihilating the need for our own.³

Variety
in Unity. It is true that rogues and fools are at all times plentiful, but "*one does not condemn a tragedy because one sees other characters than heroes appear in it, a slave for instance, a person who speaks badly: it would be to destroy the beauty of the composition were we to cut out these inferior persons and all the passages in which they figure.*"⁴

Metem-
psychosis. Then, too, in estimating the justice of Divinity, account must be taken not

¹ *Enn.* III, Lib. ii, sec. 8.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Enn.* III, Lib. ii, sec. 9. ⁴ *Enn.* III, Lib. ii, sec. 11.

merely of the present but also of the past and future, for Destiny makes those slaves who have been masters in a former life if they have abused their powers, and this change is beneficial to them.

*"She renders poor those who have ill employed their riches, for poverty is of service even to the virtuous."*¹

The good things of the soul which are the only substantial benefits are invariably apportioned in accordance with our merits.

*"The combats, too, in which men, those mortal beings, engage between themselves with an appearance of regularity resembling that of the Pyrrhic dances prove clearly that these matters, considered so momentous, are but as the games of children, and that death is no just ground for terror."*²

8. Readers of the journal of Marie Providence and the Individual : Detachment. Bashkirtseff may recall a psychological observation of the writer's, to the effect that she distinguishes a part of her nature (*moi spectateur*, she calls it) which impassively surveys, as it were from above, the actions, incidents and emotions of her daily life, criticising them in a quite impersonal way with reference to their poetic or dramatic rather than their ethical or con-

¹ Enn. III, Lib. ii, sec. 13.

² Enn. III, Lib. ii, sec. 15.

ventional fitness, and absolutely indifferent at all times to the suffering on the part of the lower consciousness involved by the satisfaction of its peremptory demand for the spectacle of an intense and varied experience. "An intellectual man," says Emerson (revealing the same idea as the property of a saner and less emotional temperament) "can see himself as a third person; therefore his faults and delusions interest him equally with his successes. Though he wishes to prosper in affairs he wishes more to know the history and destiny of man; whilst the cloud of egotists drifting about him are only interested in a low success." And the same fundamental thought may be recognised in the frequent comparison of life by Plotinus to an immense drama in which the soul itself (its higher faculty) does not, or should not take part, but only its image or shadow.¹

The Drama of Life. This drama has been composed and is conducted by the Divine art which governs and supports the universe and the various parts in it, good, bad and indifferent, allotted to individuals whose free and voluntary disposition renders them suitable to perform them, are by the said art so regulated and combined as to result in a glorious harmony.² As spiritual beings we are

¹ Enn. III, Lib. ii, sec. 15.

² Enn. III, Lib. ii, sec. 17.

free to choose our own rôles in the masque of the universe, but the exercise of that freedom does not enable us to transcend the scope of Predestination. Divine Providence, and is therefore compatible with pre-ordained necessity.¹ For, as Cacciaguida in Paradise explains to the poet—

Contingency, unfolded not to view
Upon the tablet of your mortal mould,
Is all depicted in the eternal sight;
But hence deriveth not necessity,
More than the tall ship, hurried down the flood,
Doth from the vision that reflects the scene.²

Providence in its relation to the wicked is compared by Plotinus to a commander-in-chief who provides for the actions of the enemy, but is not accountable for them.³ As human beings here on earth we are free only by virtue of, and in proportion to our possession and employment of the reasoning faculty, and its enlightenment by the pure intellect which is its source; free in proportion to our conformity to the dictates of the particular genius or demon which we recognise as the governing principle of our career. The freedom of the will as manifested

¹ Enn. III, Lib. iii, sec. 3.

² *Divine Comedy of Dante* (Cary). Paradise, Canto xvii, 37 *et seq.*

³ Enn. III, Lib. iii, sec. 2.

during actual terrestrial existence is not, however, to be formally conceived as a capacity to choose arbitrarily between diverse particular alternatives as they arise, but simply as the general ability to devote ourselves to rational and universal ends. Choice, or freewill, is in fact expressly characterised by Plotinus as an allegorical designation of the *bias* or general disposition which results from the act of the soul before generation.¹ Nevertheless, the life of the true idealist is in the long run recognised even by the vulgar and unenlightened as essentially divine and unconditioned. On the other hand, the lives of each one of us are under the sway of Destiny in exact proportion to our surrender to the demands of appetite and the capricious guidance of the merely-sensuous imagination.

9. Plotinus teaches that the soul of each human being is the abode of a demon or familiar spirit, representing the dominant motive of the individual career, the *idea* to whose realisation the soul in question is voluntarily devoted.² This theory was undoubtedly derived from Plato and is entitled to the credit of his authority.³ Plotinus explains that the demon

¹ Enn. III, Lib. iv, sec. 5.

² Enn. III, Lib. iv, sec. 3.

³ Cf. *The Banquet*. Cf. also Matt. xviii. 10, a text which

Genius
and
Talent.

(or genius, as we should say) of a particular career is practically identical with the faculty immediately superior to that which is habitually exercised by the soul of the individual in question (his leading *talent*), and that, presiding over our employment of such and all other faculties, this demon refuses to allow us to sink much below that plane of action which we have chosen—to renounce the pursuit of our ideal. That which acts, then, is the principle inferior to the demon (or genius) of our life, which can neither evade his influence, nor equal his example. If we live the sensuous life we have reason for our demon (that is our ideal will be a life of practical mundane sagacity), if the rational, an intelligence, if the intellectual, Divinity.¹ Doubtless, however, these three primary grades may be subdivided *ad libitum*. From this theory it of course follows that in a certain limited sense what we call genius or inspiration may be predicated of all human beings; but genius of that higher kind to which the word is now commonly restricted remains the prerogative of those whose demonic faculty is at least on the intelligible plane. One is tempted to was the basis of the doctrine of guardian angels as formulated by the Fathers of the Church.

¹ Enn. III, Lib. iv, sec. 3.

quote here from the "Table Talk," of the poet Coleridge an aphorism to the effect that genius is invariably metaphysical.¹

Plotinus holds that the soul on leaving the body becomes identified with the faculty to whose manifestation her terrestrial activity has been mainly devoted, and that even before the dissolution of the body the lower faculties of discursive reason, sensuous imagination and sensibility may be so spiritualised by their employment in the service of the Ideal as to become in a measure "separated" from the material organism and reinstated in the

Pursuit of
Ideals. sphere of Intelligence—a spiritual emancipation which is at once completed by death.² Thus the mere fact of devotion to an ideal, properly so-called (despite the fact that its normal result, so far as contemporary appearances are concerned, is downright failure, or at most partial and broken success) is nevertheless from the spiritual standpoint an absolute guarantee of its full and actual attainment.

It is evident that in the passages just expounded Plotinus used the word demon in a
Demons. sense quite different from that in which

¹ "All genius is metaphysical; because the ultimate end of genius is ideal, however it may be actualised by incidental and accidental circumstances." *Loc. cit.* S.T.C.

² *Enn.* III, Lib. iv, sec. 4.

it is commonly employed at the present day, to indicate the existence of latent powers within the sphere of human personality, anticipating thus the modern theory of the sub-conscious. There is no true mythological system to be found in the works of this philosopher who (unlike some of his disciples of the Alexandrian school) seldom alludes at all to the ancient stories, and when he does so is careful to indicate an allegorical signification. He appears nevertheless to have believed in the existence of a super-human order of beings of ethereal rather than immaterial essence, inhabiting celestial regions, and intermediate in nature and function between the denizens of the purely-intelligible order on the one hand, and those of the terrestrial plane on the other.¹ To these beings also he assigns the name of demons, but whether he considered them identical with the demons mentioned above who presided over particular human destinies, or that these latter constituted only one species of the order, or were, again, of a quite distinct nature, is not altogether clear. It may perhaps be inferred that he uses the word somewhat loosely to indicate a certain plane of moral and psychical dignity, for in speaking of Love as the motive of human

Mythology
in the
Enneads.

¹ Enn. III, Lib. v, sec. 5.

aspiration and spiritual ascension, he distinguishes three grades of the affection, the first or supreme of which degrees he personifies as a God, and the second as a Demon, while the third, or predominantly-sensuous, he denominates a passion of the soul.¹

10. Plotinus defines Love as the desire to be united with a beautiful object, and thereby to produce or create beauty. Concerning Love and the Emotions. Thus Nature herself, or the soul of the universe, that soul of which Nature is the express manifestation, creates in virtue of the contemplation (spiritual union with) celestial or intelligible beauty. Those human beings who loving beauty in the sensible world have not the reminiscence or intuition of intellectual or ideal beauty, still owe their love of the former to the fact that it is an image of the latter. Love is always the result of an affinity, conscious or otherwise, between the soul of the lover and the object of his passion. Our desire to produce is a direct outcome of the instinctive craving for immortality, for the essence which is immortal is none other than Beauty itself. Those and those only who love beautiful bodies without the craving to be

¹ Enn. III, Lib. v, sec. 1, *et seq.*

Pure Love. united with them, love them for their ideal beauty alone.

From the attention with which the celestial soul applies itself to contemplate the Divine Life which is its object, the supreme Love is born—an eye full of the object which it beholds, a vision made one with the image which it forms. Below the celestial soul, exists Nature—the Soul of the World as such—and of its contemplation and desire the Love which is its eye and which presides over earthly marriages is born. In this aspect the terrestrial soul may be identified with Aphrodite, or Venus, and the Love born of her with the Eros or Cupid of mythology, just as the universal soul conceived as Demiurge or governor of the universe may be identified with Jupiter or Zeus.¹ In so far as this human love experiences or begets in its subjects a desire of the intelligible it is capable of converting towards the intelligible plane the

souls of the young. The love inherent in and proper to the soul of each individual or Demon is the demon which presides over his life—a statement which, so far as it goes, corroborates the explanation already offered of the word demon, in many of the passages in which it occurs in the *Enneads*, as an allegorical

¹ *Enn.* III, Lib. v, sec. 4.

or poetical designation of a psychological fact.

Love in itself is always good, but often by reason of ignorance (the vice of intelligent beings) the desire of the good leads us to fall into evil, and pure love is replaced by the cravings of lustful appetite. These unnatural cravings are born of the faults of the soul, not of its pure essence.¹ In the view of Plotinus passion, affectability, sensation, are functions not of the soul, which, properly speaking, even in contemplation is always *active*, nor of matter, which, as already explained, is in itself immutable and unimpressionable, but of the "living body"—that which is neither spiritual nor corporeal, but a composite entity partaking equally and imperfectly of both kinds. Thus when the living organism is affected with pleasure or pain, the soul, itself impassive, observes and remembers the impression; and similarly, for the soul properly so called, the emotion of shame, for example, consists merely in the opinion that such or such an act, purposed or performed, is ignoble. Similarly in the act of external vision, the eye indeed is the recipient of an impression—is more or less passive, but it is the soul or mind which really perceives. Plotinus argues that if the soul

Affectability.

Shame,
Fear,
Pain, etc.

¹ Enn. III, Lib. v, sec. 7.

as such were liable to receive impressions, to suffer, for example, such an emotion as fear, the part of the soul so affected would not perform its function, and the appropriate bodily reaction would not occur.¹ In brief the doctrine of Plotinus is that we can only attribute to the soul "*passions without passivity*," that is to say, that we must regard these terms thus applied as metaphors derived from the nature of the body.² Even memory, which might

Memory not a Passively Retained Impression. be adduced as an obvious instance of mental impression, properly so called, is, however, says Plotinus, to be regarded as the active retention of a form created

by, rather than imprinted on, the soul.³ That this is so might indeed be suspected from the fact (mentioned also in the *Enneads*) that the duration and intensity of a particular recollection is proportional not so much to the intensity or magnitude of the bodily impressions or disturbances with which it originated, as to the degree of attention on the part of the mind or soul which created it.

Vice and Ignorance. Plotinus recognises the existence in every human being of a reasoning faculty—the soul properly so called, and an unreasoning

¹ *Enn.* III, Lib. vi, sec. 4.

² *Enn.* III, Lib. vi, sec. 1.

³ *Enn.* III, Lib. vi, sec. 3.

principle—the *natural* soul, which under the immediate guidance of universal reason, the laws of nature, presides over bodily functions, growth, nutrition, reproduction. Vice is a state of discord between the individual reason on the one hand and those faculties which pertain to the unreasoning or natural soul on the other.¹ The proper function of the soul is spiritual vision, culminating in wisdom or speculative insight, and hence the supreme vice of Man as an essentially reasonable being, and the most fruitful source of moral delinquencies and perversities of every kind and degree, is that state of blindness and ignorance which inevitably results from refusal, failure or neglect to cultivate the faculty in question. Greed, lust, anger and the like, although in particular instances they may be directly traceable either to mental apathy pure and simple or to that state of imperfect rational control which results from bodily affections or defects, are invariably symptomatic of ignorance. That is to say that ignorance is always a cause, even if not necessarily the sole cause, of immoral behaviour. The natural or animal soul of a human body in guarding the welfare and asserting the instincts and desires of the material organism as such, and Nature herself in regulating those pro-

¹ Enn. III, Lib. vi, sec. 2.

cesses which characterise the inorganic plane of existence, allow no regard for particular interests or spiritual exigencies unrecognised and unenforced by the individual intelligence and will to rupture the uniformity or limit the universality of their respective operations. Hence the danger of neglecting the voice of conscience and attending exclusively to the bodily sensations, for in the uproar of a crowded assembly it is not the wisest counsellor whose word prevails, it is rather the noisiest and most factious; and the tumult these create compels the representative of wisdom to remain seated, powerless, and overborne by the din. In the perverse man it is the animal which reigns.¹

II. The doctrine of Plotinus with reference to the genesis of the phenomenal universe has already been indicated.

It was explained that, for the Neoplatonist philosopher, matter as such, although it plays an important part in the system as a whole, is no positive entity possessing specific qualities capable of clear conception and logical definition, but that as an objective metaphysical abstraction it is to be regarded as the nurse and receptacle of

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 18.

generation, anterior therefore, not temporally, but ontologically, to generation, and as the privation of all positive qualities, that is of all goodness, it may be identified with evil. It may be thought or speculatively envisaged by a process which Plotinus calls bastard reasoning, the inverse of that process by which we apprehend the essence of the intelligible world. It is poetically or symbolically described as aspiring eternally to real existence, but as capable of appropriating only an imperfect image or shadow of the Universal Soul, thus constituting the order which appears to us in the guise of an external universe, a universe which, despite the large element of illusion which pertains to its composition, is by most of us accredited with genuine and unimpeachable reality. The life and essence of the Universal Soul (which is Reason) is external to matter, not in the ordinary sense of the word, but as being of a totally contrary and irreconcilable nature.¹ Matter participates in goodness without ceasing to be evil, but the phenomenal or sensible universe is intermediate between good and evil, form and matter, reason and fatality, order and chaos.² The creative power of Universal Reason (or of any reasonable

¹ *Enn.* III, *Lib.* vi, sec. 15.

² *Enn.* III, *Lib.* vi, sec. 11 ; *Enn.* III, *Lib.* vi, sec. 17.

principle) is manifested by its conferring upon the indeterminate a form resembling, though inferior to, its own, itself subsisting meanwhile impassively apart.¹ Hence, in the consideration of beings which occupy the sensuous plane of existence, the soul is to be excluded, just as in enumerating the inhabitants of a town one might leave out of account the foreigners who were sojourning within it.²

The factors of existence on the phenomenal or sensible plane may be subsumed under the following categories:

(1) Substance, (2) Quantity and quality, (3) Place and time, (4) Movement, (5) Relation.³ The name of substance (*οὐσία*), or corporeal essence, may be applied with equal propriety to the material substratum of a given object, its form, or the *tertium quid* which results from their identification—for each is the object itself.⁴ That which only exists in the object of which it is affirmed (e.g. qualities, as whiteness, etc.), is not substance, which as being itself subject (*ὑποκείμενον*), and possessing independent existence, cannot properly be affirmed of any other subject. Thus to assert

¹ Enn. III, Lib. viii, sec. 2.

² Enn. VI, Lib. iii, sec. 1.

³ Enn. VI, Lib. iii, sec. 3.

⁴ Enn. VI, Lib. iii, sec. 4.

that Socrates is a man is tantamount to saying that a particular man is a man, and is therefore merely an identical proposition, not a genuine specification.¹

The fundamental characteristic of the material order which falls within the scope of the categories mentioned above is generation or becoming, not existence at all in the higher sense of the word, but perpetual acquisition of an existence that must ever be incomplete.² In other words, the life of Nature, although an image of the life which is complete, universal and everlasting, belongs rather to time than eternity. But we who in virtue of intelligence (or spirituality) may be said to dwell both in time and eternity are capable of acquiring direct and primary knowledge of both spheres—knowledge which, so far as it goes, is absolute and irrefutable.³

12. Eternity relates to that which exists, Time to that which becomes. The constitutive property of eternity is perpetuity, not repose merely, for it is compatible with movement, though not with generation or decay. It is identifiable, identical, in fact, with the Life which is infinite, immutable and complete, the Life which

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. iii, sec. 5.

² Enn. III, Lib. vii, sec. 10.

³ Enn. III, Lib. vii, sec. 6.

enters and emerges from the One, yet which never leaves Him, but exists around and within and by Him.¹

Time has been identified by some philosophers with movement,² but this is obviously false, for movement can cease but time cannot. Nor is it (asserts Plotinus) identical with the measure of movement in general, the number of the extension which follows movement (as Aristotle says), nor a mere consequence or accident of movement (as Epicurus pretends). Time, says the Platonist, is the Life of the (Universal) Soul, considered in the movement by which it passes from one act to another. Its continuous course is composed of equal uniform, and insensible changes. The universe exists in Time, and therefore in the Soul. Thus time, which is one only by continuity, presents an image of the unity of the Eternal, and may be itself conceived as the duration of the Life pertaining to the Universal Soul. It is engendered by the first movement (that of the divine Intelligence) and includes all other movements.³

If this be a correct account of the matter, it follows that the abstraction we call Time is essentially objective, and that so far from its being a

¹ Enn. III, Lib. vii, secs. 4, 5.

² The Stoics.

³ Enn. III, Lib. vii, secs. 10-11.

mere subjective standard for the measurement of events, it were truer to assert that we measure time by movements than movements by time. It was born with the universe (as Plato has alleged), and hence precedes all other movements and prescribes their quantity. It is not, therefore, engendered, but merely indicated, by the revolutions of the celestial bodies. As a property of the Soul it is one and the same throughout the universe.¹

Doctrine of the Soul. 13. One of the most vital elements of the system of Plotinus is that portion of it which may be summarily denominated the Doctrine of the Soul, comprising his views concerning the following important topics—(1) The Nature of the Soul of the Universe, (2) that of individual souls of every degree, and especially those of human beings, (3) the mutual relations of individual souls with one another and with the soul of the universe, and (4) the precise manner and degree in which particular souls may be said to belong to or be present on the phenomenal or intelligible planes of existence. His doctrines concerning all these points will, it is hoped, be in some measure, incidentally or directly, elucidated in this essay, but a separate detailed account and

¹ Enn. III, Lib. vii, sec. 12.

exhaustive criticism of each is quite beyond the scope of its intention.

The Life of Nature. The external, material or phenomenal Universe was conceived by Plotinus not as a mere inert mass, devoid of real unity and congruity—an edifice adorned with stocks and stones, nor even as a lifeless machine, but as a mighty Organism, animated throughout with one purposive energy—the life of Nature, that is to say, her Soul. On the other hand not only does every minutest part of its contents participate in greater or less degree (potentially or actually) in the life of the whole—in universality, but conversely every such part is not merely and simply a part of the universe, but has also a degree of potential or actual independence—a soul of its own.¹ This independence potential merely in the unorganised elements of Nature and even in those living creatures which participate only in the lower unreasoning faculties of the universal soul, and whose vital activities are, therefore, absorbed in the functions of nutrition and reproduction, is manifested at its highest (so far as mere temporal existence is concerned) in Man, and especially in the truly rational career of the Sages—men who, like wise servants, as distinguished from unenlightened slaves, are

¹ *Enn. IV, Lib. iv, secs. 26-7.*

able at the same time to obey their master's orders (that is to submit to the decrees of Necessity) and preserve their essential freedom.¹

The Universal Soul. Plotinus asserts that the Soul is the *raison d'être* of all things, the supreme reason of the phenomenal world, the lowest reason of the intelligible world.² In Hegelian dialectic the different phases of thought, as represented by the great philosophies, are regarded as a series of definitions of the Absolute³ and that phase of the logical idea which corresponds to the Universal Soul⁴ implies the complete comprehension and explanation of Nature as a system of cause and effect, but is capable of only a preliminary exposition of the sphere of essential reality and ideal perfection.

In the first place the Universal Soul is to be regarded as inhabiting the highest region of the intelligible world, and its life is in essence an active, impassive and eternal contemplation of the one true Being.⁵ But the *essential* or constitutive act

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 34.

² Enn. IV, Lib. vi, sec. 3, Concerning Memory.

³ *The Logic of Hegel* (Wallace), chap. ix, 160, p. 288.

⁴ The phase of discursive reason or abstract understanding. Pre-Kantian Metaphysic. Cf. *Logic of Hegel* (Wallace), chap. iii, p. 60.

⁵ Enn. III, Lib. viii, sec. 4.

of such a being as the Universal Soul is to be carefully distinguished from the act which *proceeds* or emanates from it. The first is the essence or being itself, the second is its reflex or image, and the image of the Universal Soul is the inferior but still divine (because universal) principle called Nature.¹ In other words the Universal Soul has a twofold life and action, in virtue of one of which it contemplates and assimilates the ideas of absolute wisdom, while by the other, which contemplates its own ideas, thus conceiving the generic principles of Nature, it simultaneously regulates the corporeal universe, conferring upon matter a form resembling, though inferior to, its own.² Individual souls (our own for example) have also the potentiality of this twofold manifestation, but with them, for reasons presently to be explained, the contemplative and regulative functions cannot co-exist in perfection, but predominate alternately in successive periods of time. Nature is to the Universal Soul what the formative, nutritive, generative and sensitive faculties of the human soul are to the soul proper or human reason, but the Universal Soul, as such, although necessarily

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 13.

² Enn. III, Lib. viii, sec. 4.

cognisant of all the events of past, present and future time, owes no part of this knowledge to impressions from without, and cannot therefore be accredited with sensitivity in the sense in which we ourselves possess it. The sensitivity of Nature, or that power which is analogous in the material universe to the faculty so-called in ourselves, is manifested as a vital *nexus* in virtue of which (as Plotinus believed and taught) every minutest and remotest part of the universe is intimately correlated and sympathetically united to the rest.¹ The universe as a whole, although thus endowed with a potential sensitivity, may nevertheless be considered as impassive, because the Soul which animates and pervades it has no need of sensations for its own enlightenment, and does not, in fact, regard them. Nevertheless, and for the simple reason that Nature is a living organism, sympathetic throughout, individual parts of the universe have a quasi-sensitivity, and respond to impressions from without. When, for example, the stars, in answer to human invocations, confer benefits upon men, they do so (says Plotinus) not by a voluntary action, but because their natural or unreasoning psychical faculties are unconsciously affected.² Similarly, demons may be charmed

The Basis
of Magic.

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 37.

² Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 42

by spells or prayers acting upon the unreasoning part of their nature.¹

Thus much is conceded to the views of those who confide in the efficacy of magical incantations, but Plotinus is careful to add that the true philosopher is not only superior to the temptation or need to indulge in such practices on his own account, but also beyond the reach of injury by those who would employ them against him. *To pursue that which is not, as if it were indeed the true Good*, is the only possible form of surrender to the charm of magical incantations which has any real terrors for such as him.²

The Stars
and
Planets.

The stars and planets, which on account of the perfection of their movements and the supposed perpetuity of their existence were regarded by Plotinus and other philosophers of antiquity as direct manifestations of celestial or semi-divine Intelligence, are said then to respond to external impressions, only unconsciously and incidentally; and an absolute independence of knowledge derived *a posteriori*, by means of impressions as such, is in like manner alleged of Nature as a whole. In fact, Nature as

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 43.

² Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 44.

the reflex or image of the Universal Soul upon matter, and as distinguished from that Nature an Unconscious Agent. Soul of whose wisdom it is the passive expression, is an unconscious entity. Its parts are correlated by a faculty analogous to sensibility, but the Soul of the Universe pays no heed to these sensations, being already endowed with complete and comprehensive knowledge.¹

The earth itself is in like manner animated by an individual soul and intelligence (respectively known to mythology as Ceres and Vesta) and, as in the case of the stars, the consciousness of the Earth-Soul is not necessarily involved in the sensitivity by means of which its body is related to the universe as a whole. The vegetation which clothes the planet is, however, a manifestation of the power of the vegetative principle of the Earth-Soul, and is fancifully compared by Plotinus to the living flesh of an animal body.²

Individu- 14. Something must now be said with
ality. regard to the relation of individual souls

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 13; Enn. IV, Lib. iii, sec. 10. A common property of all being is to render other beings like to itself. Hence the Universal Reason living in and by Reason impresses the material universe with a like reasonable nature.

² Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 27.

to that Universal Soul of which we have just been speaking. In the Platonic and Neoplatonic systems every atom is not merely an atom, but also a potential universe, every individual intelligence is in like manner, that is, implicitly, a universal Mind—the so-called intelligible universe.¹ For the

Its Basis. basis of individuality (which includes atomicity) is in every case an eternal

idea, subsisting immutably in the universal mind, partaking therefore of the Divine universality, but constituting meanwhile the particular intelligence which dominates a given terrestrial career.² But individual souls are also in another aspect

Individuality as a Function of the Universal. mere constituent factors of the Universal Soul which generates and includes them, just as, on the material plane, organs and members are a part of the bodies

to which they belong, while our bodies are the offspring of other bodies, and subject like them to the laws which condition matter in general.³

Or to use another comparison, just as the distinction between the formative, sensitive and reasoning faculties is compatible with the unity of the soul which comprises them, so the existence and

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. iv, sec. 8; Enn. IV, Lib. vi, sec. 3.

² Enn. V, Lib. vii, sec. 1.

³ Enn. IV, Lib. ix, sec. 4.

even the independence of individuals is compatible with the unity of the Universal Soul. Individual souls are therefore distinct without being separate from one another and from the soul of the universe.¹

Cosmic Periods. Plotinus appears to have believed that in the course of ages the general cycle of evolution is from time to time interrupted by the termination of a great cosmic period. The number of creatures of every degree destined to be born during one such period is finite, and is predetermined by the number of germinal reasons² engendered by the Universal Soul through contemplation of the Divine Intelligence and developed in sequence of time by the power of Nature. Not only is the whole number in question (of germinal reasons or forms) embraced by the Universal Soul, but every individual soul, being also in a sense the whole intelligible universe, comprises within itself the potentialities of every living creature destined to be born in the period to which a particular existence of its own belongs. Thus the completion of a cosmic period will be determined by the due appearance on the material plane of the whole series of individuals predestined to be born.³

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. ix, sec. 1.

² Psychological germs, monads.

³ Enn. V, Lib. vii, sec. 3.

Unity and
Multiplicity
of the
Universal
Soul.

The existence of the Divine Intelligence in virtue of an absolute co-integration of infinite variety with essential oneness, is properly described as constituting a multiple Unity, while that of the Universal Soul, possessing unity in virtue of its eternal participation in the one Divine Being and also as conditioning the existence of a system of individual souls, and multiplicity by reason of its presence entire in each of these (in the same way as, for example, the universal notion is present by implication in every proposition of science) is truly characterisable either as a unity or a multiplicity, as both One and Many. Or to express the same truth in terms of mythology, we may assert with Plotinus that in cognising the infinity of his life Jupiter (the Demiurge or governor of the world) simultaneously observes that his action upon the universe is one.¹

Incarnation
or
Descension.

15. If now we transfer our attention to the chief problems connected with the existence of individual souls as such, a thought which inevitably occurs to us is that, being of one substance with the reasonable essence which constitutes the governing principle of the universe, they must be entitled to some share in

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. iv, secs. 10, 11; Enn. IV, Lib. ii, sec. 2.

its divine prerogatives. In the case of human souls, the constitutive essence or principal power of which is not mere sensibility but the comparatively-divine faculty of discursive reason or understanding, this *prima facie* claim will naturally appear stronger than in that of souls pertaining to lower orders of conscious existence.

The individual soul belongs in virtue of its reasonable nature to the Reason-World or intelligible order, and in so far as it participates in this nature it may be said, like the Universal Soul of which it is in one sense a part, to inhabit the intelligible universe, and to share in the creative and administrative powers of the Divine Being.¹ But the individual soul is not (even in the case of humanity) a homogeneous entity—is not merely and entirely reasonable. As in the Universal Soul we distinguished between a principal power whose life was bound up with that of the Divine Intelligence and an inferior power, called Nature, which was the immediate principle and source of natural phenomena and even included a sort of impassive quasi-sensitivity, so in the case of the human individual we distinguish between the constitutive faculty of reason properly so called and the natural or unreasoning

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. vii, sec. 3 ; Enn. IV, Lib. viii, sec. 4.

soul which is the formative and regulative principle of the human body, and in virtue of which that body is endowed with sensibility, irritability, and the power of reproduction—in short with animal life.¹

That element of the human personality which alone of its nature belongs immutably and entirely to the intelligible order, is not then the constitutive or distinctively-human faculty of understanding, but the individual mind or intellect, which is the principle and source of the reasoning faculty, and which, inasmuch as it is of one substance with the Universal Mind, and superior, therefore, in essence even to the Universal Soul, were more appropriately denominated spirit or essence than soul. But the soul, being, not only in virtue of the limitation implied by individuality, but also in itself, imper-

fectly reasonable, is necessarily unable to maintain itself eternally in the exalted sphere of absolute intelligence. As an inhabitant of the intelligible world the soul is only potentially material, but this potentiality of incarnation being the unreasonable part of the soul itself, a result of its inherent heterogeneity, is bound to declare itself, and must be fully actualised, if only in order that the power of contemplation

**The Soul
Imperfectly
Rational.**

¹ Enn. I, Lib. i, sec. 7, *et seq.*

which constitutes its life and the life of all intelligent beings may be exhaustively realised: for action itself is, according to Plotinus, merely an inferior form of contemplation—its end being knowledge with possession. Hence arises the necessity of descension, that is the voluntary concentration by the soul of its powers on the formation and regulation of an individual bodily organism which is the manifestation of its own inherent potentialities, the result of such concentration being a partial obliteration of the individual consciousness of affinity with and participation in the intelligible order.¹ In other words—to express the same thought more concretely, and figuratively—when an individual soul, weary of sharing in the administration of the universe, concentrates her attention upon herself, she is weakened by this isolation, loses her wings, descends from her throne and becomes imprisoned in the sphere of necessity. For when of this act of self-contemplation the desire to belong to herself exclusively is born, an image of herself (to wit, the body) is caused to appear, and by regarding this image she confers a

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. iii, secs. 13, 15. In descending from the intelligible world souls first enter the sky, and then assume an aerial body by which they are joined to their earthly body.

definite form upon it, and charmed by this form enters it, and a living inhabitant of the material universe is the result.¹

This descent into generation on the part of the individual soul is at the same time necessary and voluntary, or rather, perhaps, instinctive, for it is not only a fall from a high estate into a comparatively humble and degraded one, but also an example of the universal law which ordains that in every case the potential shall be fully actualised; and being, so far as individual souls are concerned, the only conceivable means by which this law could be fulfilled, it may in a certain sense be regarded not as a fall but as a normal development.² The Universal Soul, in virtue of its universality,

is privileged without descension or voluntary inclination towards the material plane (consequently without forfeiting in any degree the prerogative of Divine contemplation) but rather by an act of condescension or *procession* to create, uphold and regulate the external universe which is its body.³ But the

Descension
the Logical
Result of
Individuality.

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. viii, sec. 4; Enn. III, Lib. ix, sec. 2.

² Enn. IV, Lib. viii, sec. 4, cf. also sec. 2.

³ Enn. II, Lib. ix, sec. 7. It is important to notice that individual souls also differ from the Universal Soul, in that the bodies which they enter and subsequently

individual body in order to live safely in a world governed with reference not so much to the immediate welfare of individuals as to the justice and harmony of the system which comprises them, requires a more intimate alliance with the reasonable principle to which it owes its being: and hence it follows that the individual soul is called upon to renounce in a measure the supreme privilege of celestial contemplation when by its fall into generation it voluntarily and legitimately undertakes the administration of a particular terrestrial career.¹

But the individual soul as being essentially reasonable, that is as being not only enlightened by the wisdom of an individual intelligence, but even through that related to the one celestial wisdom which is its ultimate source and goal, has an ineradicable tendency towards, and an inalienable privilege of returning in due time to, its original state of blessedness and repose. So it is that when we speak of a soul's conversion we simply imply that a fundamentally reasonable principle has begun to re-emancipate itself from the bonds of necessity and to re-enter its native sphere of liberty and

control have previously been organised by Nature, the express agent of the Universal Soul.

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. viii, sec. 2.

reason.¹ And further, in the case at least of humanity, it is even possible to pass through earthly life without ever forfeiting entirely the privilege in question, for the true philosopher does not allow his tranquility to be disturbed by the vicissitudes of earthly existence, estimating at their true value, that is as of no essential value, alike the choicest gifts and the direst reverses of fortune. It is not then absolutely an evil, but in some sense also an advantage for the soul, to bestow upon the body form and life, because the providential care thus accorded to an inferior nature does not prevent the being which accords it from itself remaining in (or at the worst from ultimately regaining) a state of perfection.²

Briefly summarised, then, the doctrine of Plotinus as to this important point is that our souls descend into bodies and become bound to them because these require more intimate direction and guardianship than the body of the universe, which is complete and immortal. In so far as this necessary fall or descent into "generation," this inclination of reason towards the plane of sensibility, is to be counted as a fault or sin, it finds its adequate and appropriate punishment in the state of limita-

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. viii, sec. 4.

² Enn. IV, Lib. viii, sec. 2.

tion which it involves, and in that alone. Plotinus recognises, however, the possibility of absolute or spiritual wickedness (sin properly so called), which he places in a different category and for which he hints that full retribution at the hands of demons is ultimately exacted.¹ Generally speaking the acts committed in each particular existence will determine the good or ill fortune experienced by the same individual soul in the course of subsequent incarnations. The adherence of Plotinus to the doctrine of metempsychosis, so far as that implies a belief in the alternation of longer or shorter states of spiritual repose with successive terms of terrestrial existence, as the normal if not inevitable destiny of individual souls, is clear and definite. Thus he asserts that "*it is a universally accepted belief that the soul commits errors, that it expiates them, that it submits to punishment in the infernal regions, and that it passes into new bodies.*"² Also he declares that "*the gods bestow upon each the destiny which pertains to him, and which harmonises with his antecedents in his successive existences*" (κατὰ ἀμοιβὰς βίωv). "*Every one who is not aware of this is grossly ignorant of divine matters.*"³ With respect to that part of the doctrine,

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. viii, sec. 5.

² Enn. I, Lib. i, sec. 12. ³ Enn. II, Lib. ix, sec. 9,

however, which affirms the possible degradation of human souls to the guardianship of animal bodies, his tone is more doubtful and his statements are less explicit. Thus in one passage he writes, if it be true, *as they say*, that the bodies of animals imprison fallen human souls, the part of those souls which is separable does not strictly pertain to those bodies.¹ Saint Augustine, an avowed student and admirer of the Platonists, and especially of Plotinus, much of whose teaching he has been the means of incorporating into Catholic theology, takes serious exception to the whole doctrine of metempsychosis, asserting that the soul once restored to celestial existence is restored for ever. The belief of Plotinus would seem to have been that while such complete and permanent restoration, if conceivable, is at any rate very exceptional, the normal course of events is that by every sojourn on the intelligible plane the individual is permanently raised to a higher grade of spirituality, so that upon the occasion of each successive descent into generation there is a considerable improvement upon the conditions of the last. It is curious

St. Augustine's view of Metempsychosis.

Reticence as to Christianity.

that Plotinus, who was born more than two centuries after Christ, whose revered

¹ Enn. II, Lib. ix, sec. 8.

master Ammonius had at one time been a professed believer, and who must during the long terms of his residence at Rome and Alexandria have taken part in many discussions and conversations concerning the new religion, has not in his *Enneads* a single unequivocal reference to Christianity. His only known contribution to religious controversy of any kind is the ninth book of the second *Ennead*, which is devoted to the refutation of the tenets of Gnosticism, a hybrid product of Christianity and Zoroastrianism which would assuredly be repudiated with scorn (and justly so)¹ by the rational adherents of either.

16. Returning now to the consideration of the material universe, we will conclude what is to be said of its relation to the immaterial principle to which it owes its existence. In the first place it is to be noted that its vital harmony and unity are an image (imperfect for reasons already stated) of the essential unity of the universal being. Our own world, everywhere approaching the universal being, finds it everywhere present and everywhere greater than itself. Hence, according to Plotinus, the tendency to a "circular" movement on the part

¹ In the main, but there were many kinds and degrees of Gnosticism.

of the heavenly bodies, such movement being regarded as an expression of aspiration to the universal. Hence, too (may we not add), those analogous movements in time which **Development** appear as the phenomena of growth and development and the ever-broadening and ascending spirals of cosmic and organic evolution. This omnipresent and inexhaustibly-active Soul is then the immediate ontological basis on which the material world reposes, and includes the said world in virtue not of spatial magnitude but of universality. Without occupying any determinate locality it is nevertheless present in equal degree (that is, as a whole) in every locality, and every individual being partakes of its power, unity and universality in greater or less degree. The Universal Soul being infinitely greater in power and splendour than the universe itself, imparts but little of itself to that universe, but imparts, nevertheless, all that the latter is capable of receiving.¹ This principle of unity, in advancing (so far as it can be said to advance) towards other things, appears to become multiple, and in fact does become so in certain respects. Nevertheless the Universal Being is so constituted that it can never be separated from absolute unity, which is virtually present wherever it manifests its activity,

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. iv, sec. 5.

and which is the ultimate source and goal of all that exists, for all that exists is One. Thus the corporeal mass of the universe possesses, potentially or by implication, the whole omnipresent Being in every one of its component parts.¹

When a particular body acquires life, *And Life.* the soul which, as an organ of the universal, is destined to animate it, does not actually descend into or become identified with it, but rather the body *comes within the sphere of its influence* and thus attains to the *world of life*.² Life is metaphorically described as a sort of heat or light emanating from the soul and engendering in the body appetites, pleasures and pains. Thus the body, as representative of the comparatively formless and indefinite, makes its voice heard in that part of the animal nature which is, as it were, common to itself and the soul, just as a confused crowd, impelled by hunger or some other passion, might besiege a deliberative assembly seeking for guidance and control. This guidance and control is, in fact, conceded by the One Reason to the body of the universe and by individual souls to particular bodies. But the individual soul in listening to this appeal and consenting to undertake this responsibility, enters into commerce with, and, as

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. iv, secs. 8-9.

² Enn. VI, Lib. iv, sec. 16.

it were, borrows something from nonentity; and ceasing, therefore, in some degree to be consciously at one with the universal, becomes a limited or determinate being.¹

Matter and
Spirit not
locally
Separated.

Plotinus warns us that we are not crudely to picture to ourselves the world of ideas as existing on the one hand separate from the world of matter, and matter on the other as located apart from it; and then to imagine an irradiation from the one above to the other below. Such a conception, literally interpreted, would in fact be meaningless. This irradiation is not *strictly* comparable, for example, to the reflection of a flame in water; nor again is matter locally separated from those ideas which are the archetypes of the transient forms which it assumes. On the contrary, the matter is rather to be conceived as surrounding the idea on all sides, impinging upon it, so to speak, without contact, and receiving from it all that in virtue of its vicinity it is capable of receiving, without intermediation, but also without complete permeation by the idea, which latter continues meanwhile to subsist in and for itself.²

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. iv, secs. 15-16.

² Enn. VI, Lib. v, sec. 8. N.B. The modern scientific hypothesis of a space of four (or more) dimensions, and of a four-dimensioned order of existence, concealed from

17. By a natural and inevitable progression the act of contemplation which constitutes in essence the life of every individual, and indeed that of Humanity as a whole, rises by degrees from Nature to Soul, from Soul to Intelligence.¹ Following the same order we pass now to the consideration of that sphere of divine reality, yet ideal perfection, which is partially and temporarily veiled from our ken by the self-imposed limitations of terrestrial existence. The human soul (as understanding) in its acts of judgment adapts to perceived or remembered sensuous presentations the principles which it possesses; in conformity with these principles all its judgments are made, and to them the truth and universality of such judgments (in so far as they prove to be true and universal) is directly attributable.² It is obvious, asserts Plotinus, that when we declare that such or such a picture is beautiful, such or such an action virtuous or the reverse, and when, moreover, our confident expectation that

The Ideal
Basis
of the
Judgment.

us, and yet in close propinquity to our own, would seem to be based upon much the same conception as that which Plotinus here endeavours to express.

¹ Enn. III, Lib. viii, sec. 7.

² Enn. III, Lib. viii, sec. 4.

this verdict of ours will be universally confirmed proves well-founded, we demonstrate the existence within ourselves of some absolute and incontrovertible authority, an oracle whose pronouncements we may misconceive or misinterpret but which cannot in themselves be otherwise than authoritative and true.¹ Nor can it fairly be contended that the standard in question is furnished by terrestrial experience, for to which of us has life here below ever afforded the spectacle of actual moral or even physical perfection? The standard is one of desire, of unrealised aspiration, and the great point is that upon the whole the standard of each (as evidenced by the appreciation or display of approximations to it) proves to be the standard of all. Despite the flaw of imperfection which characterises all terrestrial experiences, there are but few mortals who do not believe themselves capable of recognising perfection, given the opportunity, few even who are not, more or less consciously, more or less arduously and persistently, endeavouring to adapt their own lives, in some one way at least, to the universal standard.

When in moments of doubt and perplexity, the still small voice of the oracle is heard, its accents

¹ Enn. V, Lib. I, sec. II.

Universality
of Rational
Criteria.

are by most of us instinctively recognised as divine, and its decrees therefore spontaneously adopted by the understanding and promulgated in terms of speech or action ; but it is only the elect who deliberately set themselves to penetrate the shrine, and standing at length face to face with the indwelling deity, discover in its features a transfiguration of their own.

Ascension. Very clearly, and withal beautifully has Saint Augustine, in a passage which was probably inspired by the study of Plotinus, indicated the phases of this ascension from the world of seeming to the world of Truth. "For examining" (he writes) "what caused me to admire the beauty of bodies celestial or terrestrial ; and what was of service to me in judging soundly on things changeable, and pronouncing 'This ought to be thus, this not' ; examining, I say, what was the cause of my so judging, seeing I did so judge, I had found the unchangeable and true Eternity of Truth, above my changeable mind. And thus by degrees I passed from bodies to the soul, which perceives through the senses of the body ; and thence to its inward faculty, to which the bodily senses communicate external things ; and so far, even beasts possess it ; and thence further to the reasoning faculty, to which

is referred, for the exercise of judgment upon it, whatsoever is received from the bodily senses.

“That And when this found itself in me also to
Which Is.” be a changeable thing, it raised itself up to its own understanding, and diverted my thought from habit, withdrawing itself from those troops of contradictory phantasms: that so it might discover what that light was, by which it was bedewed, when without any doubtfulness it cried out ‘That the unchangeable must be preferred to the changeable’; whence also it knew the unchangeable itself, without some knowledge of which it could not with certainty have preferred it to the changeable. And thus with the flash of one trembling glance it arrived at THAT WHICH IS. And then saw I Thy invisible things understood by the things which are made (Rom. i. 20).”¹

Abstract Intelligence. It will be remembered that in speaking of the World-Soul we distinguished between a principal activity in virtue of which it contemplates the Divinity, and an inferior faculty called Nature, which simultaneously regulates the material universe. Every individual soul has also

¹ *The Confessions of S. Augustine* (Revised Trans.), bk. vii, chap. xvii, p. 128.

an inferior part directed towards the body and the external environment, and a superior faculty directed towards the individual intelligence and related thus to the intelligible world as a whole. But, in this life, the still higher faculty, intellect or pure reason, is actualisable, as a part of the normal consciousness, only in the case of humanity (the reasoning animal), and, in the supreme degree, only in exceptionally favoured individuals and under specially favourable circumstances, even in man. In order to envisage the Reason World, the intelligence itself has, in the first place, simply to be *thought* (for, according to the Platonist, speculative thought is actual vision),¹ and, to this end, Plotinus directs us, in examining as factors of consciousness the several determinate modes of our own existence, to make abstraction of the formative, nutritive, sensitive, and even of the reasoning faculties, and to contemplate by means of the intellectual imagination, alluded to above, that reflex of the informing light or essence which remains.² But this light enters the soul in an indivisible form, and ordinarily reveals itself to consciousness, only indirectly, by illuminating the multiple presentations of the sensuous imagination.

¹ Enn. V, Lib. i, sec. 5.

² Enn. V, Lib. iii, sec. 9.

In other words, the ideas of pure reason can only be figuratively conceived or expressed in terms of the common understanding. Nevertheless, by every such influx of pure light the soul is intellectualised and raised to a higher plane of consciousness, until, at last, its activities may be merged in those of the intelligence itself, which it then beholds not as an image or irradiation, but as actually present, or even as one with itself. To the view of such an emancipated consciousness the whole perfection of the intelligible universe is unfolded, and constitutes the sum of reality, all that which to a superficial scrutiny appears evil and fortuitous in the nature of things either ceasing to exist or appearing once for all in its true and necessary relations.¹

The
Intelligible
World is a
Multiple
Unity.

The Universal Soul, regarded as the principle of Nature, is, as we have already explained, both one and many: it reconciles, or seeks to reconcile, the extremes of integrity and aloofness, of universality and individualisation. In the Divine Intelligence this reconciliation of opposites, which appears in Nature as a perpetual but never-accomplished tendency, is absolute and eternal. Nature, then, is unity and multiplicity, but the archetype of

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. iii, sec. 30; Enn. V, Lib. iii, sec. 5.

Nature (the Reason World) is a multiple unity, a unity-totality.¹

In this and all other respects, the constitution of the intelligible world is precisely that which would meet the requirements of a flawless logic, but, nevertheless, the form of belief or conviction, which arises from the use of the common understanding, is here superseded by the form of truth or apodictical necessity, and the reasoning process, as such, is in like manner superseded by direct and actual knowledge.²

The life and being of the Divine Intelligence are absolutely free and self-determined and, nevertheless (for the statements are in fact identical), the structure and order of the Reason World are absolutely necessitated. Liberty is, in essence, freedom from extraneous compulsion, and the Divine Intelligence is that which it is, because, being such as it is, and so alone, it conforms in all respects to the perfect law which is its own being.³ But the Intelligible Universe, or, as we should say, the Spiritual World, is by no means to be regarded

¹ Enn. V, Lib. 1, sec. 8. This doctrine is here attributed by Plotinus to Parmenides.

² Enn. VI, Lib. ii, sec. 21.

³ Enn. VI, Lib. viii, sec. 6.

as a mere figment of subjective imagination. On the contrary, not only has it actual and substantial existence, but it constitutes the one supreme and comprehensive actuality, contrasted with which the substance and even the forms of the phenomenal order are mere phantasmal hallucinations. It is objective truth, concrete reality, the divine source of all wisdom, virtue and beauty. How else account for the simplest facts of evolution? for

**Evolution
implies
a Higher
Principle
in Act.**

that which, in any department, we recognise as the latent germ of a possible improvement on previous conditions, could never realise itself, if there did not exist anteriorly an active superior principle, of which superior principle the new development, in its mature state, is to be the direct and outward manifestation.¹

Before we proceed with our attempt to exhibit the Plotinian idea of an intelligible order, the reader should be reminded that in the Neoplatonist system the Universal Intelligence itself ranks but as the second in power and dignity, the supremacy being assigned to that ineffable principle to which we have already referred as the first Divine Hypostasis, the Good, or the One. We have said that the

¹ Enn. IV, Lib. vii, sec. 8, § 14. In opposition to the materialistic developmental hypothesis of the Stoics.

Intelligence was to be regarded as the supreme actuality, and this remains true; for the nature of the One is superior to thought, being, actuality; superior, therefore, to the Divine Intelligence itself; which latter remains, nevertheless, the Absolute Reason, the first thinking essence, and the One Being, *par excellence*, spoken of by Plato and Plotinus as the *Animal That Is*, and, more simply, by Saint Augustine as *That Which Is*.

Intelligence as active Contemplation of the Good. There is distinction without separation between the Intelligence and the One; for the latter, although in a sense unknowable (for the nature of the First Divine Hypostasis can only be negatively determined by human reason) is not so to the Universal Intelligence. The life of the Divine Intelligence is essentially an active contemplation of, aspiration to, and attainment of, the nature of the One; and although it is doubtless true that the being and life of the Intelligence are absolutely self-determined, it is, nevertheless, and in equal degree, the fact that the Intelligence receives its life and being from the One. The life and being of the Intelligence are self-derived and self-determined, because the contemplation in question (of the One by the Intelligence) is an *eternal act*, not something which had a beginning and comes to an

end in time, and not the merely passive receipt of an impression.¹

But, although the Divine Intelligence aspires to, and even assimilates, the nature of the Good, it receives that nature not in its own simplicity and formless unity, nor, on the other hand, so dispersed and broken as to forfeit the seal of its divine origin, but differentiated in such a way as to exhibit a single *Universal Being* of infinite grandeur and complexity. In other words, the Intelligence becomes a multiple unity in the act of thinking and realising the principle superior to itself. In attempting to apprehend the simplicity of the One it withdraws from that very simplicity, and in thus emerging from the One, bearing with it as the multiple object of its thought an impression of the nature of the One, it becomes essence, consciousness, life, thought—in short, the intelligible universe.²

Primal Categories, or Elements of the Notion. 18. If now we steadfastly examine the conception of an absolute and self-sustained Being which results from the foregoing considerations, we necessarily become aware of certain generic ideas which are common to every phase of intelligible existence, which, therefore, are associated in the Plotinian

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. vii, sec. 17.

² Enn. VI, Lib. vii, sec. 15; Enn. V, Lib. iii, sec. 11.

system as *prime categories* or elements of the notion. The first step in the direction of this free and necessary development is taken when the reason distinguishes between itself as thinking subject and the idea which (although permanently and essentially identical with itself) is its object. If, next, we proceed to exhibit the several component ideas implied by the first step of our analysis (thus carrying this preliminary process to its logical termination, and returning to the point from which we set out), we obtain, first, *essence* or true being (the substance of the intelligible universe), then thought (1) as permanent idea, or stability, (2) as movement, or life, and, finally, we recognise both (1) the difference and (2) the identity of the several terms of the whole conception.¹

Essence.

Movement.

Difference.

Stability.

Identity.

These categories, or *genera*, are common to every phase, or *species*, of the universal Notion.

In other words, the sum of reality, essence, or, as we should say, Spirituality, may with equal truth be conceived as (1) a process; (2) a scheme or order; (3) subjective or intelligent, (4) objective

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. ii, sec. 8.

or intelligible; the complete demonstration of any one of these modes or aspects being tantamount to the exposition of them all.

Universal Number. 19. In contemplating the Good, the Divine Intelligence conceives, creates, contemplates and comprehends (not as they subsist in the Good, but so as it can receive them) the spiritual entities whose form is an image of the nature of the Good. In order that the multiplicity which thus arises may be itself an image of the unity which is its principle, it must have, as it were, a unity of its own, and, at the same time, in order to constitute itself, like that principle, a measure of all things, it must be complete and comprehensive, finite-infinite, or, in one word, universal.¹ Doubtless this conception of a universal number constituting the fundamental law of intelligible existence, is, in common with all universals, from the point of view of the empirical understanding an impossible one. We cannot mathematically (or spatially) represent to ourselves

Hegel on Universals as Laws. a number which shall combine the categories of finitude and infinity, or, rather, which shall be itself the common principle whence both conceptions arise. But, as Hegel has pointed out, even in the domain of

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. vi, sec. 9; *ibid.* sec. 18.

physical science, the existence of universals, that is, of laws, cannot be apprehended or even represented by the senses. "The kind, as kind, cannot be perceived: the laws of the celestial motions are not written on the sky. The universal is neither seen nor heard, its existence is only for the mind." Similarly, in the matter of conduct, where duties and rights hold the rank of laws, an action is True when it conforms to those universal formulae. But we cannot give any adequate representation of such notions as these of right and duty, which nevertheless are available to us all. It was by the use of the speculative reason or intellectual imagination that Plotinus was led to conclude the necessary and even (in opposition to Aristotelian doctrine) the substantial existence of universals; and it is only when he proceeds to endeavour to express the result in terms of the understanding that he finds it necessary to modify every statement by an, at first sight, contradictory one, suggesting rather than logically expressing his fundamental thought, and finally leaving the whole in this necessarily imperfect form to be assimilated and re-intellectualised by the mind of the reader.

This universal and essential number, whose existence is implied by that of Universal Reason,

is the principle by movement in accordance with which that Reason (retaining meanwhile its universality) becomes differentiated and individualised throughout. In the Divine Intelligence, as such, it is identified by Plotinus with the acts which appear in the life of that Intelligence, namely, justice, wisdom, science, and the like. In other words, it exists as enveloped in the Being, as developed in the Beings, of the intelligible world. The unity of the Intelligence is thus, as it were, continuous, that is, it engenders by its own essential movement or life the multiplicity which it comprises.¹

Number and Unity. 20. The participation of beings and objects in unity on the one hand, and multiplicity on the other, is, according to Plotinus, a part of the subject of their participation in intelligible forms, or ideas. For unity, as found in the several parts of the material universe, however advantageous, is in a sense accidental, but as it exists in intelligible beings, and especially in the One Being *par excellence*, it is essential and self-subsistent. And as universal number is the measure of the life of the universal Being, so every individual intelligence, every idea, has its constitutive number

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. vi, sec. 15.

or measure, in harmony with which it abides and is manifested.

Essential or Constitutive Number of the Individual. These essential numbers, and the ideas to which they correspond likewise, as also the universal number itself, are implicitly or immediately present in the background (so to speak) of every human consciousness, but it is only when they are mediated by the recognition of their manifestation in other beings and objects that they become truly our own. Thus, the explicit number which we recognise in a particular object, and which becomes related to us (becomes our own) in the act of numeration, is itself a manifestation of essential number, not therefore merely a product of our own subjective activity.¹

Every human intelligence possesses, moreover, a constitutive number or essential harmony special to itself, and immediately related to the universal number. The soul and the body (severally or in vital unison) may also be regarded as numbers, but the participation of the latter in *unity* proper is at best precarious and incomplete.

Time and Space in Eternity. 21. Plotinus teaches that on the intelligible plane time is replaced or superseded by eternity, and space by the propriety which determines that certain intelli-

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. vi, sec. 16.

gibles shall contain, or be contained by others.¹ Taken as they stand these statements afford but little assistance in the task of reconstructing for ourselves his notion of an intelligible universe.

Fortunately, however, the careful study of the *Enneads* will enable us in several important particulars to supplement the poverty and elucidate the obscurity of these preliminary propositions.

A fundamental factor in the system of Plotinus is unwavering belief in the validity of an all-round symbolic interpretation of Nature. As concrete Nature is a symbol of the absolute and universal, so, in like manner, individual abstractions from the formal factors of ordinary reflective consciousness are symbols of the corresponding ideas of pure intelligence. Thus time is a symbol of eternity, and space an image of the ideal unity of the apparently-opposed principles of universality and individuality, difference and identity. Hence the possibility of idealising our conceptions of time and space and thereby attaining to real knowledge of the corresponding modes of intelligible existence.

Symbolism
in the
System of
Plotinus.

¹ *Enn.* V, *Lib.* ix, *sec.* 10.

This, of course, is precisely what is controverted by the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who, denying to time and space any objective existence, and regarding them as mere subjective (though pure and *a priori*) forms of, respectively, internal and external sensibility, asserts that their sole use as modes of actual cognition is to enable the understanding to arrive at conceptions of, and judgments concerning the *data* of common experience. Any conclusions with regard to supra-sensuous existence, based upon argument in terms of space and time, he utterly and even scornfully repudiates, even where (as in the case of Plotinus) such argument consistently proceeds on the supposition, not of the identity, but of the analogy of the two modes of thought and existence.¹

We will not presume to enter here upon any serious examination of the Kantian position. The publication of the "*Critique of Pure Reason*" constitutes, doubtless, an important epoch in the history of Philosophy, but it is doubtful whether Kant has succeeded in anything like the degree he supposed

¹ *Critique of Pure Reason* (Immanuel Kant), *First Part of the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements: Space and Time*, pp. 21-47. F. Haywood's tr. ed. of 1848.

in determining the possibilities of speculative science. Hegel said, long ago, "People in the present day have got over Kant and his philosophy: everybody wants to get further." There are many who believe that Hegel himself got further; but at any rate the remark was a true one, based on a sound faith in the invincible aspiration of human reason towards the Absolute. To deny to cognition the characteristics of universality and necessity, or, in other words, to deny that the truth is essentially knowable, is to controvert a belief so instinctive and fundamental that we (as inheritors and trustees of the wisdom of antiquity) may well hesitate long and consider deeply before, by acquiescence, we commit ourselves to the implied renunciation. It may nevertheless be expedient that, for the present, metaphysical ability should be devoted not so much to the construction of original systems, as to the examination of those of acknowledged masters.

When Plotinus denies that the forms
 Eternal
 Truth not
 Unknowable. of intelligential existence may be adequately expressed in terms of time and space, he does not by any means intend to convey the impression that the attempt so to conceive or express them is altogether barren and futile, or that the ideal as such is essentially unknowable.

On the contrary, he asserts that in the sphere of intelligence every object is essentially the cognition of itself by absolute and universal Reason.¹ Inasmuch, therefore, as we dwell at once in time and eternity, and that, even as inhabitants of the sensible universe, we all participate in the Reason that is one and indivisible, we cannot but participate in the knowledge of its ideal content. But the conceptions which by ordinary cognition we form of the objects of the sensible universe do not correspond exactly with those objects themselves, that is, have not the form of true knowledge, but of more or less enlightened opinion. For these primary concepts or judgments result from the action of the understanding upon the plurality of sensible impressions or of empirical perceptions, whereby that plurality, being co-ordinated in terms of time or space, receives, not absolute, but relative and proximate unity. If the said unification were perfectly effected, the nature of the objects themselves would be perfectly known, and they would, from the first, appear to us not merely as objects of the phenomenal universe, but *sub specie aeternitatis*. In so far as the said unification is in fact by each one of us accomplished, the forms of time and space, which were the means of co-integrating the

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. vi, sec. 6.

sensuous plurality and the ideal unity, are superseded and we become cognisant of essential verity. Thus the universe of absolute Science. science and the ideal or intelligible universe are ultimately identical, and it is only as limitations to the free development of reason, only, that is, in their immediate and empirical origin, that objective thoughts or experiences need partake of the nature of illusion.

Of course to the consistent idealist (and such was Plotinus) the apparently accidental circumstances which determine our bodily sensations, or other "external" experiences, are, in fact, for the most part, not accidental at all, but are vitally related to, and in a measure determined by, the spontaneous growth of consciousness, or development of the soul. This correspondence between the nature of the individual mind and the facts of individual experience is, however, on the material plane, very imperfect, and to a superficial observer appears even more so; but on the spiritual plane it is absolute, so much so that it becomes a matter of indifference whether we regard the factors of conscious existence as thoughts or sensations. Hence an aphorism of Plotinus to the effect that while the sensations of terrestrial existence may be regarded as *obscure thoughts*, the thoughts of intel-

ligential existence are equivalent to *clear sensations*. In other words, time and space in the ideal universe exist not as *limitations* but as freely-adopted forms of the spontaneous activity of conscious essence or spirit.¹

22. The account given of Paradise by Dante in his "*Divine Comedy*," based as it was in part on the study of Aristotle, Plato, and other heathen philosophers, and in part on theological researches, may, with certain important reservations, be regarded as the attempt of a magnificent intellect to give concrete form to this very conception of an intelligible or spiritual and ideal universe. It is interesting therefore to note that the conclusions just arrived at, as to the *rôle* of time and space as forms of intelligible existence, are confirmed by the poem in question. Thus, when the attention of Dante in Paradise is directed by St. Bernard to where, far above them, Beatrice sits enthroned on the third tier from the highest of those radiant spirits who conform the beauty of the heavenly rose, the poet first narrates how—

" Answering not, mine eyes I raised
And saw her, where aloof she sat, her brow
A wreath reflecting of eternal beams."

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. vii, sec. 7.

And then, as if in astonishment, continues—

“Not from the centre of the sea so far
 Unto the region of the highest thunder,
 As was my ken from hers; *and yet the form*
*Came through that medium down, unmixed and pure.”*¹

In other words, the perception and the creation of beauty in Paradise are one; for Dante's ascent from height to height of glory has been the logical manifestation of his own growth in grace, the normal expression, and visible aspect, of inward and spiritual change.

This harmony or, at least, analogy between the teaching of Plotinus on the one hand and the imagery of Dante on the other holds good with regard to the ideal function not of space only, but also of time. For example, in the tenth canto of the “Paradise,” Beatrice is referred to as

“She who passeth on
 So suddenly from good to better, time
 Counts not the act.”

But the points of correspondence of poet and philosopher on this subject do not end here. Plotinus asserts that in the intelligible universe no one substance presents, by reason of impenetrability,

¹ Dante's *Divine Comedy* (Cary). Paradise, Canto xxxi, 64, *et seq.*

an obstacle to the movements of another, any more than different notions in a single mind are mutually exclusive.¹ So when Dante is approaching the lowest or lunar paradise, its *substantiality* is first of all clearly indicated, or rather insisted upon—

“Meseemed as if a cloud had covered us,
Translucent, solid, firm, and polished bright,
Like adamant which the sun’s beam had smit.”

But, nevertheless, and this in despite of the fact that Dante was still “of corporeal frame,” not, like his conductor, an emancipated intelligence—

Within itself the ever-during pearl
Received us, as the wave a ray of light
Receives, and rests unbroken.”²

What is this but a sublime illustration of the ideal function of space as implied by the doctrine of Plotinus?

The same principle affords a guide to the interpretation of a statement of Plotinus to the effect that every point of the intelligible universe is also the actual centre—of that universe. “*There exist in the intelligible world a multitude of beings which occupy respectively the first, second or third rank of dignity, but as all are, so to speak, suspended alike*

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. v, sec. 10.

² Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (Cary), Canto ii, 31, *et seq.*

from the one omnipresent point of Divinity, and there find themselves united without barrier or interval, it follows that those beings which occupy the first or second rank are equally present among those which occupy the third rank.”¹ Now, according to the system of Dante, there are no less than ten heavens, located in, or rather symbolised by the seven planets; the eighth sphere comprising (1) the fixed stars, (2) the *primum mobile*, and (3) the empyrean.

But when in the heart of Dante doubts perforce arise with respect to the justice of the decree in accordance with which certain spirits are (as he at first crudely and falsely supposes) absolutely confined to the lowest or lunar paradise, he is in part reassured by the expressions of bliss and tranquil contentment made by the individuals in question, and exclaims—

“Then saw I clearly how *each spot in heaven*
Is Paradise, though with like gracious dew
 The supreme virtue show’r not over all.”²

And subsequently his remaining doubts and misgivings are dispelled by Beatrice herself, who assures him that—

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. v, sec. 4.

² Paradise, Canto liii, 88, *et seq.*

“Of seraphim he who is most ensky'd,
 Moses and Samuel, and either John,
 Choose which thou wilt, nor even Mary's self,
 Have not in any other heav'n their seats,
 Than have those spirits which so late thou saw'st,
 Nor more or fewer years exist.”¹

But, she explains—

“Here were they shown thee, *not that fate assigns
 This for their sphere*, but for a sign to thee
 Of that celestial furthest from the height.”²

Certain features in Dante's description of Paradise in these and other passages of his work are obviously inspired by theological and doctrinal rather than by philosophical considerations, and in applying the poet's ideas to the elucidation of the Plotinian conception of an intelligible order all such features must of course be rejected.

23. Objectively regarded the intelligible
 Universal
 Differentia- order may then be defined as universal
 tion. spatial differentiation, characterised in
 every phase by absolute formal perfection and ideal
 unity. It is coincident with, and in fact constitutes
 the entire field of Truth, and contains within its
 bosom a sort of figure or scheme whereby its poten-
 tialities or constituent ideas are indicated and
 circumscribed. Subjectively regarded, that is as

¹ Ibid., Canto iv, 28.

² Ibid., Canto iv, 37.

the Divine or Universal Intelligence, it is an eternal process of combined spiritual evolution and involution, characterised throughout by absolute wisdom and prescience, which traverses completely the said field of verity, exhibiting thus a schematism of time, analogous to, and in fact identical with the spatial schematism of form.¹

With respect to the beings which inhabit the intelligible sphere, it may be stated at once that all creatures whatsoever, even those which we (as we know them) are accustomed to condemn as vile and worthless, exist there also. For nothing exists in any degree save as the more or less perfect manifestation of a flawless conception of divine wisdom. These ideas or individual forms (*εἶδα ἄτομα*) are the types or intelligible units (monads) which, conceived in accordance with the principle of universal number (or harmony), are the actual denizens of the intelligible universe, and as such are in every case participators to the full degree required by their respective natures in the divine perfection to which they contribute.²

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. vii, secs. 13-14.

² Enn. VI, Lib. vii, secs. 8-9.

The
Idealism
of Shelley
and
Plotinus.

In the "*Prometheus Unbound*" of Shelley there occurs an exquisitely imagined passage in which the Spirit of the Earth describes to her mother a wondrous change which, ushered in by loud and long yet sweet and mysterious music, breaking the stillness of a summer night, has transformed to a state of ideal perfection her planet and all its inhabitants. While the music sounds, the Earth Spirit, in likeness of a moonbeam, lies hidden within a fountain in the public square of a city; for the citizens had gathered in the streets, and in awe and wonder stood gazing up to heaven. Thus concealed, the Earth Spirit watches while

"Those ugly human shapes and visages
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,
Past floating in the air, and fading still
Into the winds that scattered them; and those
From whom they past seemed mild and lovely forms
After some foul disguise had fallen, and all
Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
And greetings of delighted wonder, all
Went to their sleep again: and when the dawn
Came, wouldst thou think that toads, and snakes, and efts,
Could e'er be beautiful? Yet so they were,
And that with little change of shape or hue:
All things had put their evil nature off."¹

Here, in a work penned some sixteen centuries

¹ *Op. cit.*

later, we find again in fairer, because less abstract, form, but in undying youth and activity, the pure idealism of Plotinus.

What then, it may be asked, seeing that every individual intelligence exhibits divine perfection, constitutes rank in the intelligible sphere? The answer supplied by Plotinus to this important question is direct and simple. In the intelligible world, he asserts, the actuality of that which occupies the first rank is universal, and its potentiality simple or individual, while the actuality of that which occupies the lowest rank is individual, and its potentiality universal.¹ In other words, the kind or *genus*, possessing and retaining its own specifications and prerogatives as universal, implies also individuality and the existence of individuals, and might be said to generate them by a process of negative self-relation or involution, but that these latter, conversely, retaining in like manner their own particular characteristics as individuals, imply, and may even be said, collectively and severally, to generate the universal. An important consequence which flows directly from this doctrine is that on the intelligible plane the indi-

Universality
implies the
Individual.

Individuality
implies the
Universal.

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. vii, sec. 13.

viduals of a given kind, *qua* individuals, are equal.¹

But the above-mentioned antithesis between universality on the one hand and individuality on the other is manifest only when we contemplate essence or spirit in its subjective aspect as an eternal creative *process* or conscious and purposive Act. Objectively, spirit appears as the intelligible universe (*noumenon*), Absolute Idea, or Ideal, or, in other words, as the eternally realised consummation or end of the said creative and purposive Act. From this standpoint the apparently-opposed principles of individuality and universality are seen to be merged, reconciled, and finally superseded in the ultimate reality of their common source and principle, the One. Meanwhile, as distinguishable actualities, both terms of the antithesis may be regarded as complete and self-subsistent entities (although each is in a sense, for all that, the complement of the other), but the universal *qua* universal is infinitely superior to any particular individual.

As a matter of fact we find that in politics, art, religion, this test-question of the universal as distinguished from the parochial and ephemeral significance

Universality
as the
Criterion of
Greatness.

¹ Plotinus does not assert this, nor am I now convinced of its logical necessity.

of their operations is precisely the criterion which in the long run determines the degree of honour and reverence in which individuals are held. Where universal functions have been assigned to individuals by the accident of birth, or in other ways without respect of their essential fitness for the office, we find that the actual personality soon comes to be regarded as a mere *idolon* or symbol of the reality for which it stands. In that section of his "*Philosophy of History*" which deals with the Lamaistic development of Buddhism, Hegel writes to similar effect: "The idea of a man being worshipped as God—especially a living man—has in it something paradoxical and revolting, but the following considerations must be examined before we pronounce judgment respecting it. The conception of Spirit involves its being regarded as inherently, intrinsically universal. This condition must be particularly observed, and it must be discovered how in the systems adopted by various peoples this universality is kept in view. *It is not the individuality of the subject that is revered, but that which is universal in him*; and which, among the Thibetans, Hindoos, and Asiatics generally, is regarded as the essence pervading all things. This substantial Unity of spirit is realised in the Lama, who is nothing but the form in which Spirit

Hegel on
Universality
in Religions.

manifests itself ; and who does not hold this Spiritual Essence as his peculiar property, but is regarded as partaking in it only in order to exhibit it to others, that they may attain a conception of Spirituality, and be led to piety and blessedness. The Lama's personality as such—his particular individuality—is therefore subordinate to that substantial essence which it embodies." ¹

Intelligence and the One. 24. Returning now to the point at which this digression was made, we resume the task of reconstructing in outline the thought-scheme of Plotinus. It is all important to bear in mind that the fundamental cravings of the soul can never be satisfied by the contemplation of, or even (what is in fact the same thing) identification with, intellectual beauty (the intelligible order) merely as such. Intellectuality is only aspired to in virtue of our possession of reason, whereas the need of the Good is instinctive and universal. The contemplation of ideal formal perfection, so long as this is mistakenly regarded as an end-in-itself, as the *ultimate goal* of spiritual ascension, has an exciting and disturbing effect on the mind of the beholder.² The universal

¹ *Lectures on the Phil. of Hist.* By G. W. F. Hegel. Tr. by Sibree, ed. of 1890, pp. 178-9.

² Enn. V, Lib. v, sec. 12.

intelligence is actuality and life, but the Good as their common principle is infinitely superior to both. It is the cause of causality and freedom, the absolute, the infinite ; **The Good is Superior to Intelligence.** in itself unknowable, not as we say that abstract matter is unknowable, but in a precisely opposite sense, because it transcends all conceivable attributes of positive existence. Formless itself, it is the principle and source of all formal perfection ; which latter is accordingly desirable solely on this account, and, if otherwise regarded than as a necessarily imperfect reflex of an ineffable perfection, awakens no transport in the soul, but becomes comparable (and is then compared by Plotinus) to a formally-beautiful face, lacking that inward and higher grace of expression which alone contents us. For every intelligible being, although it is by its own right that which it is, only becomes truly desirable when the light of the Good illuminates and, so to speak, transfuses and colours it. In other words, the mind can only be satisfied by that which simultaneously and in a higher degree appeals to and satisfies the heart also. Then the soul, which before experienced no rapture, renouncing **Ecstasy.** its attitude of coldly-admiring impartiality, awakens invigorated, and expanding its wings under the sweet influence of Love,

soars by the aid of reminiscence to a higher principle than the object of its immediate contemplation.¹ And this ecstatic reunion with the Good, since it leaves the soul permanently beautified and enlightened, is the true object of art and religion, and, indeed, since life itself is likewise in essence a contemplative act, of all existence. We say

Virtue advisedly that the soul is *beautified* by
 as **Form.** such ecstatic elevation, because being itself of the intelligible or formal nature, its particular good (as distinguished from that which alone is absolutely good in itself) is of the nature of a form—the basis or vehicle of beauty. The primary good of a human soul is, in fact, virtue, *conformity*, that is, to the moral idea which constitutes good citizenship; and this in itself confers a certain beauty and dignity upon the life of its exponent. But Plotinus points out that just as the form of

Liberty intelligence is higher than that of the
 the **Law of** soul which is its reflex or image, so the
Reason. form of liberty is higher than the form of convention, and the life which is freely devoted

to the conscious pursuit of the absolute
Liberty ideal takes precedence of the life which
versus
Convention. aims merely at the acquisition and display of ordinary virtue.² To this distinction no excep-

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. vii, secs. 20–22. ² Ibid., secs. 27–28, 36.

tion need be taken on prudential grounds, provided always that it be carefully borne in mind that of the two standards the higher must prove itself not less but more exacting than the lower. This is not the same thing, however, as demanding that **Genius and** upon questions of conduct they shall **Morals.** invariably coincide, although doubtless they will so coincide much oftener than is commonly imagined. Immorality is, in short, no proof of genius, much rather it affords a presumption to the contrary effect; but, on the other hand, it is undoubtedly the case that genius is, within the bounds of its own sphere and range, a law unto itself, and cannot be brought to book by the current maxims of ethical convention. For genius is fundamentally a manifestation of love through intellect, and what limitation shall we venture to impose upon the freedom of so august a confederacy?

Grades of The degrees of spiritual ascension recog-
Ascension. nised by Plotinus may be indicated by the following somewhat arbitrary, but not meaningless distinctions: (1) Purification, or the regulation and subdual of gross carnal desires and appetites; (2) Virtues which adorn the soul; no mere passive abstention from vice, but an active conformity with the requirements of good citizenship; (3) Conversion towards, and contemplation

of abstract Intelligence; (4) edification in the intelligible order issuing in a life of rational freedom; (5) ecstasy, the Banquet of the Gods; the life of absolute faith and pure enthusiasm, inspired by draughts of "the true the blushful Hippocrene," and mystical permeation of the Highest.¹ Of

Mystic Reunion. this last degree of elevation—identification with the principle of infinite and transcendent beauty which we call God—Plotinus asserts that the soul, in so far as it tastes thereof, cannot be mistaken in asserting its possession and enjoyment of the supreme good. In so far as the soul enjoys the presence of God it is indistinguishable from Him. Rank, wealth, power, science, beauty, as we ordinarily understand and value these things, appear contemptible to the soul which has attained to this ineffable certitude. Fear is likewise impossible to such an initiate, who has in sober verity regained his original state of beatitude, and, as the possessor of intuitive knowledge of all truth, is in a sense superior to the need of thought itself.²

The Cause of Beauty. 25. The principle of the soul's ascension from the sphere of intelligence to ecstatic reunion with the Good is thus explained

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. vii, sec. 36.

² Ibid., sec. 35.

by Plotinus. He says that whenever a beautiful object is presented to the consciousness we strive always, while reducing that object to a form (apprehending it, that is, as an idea) to discover beyond and identify ourselves with the formative principle. This principle, which is superior to all determinate form, and hence to all ideas (being itself the one absolute and supernal *ideal*) is essential or transcendent beauty, the first Divine Hypostasis—shall we venture to name it universal Love? ¹

Every intelligence has, then, two powers, an inferior, which thinks, comprehending thus its own intelligible content, and a superior, which by a sort of intuition apprehends that which is above it, and, in so far as it is pure intelligence (and as such superior to reason), is transported with love, and thereby identified with its object. This spiritual contact with the Good has been already characterised as the ultimate goal of aspiration—the beatific vision of the Saint, the *summum bonum* of the philosopher.²

Strictly speaking, the Good cannot be
 Nature of the One *directly* thought or perceived, only felt in
 Superior to Thought. the ecstatic reunion described above, where
 an idea that conforms to and expresses
 the Good is the object of direct contemplation.

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. vii, sec. 33.

² Ibid., sec. 35.

Hence Plotinus forbids us to affirm categorically that God is good, or even that He exists, holding that the One is superior to all positive attributes, superior even to our notion of existence, and only to be described by negations. So, too, his master

Plato asserts that God cannot be named ^{Superior,} therefore, to or known. "*We refuse,*" says Plotinus, "*to all Conceivable Attributes.* *attribute being to the One, in order to avoid establishing a relation between Him and derivative beings.*"¹ Consequently, "*when you have had an intuition of the Supreme, do not assert that He is this or that; otherwise you virtually reduce Him to the category of determinate beings.*"

In God we are to seek all that is posterior to Him, but we are not to attempt by scientific analysis to penetrate the depth of His own being—still less to pass beyond it.² For God is

the outside ($\tau\acute{o}\ \epsilon\xi\omega$), the absolute and comprehensive measure of all things. He is also the within, the infinite depth or profundity, the occult wellspring of reality, the infinite Ideal. That which approaches Him the nearest, and, as it were, circularly impinges upon Him, is universal Reason or Intelligence, which in virtue of this aspiration towards, and

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. viii, sec. 8.

² Ibid., sec. 9.

attainment of the Good, is itself one and perfect. Hence, the universal Reason (Logos) is symbolically designated *a centriform circle*.¹ Be it noted that the form of the universal Being, although absolutely perfect and therefore absolutely accordant with the will of the One, is such *by its own act* and not merely in passive obedience to an impulse from without and above. Otherwise it were impossible to say, as Plotinus does say, that God is the Author of Liberty. And, nevertheless, God, as superior to Reason, essence or Spirit, has engendered it, and constitutes its principle and *raison d'être*.

The One. 26. When finally we pass on, as despite of all that has been said to the contrary, we inevitably do pass to the contemplation of the One as existing in and for Itself, we leave Reason behind us and rise upon the wings of ecstasy into a rarer and more exalted—the most exalted region of consciousness. What we say of the Good

Inadequacy of Science. is not to be regarded as an attempt to define its nature, for the ineffable cannot be formally and impassively scrutinised, nor the absolutely indivisible analysed and explained.² For whereas mere science, as the act of discursive reason, involves multiplicity, its inherent tendency

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. viii, sec. 18.

² Enn. VI, Lib. ix, sec. 4.

is to separate us from God, but the act of Divinity is an eternal *super-intellection*, and such knowledge as we have of this transcendent Activity is due to its actual presence in contact with and illumination of the soul of the beholder, which becomes for the time being *indistinguishable from Itself*. As we may imagine the master of a glorious palace, whose own beauty surpasses that of the formally perfect but comparatively lifeless statues which adorn it, so the beauty of the Good surpasses that of mere intelligible essence. Yet the One does not at first reveal Itself visibly and separately, but, as has just been explained, penetrates and becomes identified with the soul of the worshipper.¹ We discuss the Divine Nature, says Plotinus, not in the hope of defining or comprehending it (for such hope were baseless and irrational) but in order to awaken and stimulate the soul, and thus rekindle its innate desire of this Divine, this ultimate experience. "I am trying," said Plotinus on his deathbed to Porphyrius, "to bring back the Divine that is in me to the Divine that is in the All." That, indeed, behoves us; and, further, the need of this reunion is not confined to ourselves but is instinctive and universal. For—

"As flame ascends,

As vapours to the earth in showers return,

¹ Enn. VI. Lib. vii, sec. 35.

As the pois'd ocean toward th' attracting moon
Swells, and the ever list'ning planets, charm'd
By the sun's call, their onward pace incline,
So all things which have life aspire to God,
Exhaustless fount of intellectual day,
Centre of souls." ¹

Every living soul yearns after the Good as a virgin for her destined spouse, but may and often does forget this heavenly love and plunge for awhile into adulterous excesses. Nevertheless, the sole object of existence for all is contact with and direct contemplation of the Good, in virtue of which contact the centre of our own being may become coincident with that of the universe, and the purport of our otherwise trivial and meaningless existence, in sober verity, Divine. Exalted thus, and in virtue of this spiritual contact, the soul becomes clear, subtle and luminous, full of the light of intellect, conscious, moreover, of its own perfection, and may be likened to a resplendent flame.² Even yet, supposing its previous detachment from sensuous allurements to have been incomplete, it may fall again into comparative obscurity, but by every such ecstatic ascension and beatific reunion it is permanently beautified and exalted, and its ultimate return and

¹ Akenside, *Pleasures of Imagination*, bk. ii, 264.

² Enn. VI, Lib. ix, sec. 9.

reabsorption are inevitable; for when the soul has once beheld God, a virtue or image remains with it, which serves to guide it back to Him, manifesting its presence by the light which we call intelligence and the love which creates wisdom.

Potential Import of the Doctrine of Unity. 27. With reference to this doctrine of the First Divine Hypostasis many questions will suggest themselves to the student which find in the *Enneads* of Plotinus no very clear or satisfactory answer. For instance, it may be asked, is the Good a personal or an impersonal Being, is this principle the philosophical equivalent of the First Person in the Triune God of Theology, or, peradventure, of the Third? It must be admitted that, at first sight, there is something extremely unsatisfying in the account given of the One by Plotinus; but allowance must be made for the enormous difficulty of the task, no less than that of describing the indescribable and of defining that which is beyond all comprehension. If, however, in completing this brief study of the lifework of a great thinker, we would be faithful to his own spirit of free and fearless inquiry, we must not shrink from the endeavour to solve this supreme problem of the nature of the One, not merely as it was interpreted by Plotinus him-

self, but also in respect of its true potential import.

The One as Abstraction. In the first place it is to be noted that, in common with the second and third Divine Hypostases (literally *substances*) the One is arrived at by a process of abstraction, and accordingly presents itself at first to the mind as a mere formless residuum, void of all real content, or genuine significance. But this was equally the

Intelligence as an Abstraction. case with the Divine Intelligence, which, although similarly apprehended in the first place, by the abstraction of all lower forms of consciousness, as a mere informing light or essence, ultimately proved itself capable of embracing all that pertains to the notion of positive existence. The case of the First Divine Hypostasis, to which, as has been stated, cannot be ascribed a genuine existence, is no doubt different in many

Psychological Basis of the Soul, the Intelligence, and the One. respects from that of the two inferior principles; but it has at least this in common with them both, that the inference of its existence (in so far as it can be said to exist) rests like theirs in part on a psychological basis. For, as was pointed out in the beginning of this essay, each of the three grades of spirituality corresponding respectively to the third, second and first Divine Hypostasis, is in some degree of immanence or actuality repre-

sented in every individual human or other microcosm. Plotinus asserts, in fact, that sensations aspire to become thoughts, and thoughts to merge in wisdom or intelligence, and similarly, from the psychological standpoint we may say that the First

The One a
Potence of
the Soul. Divine Hypostasis is simply the human or other consciousness carried to its supreme potentiality and there merged

and, so far as reason is concerned, lost to view. Can we not, at all events, give a name to this highest, ineffable power of consciousness, a name which, without controverting in one single detail the account given of it by Plotinus, but rather coinciding in a remarkable way with every indication of its mysterious nature, may yet serve to redeem the conception once for all from the charge of barren and empty formalism?

The First Divine Hypostasis is superior, indeed it is infinitely superior, to thought and existence. It does not think, or even will, but has merely a *simple intuition of itself*. It is the transcendent principle of all beauty, the ultimate source of all emancipation, yet in itself neither free nor subject

Matter
and the One. to necessity. It is the measureless measure of all things, the rule of wisdom or intelligence, and as the absolutely formless and (hence) impersonal, yet creative and self-deter-

mined Good is the complement of the idea of matter, the absolutely chaotic, inert and indeterminate evil.

The two Matter and the Good may also be con-
Infinities. trusted as the two infinities, the first, indefinite nonentity, the second infinite ideality; and this antithesis is, in fact, complete, for whereas the Good resembles matter in that neither form, will nor intelligence may be posited of either, the first is immeasurably above, the second as absolutely beneath the possibility of such determinate existence.¹ The One is likened by Plotinus to the root of an immense tree, whose trunk is Reason. It is that principle to which all things, created and uncreated, aspire, and in virtue of their more or less perfect possession of which they aspire, and in virtue of which they are one. It is therefore

Infinite the source and goal of all things, the
Love. principle of evolution and involution, the expulsive energy and the attractive force, the "dialectic" of Hegelian philosophy, the divine grace of Christian theology, the circle which closes with itself. In one word, it is Love.

The It in nowise affects the validity of the
Doctrine above interpretation to assert that Ploti-
of Unity nus himself was not the originator of
not peculiar this doctrine of unity, but that he appro-
to Plotinus.

¹ Cf. Hegel's antithesis of the "true" and the "false" Infinities.

priated it from the system of Pythagoras. Nor are we concerned to prove (as might well be impossible) that Plotinus himself had any clear perception of the real identity of his notion of the Good with love, abstract and universal. We may recall the recollection of the reader to his comparison of the beauty of mere intelligence, unenlightened by the Good, to a formally perfect face, lack-

ing the inward grace of expression. It is certain, too, that he teaches that love is the sole principle of ascension, and there is also a passage, in which he asserts that souls which have contemplated the One may return to reveal to others the secret of celestial rapture, which seems to justify the con-

clusion that love is, or at least should be, the principle of descension.¹ But the soul in union with, and contemplation of the One, is a homogeneous entity, indistinguishable from that which it beholds. The circle is thus complete.

Love the principle of Ascension and Descension.

The Soul as Love is the Good.

Love not a mere Affection.

It may perhaps be objected that love is an emotion, and that in the Neoplatonic scheme the first condition of the imprisoned soul's return to God, of salvation in fact, is the renunciation of all natural appetites and

¹ Enn. VI, Lib. ix, sec. 7.

desires. Such an objection, however plausible, would be founded on a total misconception of the doctrines of Plotinus and, indeed, of the nature and aims of all philosophy. The one supreme and comprehensive science would upon this supposition be no science at all but a mere sentimental exercise or indulgence. Philosophy, as the ideal expression of the love-of-wisdom, is not only based on emotion but is even itself *in essence* emotional. Appetites and desires as the result of that law of the members which wars against the law of the spirit, and only

**The
Material
Organism
as the Seat
of Feelings.** in so far as they so contend, constitute for Plotinus, as for St. Paul, those "feelings" which at the bidding of Celestial Wisdom, invoked and revealed by Love, are to be "crucified," or at the least controlled by the converted will of the aspirant. Their seat moreover, is neither the body as such, nor the soul, but that composite product of Nature and the irrational or *vestigial* soul of the individual, which Plotinus calls the *living* body. To the soul itself

**Emotions
compatible
with
Freedom
belong to
the Soul.** we can properly attribute neither sensation nor any other mere feelings, but "passions without passivity," that is, emotions compatible with freedom, or, in other words, the desire of that which is good, or ultimately of the Good itself. When

the soul seems to will that which is evil it is (appearances notwithstanding), according to Plotinus, at worst, the victim of ignorance: for (as Meredith beautifully says) "the light of every soul burns upwards," and the aim of a rational entity cannot in the long run be otherwise than good. And the reason of this is that the love which impels the individual soul and intellect knows no rest until it has completed its circuit and returned to the source whence it was derived. Regarded as an impersonal abstract entity, we may say, indeed, that it has never really left that source, but regarded as a mere potentiality of any particular human consciousness, its ultimate return is, at all events, inevitable.

We are now, therefore, in a position more fully to appreciate the latent significance of the above-quoted words of the dying philosopher: "*I am trying to bring back the Divine that is in me to the Divine that is in the All.*"







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