



THE UPPER TRIAD

SPECIAL ISSUE NUMBER 9

THE ENNEADS

Commentaries on Plotinus and The Enneads

THE UPPER TRIAD

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Commentaries and quotations printed in the journal are intended to stimulate constructive thinking and further study along spiritual lines. Each thought may be accepted, deferred, or rejected, in whole or in part, according to the perspective of the reader.

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SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. THE UNITY OF ALL LIFE. That there exists one God, both immanent and transcendent, within which are differentiated all lives and all forms.

2. THE PURPOSE OF LIFE. That the purpose of life is the evolution of consciousness through experience and expression. That all life is conditioned by purpose within a grand scheme of progressive cyclic evolution.

3. KARMA. That human evolution proceeds through many progressive incarnations according to a cosmic law of periodicity, ever onward and upward. That life is conditioned by the Law of Karma, which yields learning experiences and encourages evolution as a consequence of free will, through every thought, feeling, and action.

4. THE NATURE OF TRUTH. That truth can be found in philosophy, religion, and science, which are but aspects of one coherent and inclusive truth having no inherent conflict or contradiction. That there are many paths to God, embracing all religions and spiritual philosophy. That truth is relative and can be perceived in many ways and on many levels, according to consciousness.

5. THE PROBLEM OF LIFE. That the real problem of life in the lower worlds is the elimination of glamour and illusion. That glamour and illusion can be fully overcome, as the student achieves the alignment of a purified and integrated personality with the soul, through intelligent meditation.

6. PERSONALITY AND SOUL. That the true individuality is the soul which inhabits the personality. That the personality is composed of three interrelated instruments: the physical body, the emotional or astral body, and the lower mind. That the soul is the essence of the divinity within.

7. THE SPIRITUAL PATH. That the spiritual path in its many aspects embraces the higher stages of human evolution, as the human soul takes its stand and commits itself to conscious and selfless development. That this process encompasses the development of the inner, latent spirituality and the application of one's faculties in service to God and to humanity.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 162 - PLOTINUS AND THE ENNEADS

Plotinus was an Egyptian-born Roman philosopher who lived in the third century A.D. He was a student of Ammonius Saccas in Alexandria, Egypt and was exposed to the esoteric (theosophical) tradition which underlies all enlightened philosophy and religion. Plotinus is generally regarded as the founder of Neoplatonism, a philosophy which synthesized the metaphysical and spiritual teachings of the Peripatetic, Platonic, Pythagorean, and Stoic systems. Plotinus was probably influenced the most by Plato, but above all, the (underlying) esoteric tradition was the basis of his life and work.

Another student of Ammonius Saccas was Origen, the Christian theologian and foremost member of the catechetical school at Alexandria. Origen applied the esoteric teachings within the framework of orthodox (third century) Christianity, while Plotinus applied the teachings within a parallel (complementary) philosophical (rather than religious) framework. There was no real (inner) conflict between the two expressions, just as today, where many true Christians work within the framework of the orthodox church, and many others (true Christians) work without that orthodox framework. Both Origen and Plotinus developed the ideas of divine triplicities: Origen refers frequently to the Trinity; Plotinus refers often to the One and the Triad of divinity.

The philosophical mysticism of Plotinus has had a considerable influence on (orthodox) Christianity, since it has, as its basis, the esoteric Christian tradition. That esoteric Christian religion actually predates the popular (historical) Christian religion. The philosophy of Plotinus concentrates on the soul and its relationship to God and its relationship to the personality. For Plotinus, salvation was not something to be sought; it was something to be realized. He taught the reality of Christ (the soul) and the meditation through which the spiritual student can become aware of that (real) (inner) spiritual self (but he did not use the Christian terminology). Plotinus was not a sentimentalist, nor was he given to personalities or phenomena. As an esotericist, he maintained a rather strict control over the circulation of the teachings, being careful not to reveal any teachings prematurely (to unprepared or unqualified students).

The written papers of Plotinus are in the form of commentaries or discourses on the philosophy. The existence of a (the) metaphysical (theosophical) (esoteric) system of knowledge (philosophy) is assumed in each of the various commentaries. Each separate discourse or commentary is a development or clarification of a significant point or question. The papers were not written as consecutive or sequential chapters of a larger work; however, the commentaries of Plotinus were collected, titled, and organized by one of his students into a systematic work entitled the Enneads.

There are fifty-four commentaries in all, and they are organized as six enneads of nine tractates each. The First Ennead considers living being and the nature of man. The Second Ennead considers the heavens and the two kinds of matter. The Third Ennead considers the cosmos. The Fourth Ennead considers the soul. The Fifth Ennead considers the nous and first being. And the Sixth Ennead considers the existent and the good or the One (including human and divine freedom). In reading the Enneads, care must be taken with regard to terminology, as many of the words translated from the Greek have somewhat different meanings than contemporary usage. The terminology can be reconciled in its consistency with the esoteric tradition (that depends on various keys)(without which much of the meaning would remain inaccessible).

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No. 167 - THE FIRST ENNEAD (1)

The First Ennead of Plotinus considers living being and the nature of man. The first tractate of the First Ennead is entitled the Animate and the Man. Considered are the relationships between the soul, the waking-consciousness, and the body; the place of sense-perception, discursive reasoning, and intellection; and the relationship of the (individual) soul to the (soul of the) lifewave. A number of pertinent questions are addressed, as the author ultimately defines man as the waking-consciousness, an important distinction in view of the ways in which a person can exercise identification.

Where (what) is the seat of the human (personal) interests (desires)(feelings) (affections)(experiences)(sensations)? The seat of personal interest and experience is the seat of sense-perception which is the personality (the body and the emotions). Discursive (analytical)(concrete) reasoning is attributed to the lower mind which is also the highest aspect of the personality. The soul employs (deploys) (influences) the body (personality) as the agent to the instrument yet the soul remains unaffected by and unreceptive to the acts and experiences of its personality. Thus, the soul uses the body as an instrument but does not share the experiences of the body. What aspects of ordinary life (in incarnation) can be assigned to the soul? Very little, for the soul is only related to as the waking-consciousness reaches the levels of the soul (in contrast to that of mundane or common existence).

What is meant by the Animate? The living organism (mind and body) which is that instrument of the soul. The body has acquired a life of its own, but how does the body stand to the soul? There is certainly an interaction (relationship) between the soul and the body, but that is not a coalescence. For the soul is veritably noble (immortal) (impassive). But the soul might be considered in two (or three) ways. The individual soul is at all times inseparable from the essential soul (of the lifewave). The soul derives its nobility from the intrinsic divinity of the outpouring of life which is the essential soul. But that noble, individual soul is also related (in some occult fashion) to the personality of its own creation (appropriation). The lowest aspect of the soul is the abstract mental, which links to the concrete mental nature of the personality. The noble nature (mind and soul) is related to the human nature (emotions and the mind) and the animal nature (body and emotions).

The couplement of soul and body is essentially the mind (or more accurately, the waking-consciousness which is designed to function through the mental faculties). The couplement (waking-consciousness) subsists by virtue of the (indirect)(impersonal) presence of the soul. The man (the mind) is considered the associate of the reasoning soul. The soul is considered the realm of higher causation (insofar as the person is concerned), yet the realm of lower causation (which is an interrelated reflection of the higher) incorporates the mind, the emotions, and the body (and their environment). The desire faculty (and the experience of desire (sensation)) is seated entirely within the personality, whereas the higher (noble) faculties (the experience of judgement and realization apart from the senses)(the abstract mind and the intuition) are within the presence and influence of the soul. The soul stands apart from that which is lesser, and yet exists within the form. The soul remains not sympathetic, though the most noble of thoughts and feelings do begin to touch the place of the soul. The divinity of that greater life begins to shine forth into the lesser in accordance with the receptivity (purity) (preparedness)(responsiveness) of the focus of the waking-consciousness.

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No. 172 - THE FIRST ENNEAD (2)

The second tractate of the First Ennead is entitled the Virtues, but the real focus is the concept of likeness to God, and the attainment of such likeness (and the role that the virtues play in such attainment). The soul's purpose is acknowledged as liberation (escape) from (through) the world of form (matter)(evil) and reunion with the supreme aspect (the human monad). The process of liberation implies that sufficient progress (evolution) has already been attained in the pilgrimage in matter and that the soul has sounded forth the call for liberation. This reunion also implies completion and fulfillment (abstraction) of purpose. Plotinus is concerned with the path of liberation and the means through which that liberation should be rightly achieved. That path may require several lifetimes, for the withdrawal of the soul from active manifestation is a relatively difficult and tedious process.

Much philosophical reasoning (enquiry) is set forth in pursuit of the proper approach to the soul (and its monad). The virtues are analyzed, but especially the nature or concept of virtue. The supreme (monad) is said to possess (by reflection) archetypes or exemplars which are patterns (intentions) (potentialities) for evolutionary development. Each archetype has a correspondence on each successively lower level of existence. The civic virtues are said to be good (meaningful and worthy of attention), but nevertheless, somewhat removed from the reality of the exemplars themselves. The ordinary virtues are said to be stepping stones to higher correspondence. There exist several categories of virtues, including those that are preliminary and have to do with (mostly) human personality interactions; those that are considered purifications, which further lead the student toward the beauty (purity) of the soul; and virtues which actually resonate with the undamped character of the soul itself (which are therefore much closer to the archetypes). A distinction is made between virtues and the source of virtue.

Goodness is said to be something more than purification. The nature of the soul is obscured by the personality. As the personality is developed, purified, and refined, the nature of the soul (goodness) becomes evident. The soul is seen to be inviolately free from (above) all passions and affections (desires). The process of liberation is considered as a disengagement from (release from absorption in) the ordinary mundane (human) world of activity. That process is actually one of assimilation and attraction, as the fruits of experience in the lower worlds are withdrawn (transformed) into their higher correspondence (in fulfillment of the original archetypes). What is actually abstracted is quality (consciousness). Experience in the lower worlds is intended to develop the waking-consciousness to the point where it can function at the level of the soul. At that point, the primal excellence of the soul can be fully manifested, on its own level.

The mystical path which Plotinus develops is essentially a conscious process of abstraction; it is not a path of development per se, because it presupposes sufficient preparation. It is simply a path to restore (to) the primal excellence. It is a path in which the preliminary virtues give way to loftier virtues, as a means of attaining the likeness of God. And in this path it is the power of the soul (having been developed through assimilation) that produces all of the virtues. This paradox is easily resolvable in the exchange of energy between the soul and its reflection. Through the increasing quality of consciousness, the spiritual aspirant attains to the likeness of God, as that quality becomes (directly) God (the soul itself).

The third tractate of the First Ennead is entitled Dialectic. The question is asked of what art, method, or discipline will spiritual attainment or perfection be achieved. The answer or response is an elucidation of dialectic (as defined and used by Plato and Plotinus). There are many definitions of dialectic. In the orthodox sense dialectic is logical discussion, reasoning by dialogue (or questions and answers) as a method of philosophical investigation. In another major sense, dialectic is a process in which an entity passes over into and is preserved and fulfilled by its opposite. Both of these definitions provide some foundation for understanding dialectic in a higher sense.

According to Plotinus, dialectic is the science, method, or discipline of spiritual realization. The nature of dialectic is alike for all, but the approach (preparation) depends on the student's temperament, capabilities, and experience. There are two stages to the path: the lower degree incorporates the paths of approach and the probationary path; the higher degree incorporates the path of discipleship and beyond. In the first stage, the student is striving upwards, being concerned with the conversion of the lower life. This includes self-assessment and a training program designed for the particular student. The second stage is for those who have overcome the lower life and have reached the upper sphere (or in other words, have purified the lower self and have achieved alignment of soul and personality). It is in this second stage that the true (higher form of) dialectic is experienced.

The lower form of dialectic is a discussion that involves (primarily) the rational mind. A middle form of dialectic involves an internal reasoning process that is enlightened by the energy of the soul, as the concrete mind comes into (approximate) contact with the soul. The higher form is pure realization (on soul levels) with the concrete mind standing by as the recipient and benefactor. Such dialectic brings with it the power of truth (reality) to every analysis, but that analysis transcends rational thinking and reasoning. The rational mind can only respond to that higher knowing (realization). Dialectic (in this higher sense) deals with certainties (realities) rather than hypotheses. It is a super-reasoning process on abstract mental and intuitive (buddhic) levels. Dialectic is the internal dialogue of the soul itself, which is also the dialogue (interaction) with the realm of universals.

Dialectic is thus said to be the supreme philosophical method, leading always to reality. Philosophy is said to be the supremely precious, and dialectic the precious part of (esoteric) philosophy. Dialectic relates philosophy to true contemplation and the elimination of personal energy. One cannot master dialectic without having cultivated the lower (and intermediate) virtues. The supreme (human) virtue is said to be wisdom, which is the virtue peculiarly induced by dialectic. But neither wisdom nor dialectic can be attained without spiritual refinement and preparation.

The master of dialectic is one who ever knows what questions to ask (which are really no questions at all), how to ask them, and how to respond to the threads of energy received as a result of the questions-which-are-not-questions. The master of dialectic is the master of himself and the master of silence; he knows which energies to avoid and which energies to cultivate. He knows how to enter the quiet, still place, and he knows how to follow any and every thread without distraction or distortion. The master of dialectic is a heart (and mind) and soul uplifted to God, with no thought of selfhood, with only the love of truth and a willingness to live wholly by its dictates.

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No. 182 - THE FIRST ENNEAD (4)

The fourth tractate of the First Ennead is entitled Happiness. The object is to distinguish between true happiness and welfare or prosperity. Welfare and prosperity are considered within the reach of all (lower) lives, but true happiness is said to be a condition in consciousness (disposition) in which the awareness of the soul is required. The lower order of happiness is simply the good of life, based upon appearances, the conditions of life, achievements, and even inborn tendencies. True happiness is a higher order of happiness altogether, centered in the inner peace of being, in accordance with the purpose of nature. In this sense, even the soul of the lower kingdoms can participate.

The state of well-being is seen as a good in itself, apart from perception, and therefore goodness can be experienced on all levels, even in the lower kingdoms. But true happiness is not based upon any (artificial) sense of well-being, nor is it dependent on sensation or any form of outer experience, attainment, or condition. True happiness is inherent in the possession (realization) of the perfect (divine)(inner) life. All beings possess (participate) in this divine life, either potentially, unconsciously, or effectively. True happiness is said to be related to the effective inner life and the end of seeking. Those who are proficient in the inner life of the soul, work no longer for themselves, but for God, the lifewave, and the soul itself.

One who has attained true happiness is (relatively) unaffected by pain, suffering, or sorrow. True happiness is not affected by any form of (apparent) misfortune, since true happiness depends only on the divine changeless (existing beyond the outer world of changes) essence within the form. Even drugs (food or drink) and disease, which are viewed as bringing about a suspension (distortion)(compromise)(clouding) of consciousness, deter not the happiness based upon inner peace. The inner peace pervades both the waking and sleeping states, for it is dependent upon neither. Furthermore, there are no means to true happiness. It exists, and it can be experienced, but it cannot be attained in any objective or deliberate sense. As one becomes centered in the soul, one simply realizes that quiet, inner joy that is true being.

Pleasant conditions may be sought for the sake of integrity (the simple, purified life of the spiritually responsive personality) rather than compromise (the complicated or distracting life of involvement in lesser matters). But even with inner peace there must be an acceptance of karma (conditions). Even with true happiness, one may carry personal suffering (and the suffering of humanity) as well as can be. But with strength, untroubled by appearances (even painful ones), the inner life persists. The enlightened view and experience the world quite differently than other mortals; the outer events do not penetrate the inner calm of the enlightened, only the observation and assessment are reflected into the inner being. The one who is proficient in the esoteric peace retains his composure, having the consciousness centered (focused) within, while simultaneously functioning effectively in the outer world.

True happiness is thus removed from sensation or emotion, removed even from the joy of reasoning, as the mind is held steadfast in the light of the inner self. The true individuality is neither the male or female body (expression) nor the personality nature; thus, happiness centered in the lower self is at best, temporary and impotent when compared with the reality of higher existence. Happiness that is centered upon the real is a form of immortality in which the proficient ever bathe, while helping the balance of humanity onward and upward, from darkness into light.

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No. 187 - THE FIRST ENNEAD (5)

The fifth tractate of the First Ennead is entitled Happiness and the Extension of Time. Happiness is considered in its two dimensions (apparent and real) with respect to time, as a present (instantaneous) quality, and with respect to duration. Apparent happiness (pleasure) is that dimension of happiness resulting from phenomenal existence and mundane affairs. Real (true) happiness is that other dimension of happiness that results from quality, virtue, and inner existence (which is being).

Happiness is usually considered as a present (current) state or quality experienced by an individual in time. Such happiness requires the presence of the emotional or mental state; it is not a matter of anything past or future, for it is only substantial in the present tense and only to the extent that it is manifested or experienced by the waking-consciousness. In the case of apparent happiness, the state (of happiness) appears and disappears and fluctuates in intensity depending on outer conditions and their relationships with consciousness. In the case of true happiness, the state is relatively constant, being the result of a depth of consciousness and a temperament conditioned by inner values and higher consciousness.

Passing (phenomenal) happiness does not really vary because of time, but it does vary according to events and circumstances in time. Eternal (inner) happiness is quite unrelated to time or to events in time. But in either case, happiness exists only in the present tense. Memory is not happiness, but memory can affect (phenomenal) happiness in the present tense (as in the experience of memory). Felicity (the quality or state of being happy) does not of itself increase or decrease as a function of time. Greater (true) happiness is a consequence (reward) of higher virtue, notwithstanding a duration in time. Virtue (and real happiness) is simply not a time-dependent phenomenon.

However, there is a relationship between a quality of pain (unhappiness) or pleasure (apparent happiness) and the time over which it is experienced. The product of the duration of an experience with its intensity or magnitude (the integration of experience over time) may determine certain effects and processes in the personality. Experience has as its object the learning of certain lessons pertaining to the progress or evolution of consciousness. Significant pain over a short period of time is more likely to make a direct impression on the waking-consciousness than slight but malingering pain over a long period of time. Pain is essentially an attention-getting device for the purpose of learning. Thus happiness and unhappiness in time are effects of consciousness and related to learning experience. All of experience aims toward something present (at the focus of consciousness), yet much is still experienced and assimilated unconsciously (and out of time).

Moral excellence is more important than (transient) (personality-centered) happiness. True, inner happiness comes when the student has the demonstrated ability to (assimilate) experience without emotional or phenomenal involvement (absorption), when the student has risen above the purely mundane existence. Time and circumstances simply cannot deter the student who has achieved inner happiness (as a consequence of quality in consciousness). Time is the illusion of eternity, but eternity is really timelessness. Life is measured by eternity, not by time. Everlasting time is not related to eternity, for eternity exists without time. Those who live unabsorbed by the active (mundane) life attain happiness in greater depth (reality), for the good (true happiness) results from the inner disposition (wisdom) and the contemplative life.

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No. 192 - THE FIRST ENNEAD (6)

The sixth tractate (commentary) of the First Ennead is entitled Beauty. Therein Plotinus considers the nature of beauty and the relationship of beauty to the soul (and to God). Beauty is considered in several dimensions (orders). The lower order comprises the beauty perceived through the senses (through sight and hearing). Another (higher) order comprises the beauty found in the conduct of life, in actions, character, and virtue. An even higher order comprises the beauty inherent within communion with the soul (and God) and the vision of truth. The lower order pertains to concrete experience while the higher orders are increasingly more abstract. In each case, beauty depends on perception and realization, and the order of beauty realized depends on the extent to which the higher levels of consciousness are involved.

Beauty is defined as the quality or aggregate of qualities in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses (in the lower aspect) or exalts the mind and spirit (in the higher aspect). Beauty depends on symmetry and (compound) unity, on the proper synthesis of components. Beauty is a matter of perceived accord and harmony, being a measure of how close the object or experience approaches the ideal form or archetype. In the higher sense, beauty is a matter of truth (goodness) and reality, perceived beyond the senses, through the participation of the soul itself. There is a superficial beauty and an inner (intrinsic) beauty. The authentic (inner) beauty stirs the soul by association (correlation) with God, through the inherent and divine grace. The greatest joy is regarded to be the perception (participation) of the soul, to see with the sight (inner vision) of the soul, and with its affinity for truth (reality) (beauty)(goodness).

The separated (independent)(unenlightened) personality is considered ugly (dull) by virtue of its association with matter (the opposite pole of spirit). The soul is seen to be beautiful by its concordance with the divine life (light). Thus the ideal is seen to be beautiful in its pattern and unity (brightness), and its reflection into matter to be relatively ugly by comparison. Cleanliness and purity of matter (the vehicles of the personality) are then seen to be necessary for communion. The distraction (and distortion) of the personality in the lower worlds must be overcome so that the higher order of beauty might be realized. The soul (personality) immersed in the world of matter is seen simply as the distant (imperfect) reflection of the soul resplendent on its own level. That which is truly beautiful draws the beholder (the mind and personality) upward in consciousness until communion (the higher realization of divine beauty) is achieved.

Beauty, then, is regarded as a potent force that draws the mind and the soul of the spiritual student onward and upward (inward) to the source of light and love (and life). Pleasure (happiness) drawn from the lower order no longer satisfies and is released. The real joy (beauty) of inner experience replaces the lower order, and increasingly the vision of the spiritual path (truth) is realized, as the focus of consciousness achieves conscious communion with the divine center within (the soul)(God). That process is one of becoming closer and closer to God in terms of quality (consciousness); thus the spiritual student is enjoined to become Godlike in all things, that the beauty of creation and the achievement of divine humility might be consciously entered. The nature of God (the good) can only be realized by participation. An even higher order of beauty (beyond communion) is suggested as the soul (monad) begins to participate in the principles of cosmic existence.

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No. 197 - THE FIRST ENNEAD (7)

The seventh tractate of the First Ennead is entitled the Primal Good and Secondary Forms of Good. Considered is the basic nature of the good as prelude to discussion of the nature and source of evil. The primal good is the unmoved (immutable)(implacable) essence of the central life, that to which all is bound, yet that which remains unbound (as the light of the sun is bound by the sun, but as the sun is not bound by its light). In the limited (human) sense, the primal good is the spiritual monad which remains (esoterically) detached from its incarnations (reflections)(soul and personality).

In a greater sense it is the Solar Logos of which the solar system is but a distant reflection (of the central sun). In an even greater sense, the primal good is some absolute good, a principle of cosmic existence. That primal good may be possessed (experienced) through approach (likeness)(nearness)(resonance) and through aspiration (realization). And that primal good is evoked as the natural expression of the life (spirit)(energy) of the soul, the manifestation of the goodness (God)(life) within the form, and the corresponding movement (response) of the soul (and its personality) toward the good.

Analogous to the light of the sun, everything in the world (realm) of matter, form, and personality is aligned (in some way) toward the good by virtue of the inherent relationship of the soul (as all forms are related in some way to a corresponding soul). Likewise the soul (consciousness) is directed (directly or otherwise) toward the good (the monad), since it (the soul) is merely a dynamic correspondence of the monad. By the unity of all life (which pervades all of form and consciousness) everything shares in the image (reflection) of good. But the soul is much nearer to God (the good)(in the sense of quality), and thus, the soul is the link (intermediary) between life (the good) and form, providing the higher energies as needed (and as permitted). As the soul is oriented toward the monad (and as the personality (the form) is oriented toward (aligned with) the soul), the measure of good is shared throughout the spectrum of life. The monad (good) is life in the higher sense. Life on earth is life (expression)(experience) in the lower (objective) sense. Both the soul and the monad freely exist beyond life and death in the lower worlds. Only the personality relates to lower existence directly.

But all that lives (in the lower sense) is not aligned directly with the source. Wherever barriers (ignorance) exist between life and form, evil is said to exist, as the obstruction of truth (reality)(goodness). And that obstruction (resistance)(evil) is inherent within form itself, through the design of manifestation. Thus opposition provides stability and balance (in the abstract sense). In a stronger sense, evil cannot reach the soul that is free from attachments in the lower worlds. Life (experience) on physical, emotional, and mental levels is a calculated investment, a temporary and necessary time (risk) of (relative) distraction in support of evolutionary purposes. Life in the lower worlds is, then, of itself, an evil (in the abstract sense of identification or involvement with matter), but the soul persists on its own level, free to participate in the primal good, without concern for objective or subjective existence. Life in the lower worlds is good in the sense that it serves constructive spiritual purpose (the evolution of consciousness). Life in the higher worlds is seen to be good in the sense that it permits far greater freedom and realization (understanding) unbound by the limitations of objective existence, and in the sense that life in the higher worlds is closer to the source (reality).

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No. 202 - THE FIRST ENNEAD (8)

The eighth tractate of the First Ennead is entitled the Nature and Source of Evil. Considered is the relationship between good and evil, being and non-being, and between the soul and the opposition of good by evil. The primal evil (evil absolute) is said to exist as the independent (and abstract) principle of non-being (the absence of being)(or the quite distant image or reflection of being), as the absolute (lifeless) formlessness and lawless void that exists prior to (and to a certain extent during) manifestation. As an emptiness (non-existence)(the negation of reality), evil is real in the sense that it complicates life and consciousness, but it is unreal in the sense that it has no real life of its own.

On the other hand, the good is the abstract principle of being which has its root (source) in God (life) (reality) and produces the ordered purposeful manifestation of life and consciousness. In one sense, the good is associated with the highest formlessness, unbound and unlimited, but having an inherent purpose and an ordered synthetic nature. The good is inserted into the lower formlessness (emptiness) (chaos) by successive differentiation and reflection. The ordered nature of being produces patterns (forms) (structure) within the lower formlessness. From life (spirit), through quality (consciousness), to appearance (matter), the spiritual impulse reaches a lower (relative) limit. That lower limit (the greatest diversification of matter on the lowest level of manifestation) confronts the lower formlessness, and by association is qualified by evil (lack of purpose) (random, chaotic force). Thus evil is inherent within matter, though evil is actually a derived quality.

So absolute evil is an abstraction inherent in unqualified formlessness. And those forms which come into closest contact with such formlessness (in the lower sense) acquire a degree of evil by association and to the extent to which the indwelling life and consciousness permits (or is unable to prevent). Higher forms can take on an increased measure of this evil quality by continued association. Matter itself exists at a lower level than that of patterns and forms, and therefore in the realm (interface) between form and (lower) formlessness. Bodies are not true forms (archetypes); bodies are formations of matter and are therefore very easily swayed by material forces. The lower mind is associated with evil only in the sense that it is associated with its bodies (personality) and works therefore with matter and form. The higher mind (and the soul) remains untouched by evil.

But that which identifies with lower limits of form takes upon itself some character of evil. Thus human ignorance (evil) begins with the identification with form (illusion) and ends with the identification with life (reality). What is normally called or characterized as evil is simply the manifestation (induction) of evil by association with matter. Matter tends to control whatever is manifested through it; thus are forms corrupted and considerable effort is required on the part of consciousness to secure their relative freedom. The abstract evil does have a place within the evolutionary scheme, however, for it opposes evolution and therefore moderates all activity in the lower worlds, thus providing a framework of experience. Evil (ignorance) manifested within the human form (body)(personality) is a resistance (inertia) to be overcome, ultimately yielding greater potencies for good. All forms within the framework of manifestation have within themselves a degree of the inherent good (by virtue of their source of creation and how close they are to that source). Thus the human being is essentially a very noble creature.

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No. 207 - THE FIRST ENNEAD (9)

The last tractate of the First Ennead is entitled The Reasoned Dismissal. Considered is the inappropriateness of suicide. The great sin (suicide) is its interference with the purpose of the soul (which purpose is experience and expression leading to the evolution of consciousness). It is also perhaps the greatest act of arrogance that a mind or personality can commit, for no one (on the personality level) has the right to terminate life (release life from the form) prematurely. When the soul is ready to withdraw from its incarnation, a simple and natural transition (death) will result.

Suicide implies a voluntary and deliberate act (of interference) on the part of the personality, giving rise to the concept of reasoned dismissal (of the physical plane experience). The reasoning (rational or irrational) may vary widely, but is more often based on strictly emotional experience or at least centered in kama-manas (the desire mind). Higher forms of (strictly rational) (if not reasonable) reasoning often relate to an apparent lack of usefulness. The reasons themselves are not important, for there are simply no grounds which are sufficient (justification) for dismissal (suicide). Suicide is an extreme act, one that has gone far beyond the balance, moderation, and poise of one who is healthy emotionally and mentally. Anyone who dabbles in extreme energies is likely to develop the vulnerabilities which may lead, in turn, to a consideration of suicide. Suicide is sometimes related to the sudden release of an intense attachment (on some personality level), but no matter what circumstances precipitate the event, the event itself is one of failure to maintain reasonable balance and self-control, coupled with lack of respect and understanding of life and death (and the purpose for incarnation).

The consequences of suicide are relatively (very) bad. At any death, the individual stands free from the body (which is released to its elementary state (uninspired matter)), but not necessarily free from the emotions and the mind. The individual takes into superphysical existence the consciousness (lower and higher) that was experienced in ordinary life (without the distraction of the dense physical). The personality survives, at least until the soul withdraws from the personality (and the personality is then resolved into its constituent and elementary lives). The archetype of the physical body persists until the intended time of natural transition. During ordinary transition, the life's experience is assimilated on the various levels (astral, lower mental, higher mental) and the soul passes on freely to its natural (higher) state (existence). But in the case of suicide, the soul remains bound to the personality (and to the unfulfilled archetype of the body) for usually a considerable length of time. And that experience is one of the most painful (since it is so contrary to the purpose of evolution).

The conclusions are simple; suicide is (by definition) an unjustified and potentially devastating experience. With greater public understanding of the nature of life and death, the problem of suicide should recede and (ultimately) be eliminated. All life has meaning and purpose, whether it is recognized and understood as such or not. It behooves everyone to continue learning for as long as the opportunity for life in the lower worlds exists, to face all situations and circumstances with reasonableness (and as learning experiences), and to contribute whatever one can to the evolution of the greater life. Life in the lower worlds (regardless of its appearance) is an opportunity for individual and collective progress. And until the soul is free, there is always hope for progress. Usefulness persists.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 212 - THE SECOND ENNEAD (1)

The Second Ennead of Plotinus considers the heavens and the two kinds of matter. The Second Ennead begins with the first tractate, entitled the Heavenly System. Considered in the first tractate is an analogy of the microcosm (the human being) and the macrocosm (ordered universe), with a clarification of the heavenly system in its various qualities and characteristics. A distinction is made between individual persistence and the persistence of type; the macrocosm is a useful combination of soul and form where the soul persists (endures) and the form suffers limited duration. The ordered universe has a changeless foundation, a ceaseless and dynamic, ever-changing manifestation, and a perpetuation (purpose) based upon the will of God.

On human levels, the persistence of type refers to the form, as the souls (lives) are reintroduced to objective levels in new forms (personalities) (bodies) which sustain the type. Also seen is the interrelatedness of heavenly lives and forms, analogous to the human experience. The heavenly system is considered a ceaseless flux, but one which is a (relatively) closed system (with primarily internal changes). The heavenly system (like the human) is self-consistent and stable (though interactive). Identity (the monad) remains unchanged, while consciousness (and form) changes (progresses). With eternal beginnings, a restoration (of flux) is not needed, for the immortality of the cosmos and its intrinsic internal character are sufficient.

A restoration of energy is only needed in the lower worlds, yet from a higher standpoint the energy is not lost, but merely involved in ceaseless transmutation. The cosmos (the ordered universe) has no beginning or end, only relative beginnings (and endings) as the cycles of manifestation proceed. The flux is not outgoing, but self-contained. In the lower sense, the flux appears to be outgoing only because the whole is not taken into the vision. Lives which expend themselves are merely transformed. Forms which have completed their usefulness are returned to their constituents, and as the universe completes its immediate usefulness, all is returned to chaos, that a new beginning may follow.

The ceaseless activity of manifestation depends on four major elements: fire (heat)(light), earth (matter), air (space), and water (cohesion)(magnetism). But even these elements of the heavenly system undergo transformation and re-formation. And these elements are also completely integrated with respect to higher purpose. Lower forms are derived and therefore suffer less permanence (as formations) than consciousness. The reality of cosmic fellowship is seen in the utilization of life, consciousness, and form by the life of each higher dimension. The lesser is not dominated, but rather the qualities and characteristics of the lesser are determined by the guidance of the higher life.

Earth-centeredness is also seen as a relative phenomenon. The dynamics (internal motion) of the heavenly system depend almost entirely on the reference frame or perspective. Every major element (star) (planet) of the heavenly system can be viewed as being self-centered (with respect to its frame of reference), just as each self-conscious life (human being) views his personal universe as centered in himself. But in the greater reference frame (unanimity), there is no self-centeredness (or earth-centeredness), only an omniscient and internalized (all-inclusive) vision. With such a vision, no external forces (body) are needed to insure permanence (divinity flows from within and provides the soul with immortality). But the soul does not (cannot) share its permanence with its instrument (the body) (personality). The same also holds true for the macrocosm, by correspondence.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 217 - THE SECOND ENNEAD (2)

The second tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled the Heavenly Circuit, and considers the abstract existence and motions of the heavens (the soul). The heavens reflect the abstract principles of philosophical existence, and from the heavens may be discerned much concerning the nature of the soul and its universality. One of the most potent of abstract concepts is that of motion.

Physical plane motion includes vibration, translation, rotation, revolution, and progression. Each aspect of physical plane (objective) motion has an abstract, subjective counterpart. The soul has no spatial or objective movement, but the soul can animate matter and therefore involve spatial motion; likewise, the movement of heavenly bodies is a matter of appearance (effect) (animation) rather than consciousness (life) (reality). One should not confuse physical appearance with levels of causation or reality. The circular movement of the heavens (the soul) is spatial only incidentally. The real, non-spatial movement is ceaseless, infinite, and unlimited; a movement of self-awareness in the universal sense; a movement of the soul toward itself (the source) in the most encompassing sense; a movement of eternal and never-ending attainment (approach) (refinement), with only relative degrees of fulfillment to mark the various cycles of reflection (activity) and evolution.

The need for such (abstract) motion is inherent within the nature of life and manifestation. Being (existence) requires motion (vibration) (ceaseless flux); life is movement, the reflected energy of manifestation. Without motion (in the abstract sense), there would be no life or consciousness; and without motion (in the concrete sense), there would be no objective existence on physical, emotional, or mental levels. Consciousness requires interaction, the communication (movement) (exchange) of energy (information). But motion (on both abstract and concrete levels) is opposed (balanced) by inertia (friction) (moderation); otherwise there would be no purpose and no possibility of progression or achievement (expansion of consciousness). Thus time and space (in the lower sense) and motion and being (in the higher sense) are distinctly related to cosmic purpose. Motion (in the abstract sense) is the eternal attainment, the advance toward perfection (universality).

That advance is one of circular (spherical) (abstract) existence and the simultaneous movement of the soul inward toward the center (source) of existence and outward toward the same (inverted) center of existence (as that center is drawn toward the focus of the soul and as the focus of the soul expands). The soul is that advance, an impulse of self-awareness and imperative mobility, a gravitation toward the God (source) of its being. That abstract and subjective advance contrasts sharply with that of the animated form which knows only forth-right movement. The soul remains in the repose of relative stability (the ordered synthesis of ceaseless vibration), while the animated form (personality) experiences the limitations of time and space. The movement of the soul is one of grace; the movement of the form is one of intermittent translation. But an aspect of the soul remains localized with that animated form, overshadowing the objective existence and experience, while the essence of the soul persists at rest, in the motion (tendency) toward perfection.

The most obvious example of this heavenly circuit can be found within atomic existence (the existence of life within a self-turning atomic sphere). The soul is an atomic sphere of considerable order, while the greater soul (the cosmos) is an atomic sphere on its own level. The motion (distributed energy) of atomic existence is not really spatial (or temporal) but statistical and abstract.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 222 - THE SECOND ENNEAD (3)

The third tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled 'Are the Stars Causes?' Plotinus considers the science (and myths) of astrology. Many of the popular misconceptions and misunderstandings concerning astrology are clarified. Many people find popular astrology to be appealing because it seems to allow them to avoid the responsibility for their own actions. But in truth, each person is fully responsible for his own actions and their consequences. Astrological forces work in complete harmony with karma to impel (not compel), and the recipient of those forces is quite fully responsible for his responses.

Plotinus affirms that the passages of the heavenly bodies (lives) indicate definite influences, but without being direct causes. Each of the heavenly lives has an associated position, motion, and (stable) character. But the energy (forces)(radiation)(communication) from those lives is modified by static and dynamic relationships and the medium through which it passes. The resultant blend of energies works upon the material (physical, emotional, and mental) nature of the personality, depending primarily on the quality of the individual's consciousness. The soul is the real (direct) cause of energy for the personality, but if the personality is not responsive to the soul, then it is necessarily responsive and vulnerable to the external forces (karma through astrological force). In the enlightened personality, the soul provides the needed guidance directly, and the individual becomes much less vulnerable.

It would be very wrong to associate human characteristics with the various heavenly bodies; from their point of view, their effects on humanity are quite incidental, and certainly those effects on the human personality are dependent entirely on the individual's human nature, the original energy itself being far removed from human consideration. Thus astrology is really a science which studies the effects on human (personality) levels of external (non-human) energies. Consequently, Plotinus does not challenge the ancient science (astrology) itself, but he does rightfully challenge the popular misconceptions and misinterpretations. It would simply be too easy (and wrong) to blame external forces for earned consequences.

Divination is explained by the unification and relatedness of all things within one whole, from the macrocosmic to the microscopic. The soul is actually an intermediary between the lower and higher domains, and functions (analogously to the heavenly lives) as an independent (interdependent)(individual) source of motion (energy)(influence). Along with the soul, karma provides another common thread which ties all of life and consciousness (experience) together. The law of justice (karma) actually relates every action in the universe, however significant. Through karma, virtues (blessings) are considered as gifts of the soul (based on experience) and vices (difficulties) result from absorption in outer (mundane) matters (which are also based on experience).

While the relatively unevolved (working on personality levels) are impelled (influenced) somewhat by external forces, the relatively evolved cooperate with those available energies for constructive purposes. The material forms of the personality are recognized as useful instruments for higher purpose, naturally impelled by (vulnerable to) external forces (a contributory environment). But as the soul's energy begins to play upon the lower forms, the energy (guidance) of the soul predominates. Human conditions are then (still) determined entirely by karma, as (through) a blend of external forces and the interaction of freewill with those forces; but the creative soul becomes supreme, and the external (astrological) forces are utilized intelligently, as needed.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 227 - THE SECOND ENNEAD (4)

The fourth tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled 'Matter,' wherein Plotinus suggests that matter is nonexistent. In the popular sense, matter refers to anything within the domain of material existence, i.e., to forms, bodies, things, etc., while Plotinus defines matter in a much more particular fashion as the ultimate base of material existence (through which the various forms are created). As an ultimate base, matter is the recipient of ideas (with respect to forms or archetypes) resulting in material manifestation. For some, matter is the only reality, for its results (as form) are tangible and objective, while the world of concepts is too remote from sense impression to have any real (material) existence. For others, matter is the illusion, for its appearance is merely temporary, and without having any subjective reality, being only the most distant reflection of spirit.

But regardless of perspective, matter appears to exist as the irreducible, simplistic base from which all forms are derived (with the help of determination (creative thought)). Plotinus discriminates sharply between matter (the base) and (derived) forms. Matter (in the ultimate, basic sense) is eternal, immutable, indeterminate, continuous, indefinite, sizeless, invisible, boundless, and evil (in the sense of being empty of life or consciousness). Matter can be impressed upon and compounded into atoms, elements, and greater forms. Matter can be differentiated and it can exist on the various levels of consciousness. Furthermore, matter accepts shape and other attributes, without those qualities or attributes being associated with matter itself (the qualities can only be associated with the forms impressed or created in matter). Matter (darkness) is the object of determination (reason)(light). Idea is the outside power which brings all that even appears upon matter.

Forms or bodies on the other hand (matter in the more general sense) are reducible, compound, attributive (having magnitude, shape, color, etc., and some relative existence). But the primordial matter constitutes a void of non-being, existence without magnitude or direction, without quality, the recipient of spatial extension, an illusion common to all elements, and without stability (in the sense that matter is always available, responsive, driven by positive force), ceaselessly changing its form. Primordial matter is related to space, but only esoterically does matter experience anything beyond the void (space is not a void, but a living entity). The primordial matter is an absence of life and can therefore only be construed in a negative (empty) sense, while ordinary matter has been impressed by vibration (life) and has some primitive consciousness (light). Primordial matter may be conceived as an energy field which is displaced in some way to permit the existence of material forms, and in that displacement lies the key to the mystery of matter.

In its absence of life, matter (in the primal sense) causes the soul (consciousness) to recoil, and from this interaction (the communication of soul with matter) arises the sense of evil (ignorance) and destitution. While basic to all forms, matter introduces its unredeemed evil (emptiness)(lack of being), and of its own kind naturally opposes reason. Yet consciousness must deal with this indefinite, undelimited factor of evil (darkness) in all forms. Furthermore, this material factor underlies action, since it supplies the natural base. The inescapable conclusion then, is that matter in the primal sense does not exist, yet remains a factor to be reckoned with. In the privation of matter lies the key to reality and the eternal struggle of life (consciousness)(being)(existence) with non-being (the void).

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 232 - THE SECOND ENNEAD (5)

The fifth tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled 'Potentiality and Actuality.' Actuality means the quality or state of being real, active, or existing in fact and not merely potentially. Potentiality indicates the ability to develop or come into existence (actuality). But Plotinus considered these terms as abstract entities as well as practical ones. A sharp distinction is made between actually existing things and potentially existing things (or more correctly, things existing potentially). Actuality indicates a really existent entity (depending on reality), while potentiality exists as a mere pattern (impulse)(intention)(archetype) for some subsequent (future) existence.

Actuality is prevalent on higher levels of consciousness and to a certain extent on ordinary levels (depending on perspective). But potentiality does not refer to the higher order of things in Plotinus' view, for the higher order exists in actuality (in being), while the process of becoming is restricted to the lower order. And this is quite true for the lower order with respect to the higher. From the lower perspective, the higher realm is entirely subjective, and existence in that higher realm even resists actualization (since time-dependent processes are precluded)(on that level). The higher order therefore depends upon the lower for the development of potentiality into actuality (the development of matter into form), and that higher order (the realm of the soul) actually (subjectively) impels the lower order toward its fulfillment.

Potentiality is specifically related to the proposed or intended actuality. It refers to the present existence and to the intentional conclusion of its becoming. Becoming refers to the relative acceptance of change (growth)(fulfillment), while potentiality indicates a capacity for change. According to Plotinus, whatever has a potentiality must first have a definite character of its own. Its potentiality will then consist in its having a reach beyond that character to some other. This is the entire basis of evolution (epigenesis). The cosmic powers are merely evolutionary (productive) forces involved in the (never-ending) process of achievement of potentiality. Potentiality however, is not the power itself. Potentiality indicates actuality, while the power of potentiality (a reality) leads to actualization.

Potentiality and actuality are analogous to matter and form, respectively. An actualized entity is a combination of matter (potentiality) and the impression of idea upon matter, but a clear distinction is made between actualization (the process) and actuality (the abstract). Matter serves as a potentiality (non-being in itself, but a necessary ingredient in the actualization process). Matter is not of the order of the form it is to become. In this sense matter is not the form, but the potentiality of everything, and therefore the actuality of non-existence. Anything that has potentiality is actually something else. But these matters are occluded by time-dependence.

With time-dependence, the potentially educated person is not the same person fully (actually) educated. In any discrete (objective) view, they would appear to be the same life at different levels of experience, the latter having actuality while the former exists no longer (except conceptually). But it is a greater reality, that life is an integration of all existence (past, present, and future). In time-dependence, things are seldom as true as appearance would indicate. Without recourse to time, the mind exists as a potentiality through which a person becomes knowledgeable. But potential is led into realization by an external (internal, but superior) force. The soul (not being a potentiality) is that force or power toward actualization.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 237 - THE SECOND ENNEAD (6)

The sixth tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled 'Quality.' In the highest sense, quality correlates directly with consciousness (as a principle) and with the soul (as an aspect). But Plotinus uses quality in its ordinary sense (as an attribute, characteristic, property) and in a higher correspondence to that ordinary sense, rather than in the sense of aspectual consciousness. In Plotinus' terminology, qualities are considered in two orders: a higher order in which qualities are real (subjective)(in the realm of the soul) and indicate character (principles)(abstracts)(archetypes), and a lower order in which qualities are merely apparent (in the sense of attributes and characteristics). Of the qualities in the lower order, some are derived from the higher order (and are therefore constitutive) while others are not (and are therefore incidental).

Reality is considered to be the universal fabric (not the material base) in which a number of highly meaningful constituents are present (such as being, movement, identity, consciousness, etc.). Reality is essential to the higher order, but has existence in the lower (only) by reflection. The higher order is a reality because all things are one, while the lower order is merely a sphere of images whose separation produces grades of difference. It just happens that it is this lower order of existence by reflection that is the mundane (objective)(external) world of ordinary human experience. Thus, distinct (separated) human existence is not authentic; it is simply a consequence of descent into the lesser realms.

Plotinus draws a considerable distinction between the two types of qualities in the lower order of differentiated existence. Whenever the quality can be derived directly from the higher order, that quality is said to be constitutive rather than incidental. The incidental (accidental) qualities relate mostly to superficial appearance, and are not needed for the sake of reality. Thus constitutive qualities constitute needed qualifications. There are certain (constitutive) characteristics (for example) which contribute to a person's humanity, and other (incidental) characteristics which do not so contribute.

In a reality possessing a determined quality, the reality and the essence precede the qualified reality. Quality (in the lower sense of attribute) is a condition added to a reality whose existence does not depend on it. Such a quality (qualification) may be a later acquirement or an original accompaniment. In the absence of quality (in the lower sense), the reality would persist. Qualities in the higher order are more substantial (subjective)(each having an energy existence of its own) than particularities in the lower order. Qualities in the lower order (the sensible realm) do not indicate the very nature of the reality, while the archetypes of such qualities are of a much higher order.

The key to all this rests in the consideration of reality as existence within the principle or abstraction, not in its practical derivation. For example, fire as a principle has a greater reality than the fire of material phenomena. Until this realization is made and accepted (that conceptual realities are far greater than tangible realities), confusion (illusion) will persist. Real existence is limited to the realm of principles and beyond (to the soul and higher orders); everything of a lesser order (such as the personality) is (at best) merely qualified in some way by the higher. The great error (illusion) of humanity is the attachment to qualities (in the lower sense) while losing sight of quality (reality) in the higher sense; the (improper) association of reality with things in the realm of sense impression rather than the (valid) association of reality with the quality of consciousness.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 242 - THE SECOND ENNEAD (7)

The seventh tractate of the Second Ennead is entitled 'Complete Transfusion.' Plotinus considers the nature of the complete transfusion of material substance as a prelude to understanding the spiritual transformation of the human personality. The concept of transfusion is contrasted sharply with that of mixing. In the mixing of two or more elements or compounds there is a simple combination of components, with each component retaining its separate existence. The volume (potency) of the product of mixed substances depends on the degree of interpenetration (keeping in mind the vast relative spaces between atoms and molecules), and therefore a reduction or increase in volume does not necessarily indicate a more serious process of transformation or transfusion.

A complete admixture is merely a juxtaposition (mutual, lateral coexistence) of components without any real interaction. Transformation implies the passing from one molecular or energy state to another, and this process may or may not be reversible. But the product of such transformation is merely the same substance in a different form or manifestation. Another concept is that of diffusion (permeation), in which one or more elements are diffused in another (and lost in the sense that the energy is not easily recovered), resulting in a (relatively) permanent modification. That modification may be incidental or highly significant (resulting in an entirely new product) depending on the magnitude and type of interaction (mutual influence).

The complete transfusion of material substance always results in a new product, though it may involve a (relatively) permanent qualification or polarization of elements. Transfusion implies considerable interaction, the coalescence (fusion) of elements into a new, independent existence. The primary distinction between mixing and transfusion is that in mixing the elements are separable and independent, while in transfusion the elements are inseparable and interdependent. Transformation is an intermediate concept, between mixing and transfusion, which simply implies a modification of energy levels.

Each of these concepts pertaining to material substance can also be applied to personality refinement. The personality is actually energized (vitalized) physical, etheric, emotional, and concrete mental matter. Consequently, the personality in its various aspects can experience subtle mixing, transformation, and even transfusion, for the quality or character of the personality depends upon the quality or character (qualification) (polarization) of the matter of which it is constituted. And that matter can be highly interactive and dynamic with respect to the environment, the impression of higher energies, and/or the modification of internal energy levels in general. Mixing is a process that usually describes the relationship of the aura to the immediate environment (since the aura is usually somewhat open). If the aura is not properly regulated and controlled by the mind-soul, then the aura will experience (some) adverse mixing and some transformation of energy levels (e.g., the emotional body can be stimulated to various energy (vibration) levels by external influence). The same can also be induced internally.

But the complete transfusion of the personality suggests a process and experience of more serious magnitude and consequence. In the transfusion of the personality, the soul transforms the qualification and polarization of the (matter of the) personality to greater, more spiritually potent levels, and this process passes beyond mere (reversible) transformation, to a new and different (improved) (highly refined) state of responsiveness (and temperament), in which the personality is infused with the quality and potency of the soul itself.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 246 - THE SECOND ENNEAD (8)

One of the shorter, but more potent of Plotinus' commentaries is the eighth tractate of the Second Ennead, entitled 'Why Distant Objects Appear Small.' Plotinus takes what might otherwise be considered a rather trivial subject and challenges the very (apparent) reality of objective, three-dimensional existence. It seems quite obvious that distant objects appear reduced in size (magnitude) and close together (less distinct). And in purely physical terms one can easily and satisfactorily explain (rationalize) the phenomenon of diminution. But in philosophical (and metaphysical) terms, the problem is not so easily dismissed, and the physical solution is clearly inadequate.

The problem of three-dimensional (spatial) recession (diminution) involves four conceptual problems: distance, objectivity, perception, and magnitude. In spatial terms, distance implies the extent of separation between two points or objects. In the three-dimensional spatial universe, distance is easily measured and assumed to be a function of physical reality. But distance (the interval between an observer and some observed object) assumes the existence of an intervening space, and in the higher reality of consciousness, space is merely a conceptual existence, and the three ordinary dimensions of voluminous experience are easily overcome (as spatial existence is recognized as having no intrinsic reality). In consciousness, any space serves no intervention; there is no spatial separation (in the greater reality of consciousness).

Objective existence, likewise, has little basis in consciousness. An object is something capable of being seen, touched, or otherwise sensed. Or in other words, the reality (existence) of any object depends entirely on sense perception. Sense perception in itself is a function of objective (illusionary) existence. Thus the reality (appearance) of any object depends upon observation, the medium and method, the perspective, and the interpretation of sense impressions. Furthermore, the perception of any object depends upon spatial parameters and the magnitude of the observation (as opposed to the magnitude of the object). An object may be viewed microscopically or macroscopically, and the appearance (and subsequent conclusions) may differ dramatically. Thus the spatial existence of any object is questionable, as is any process of perception, colored as it is by intention and consciousness.

Even if an object has an apparent existence that can be perceived from some apparent distance, there remains the problem of size (magnitude) (mass) (bulk) (extent). The reality of an objective magnitude extends to subjective (energy) levels, though the physical magnitude has little significance; the physical magnitude depends on spatial reality and the perception of that quality. For a distant object to appear small is a consequence of the apparent (illusionary) nature. An object may appear large or small according to the position (perspective) of the observer, and there can be no absolute magnitude (size) for any object, since magnitude itself is a relative quality. Objective measurement is an interesting exercise, even necessary to objective experience, but of futile value in any (higher) subjective sense.

The reduction of apparent magnitude upon recession is actually not a function of distance but a function of changing perspective. In consciousness, the perspective can be changed without any physical or spatial movement. Magnitude is known only incidentally, by virtue of perception and the interpretation in consciousness that perception implies. The process of diminution is hardly worth attention, yet it does serve as a means of focus for the discernment of appearance and quality (consciousness)(a higher reality).

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 250 - THE SECOND ENNEAD (9)

The last (ninth) tractate of the Second Ennead clarifies the basic principles of the esoteric philosophy, compared with certain teachings of other philosophical schools. Plotinus begins by affirming the simplicity (essential, primal nature) of the trinity. The three primary rays (principles) are referred to as the Good (the One) (the First), the Soul (consciousness) (interaction), and the Intellectual Principles (mind) (creative intelligence), respectively.

There are only these three (major) principles (primals), from which all else is derived. The nature of each of the three primals determines all (secondary) distinction. The One (the first aspect) is the absolute primary. The soul (the second aspect) constitutes a middle ground of consciousness (quality) between divinity (the monad)(the Good) and the lower sphere of the less noble (personality). The measure of the soul's potency is the degree of its absorption in contemplation of divine (subjective)(monadic) existence. That greater vision may be impaired to the extent of the soul's involvement in (attachment to) the lower self. This by no means implies any objective involvement, but suggests a subjective dependency on the integrated experience of the personality. The more potent (well-developed, experienced, older) soul is absorbed by the greater yet able to transmit (subjective) energy (illumination) (guidance) to its less noble self (the personality), while the less potent (younger, less experienced) soul is distracted somewhat by the (need for) experience of the lesser self.

The second aspect (the soul in its broader sense and group context)(the All-soul)(over-soul) provides for the communication of light energy from higher levels to lower, depending on the receptiveness (and intelligence) of lower forms (and lives). Even matter (at the extreme (conclusion) of the unbroken chain linking lesser lives with greater) receives, assimilates, and reflects some light energy. In collaboration with the third aspect (light), the second aspect (love) is also involved in the divine (creative) process. This process (stimulated by the light energy), embraces manifestation (differentiation), externalization (creative activity), and ascension (integration).

The greater soul is sovereign (with respect to the lesser) and immune to the distraction of lesser matters. The life of the personality is derived from the soul; that (personal) life is terminable, while the soul continues eternally (in principle). The higher is not bound to the lower; the conditions of the lower are not communicated to the higher; only the quality developed is communicable to the soul. The immortal (the student who has achieved conscious alignment with the soul) is not troubled by material things, has no attachments in the lesser worlds, but accepts his responsibilities and proceeds with the cause of truth (the spiritual path). The (relatively) more perfect the man, the greater is his humility and compliance (harmony) with the greater life.

The science of invocation, based upon understanding and cooperation with natural forces, has considerable merit; but self-centered (arrogant) invocation replete with various glammers (misunderstanding) has little merit. Creation is not a matter of self-assertion, but one of purposeful cooperation with greater principles. The light of greater existence ever illuminates the lesser, according to the ability of the lesser to recognize truth. Truth stands revealed ever on its own merits; truth requires no assertion. The pursuit of pleasure and personal advantage is inconsistent with the object of life (evolution)(spiritual progress)(goodness)(virtue). In virtue is found the joy of helpfulness (cooperation) in God-centered existence.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 254 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (1)

Plotinus' Third Ennead deals with the cosmos. The first tractate deals specifically with the idea of fate and the nature of causation. Plotinus considers several deterministic theories of cause and effect before elaborating the distinction between internal and external causes. The basic controversy is the assumption of a teleological universe (one having a purpose and subject to divine encouragement) as opposed to an order in nature derived from entirely mechanical processes.

Though Plotinus rejects each deterministic theory in turn, he draws upon aspects of each to show the interrelatedness in thinking and the contribution of each to a self-consistent formulation of apparent destiny. The deterministic theory involving purely mechanical consequences is dismissed by a consideration of teleological needs. But the subjection of material elements to external forces resulting in mechanical consequences is considered realistic, for material elements have such limited (extremely localized) consciousness that they are entirely at the mercy of environmental forces. Another deterministic theory involving an absolute cause is dismissed with the need for interactive consciousness. A third theory, involving sidereal (astrological) determinism, is rejected on its universal determinant, though the forces involved are accepted as viable, evolutionary forces; as impelling (not compelling) factors.

The wide influence of astrological forces on material aspects is acknowledged. The unaligned personality is considered as a material (physical, emotional, and mental) instrument subject almost entirely to external (environmental and astrological) forces. But the personality that is relatively integrated and aligned somewhat with the energy (will) of the soul is increasingly free from external forces, and increasingly determined by internal volition. The sidereal circuit is recognized for its overall protection, but its influence is limited to the unaligned lesser self and has no bearing upon the soul. The soul is (ultimately) master of itself: the more noble the soul, the greater is its power over its environment (and the external forces).

There exists no universal compulsion, only a universal purpose and derived (secondary) forces which qualify and encourage all lesser lives while drawing upon their creative interdependence. The soul is a powerful entity, responsive to higher impression (first principles) but potent in its own right (and cooperative). Though divine intention (the plan) brings order to the cosmos, there are many intermediate causes (creative beings) which provide secondary forces. All that happens is a consequence (effect) of cause. But the ordinary mind is satisfied with the nearest (apparent)(superficial) determinants. The spiritual student, however, is urged to pass beyond the mundane (superficial) causes through the various intermediate causes to a realization of purpose.

With inherent purpose are all of the various effects resolved as meaningful, evolutionary experience, even when greater lives are taken into consideration. All of the noble lives serve a common (universal) purpose, though the soul (through its experience as a personality) is the primary determinant for human evolution. The human condition is a direct consequence of earlier action (causes); thus the human being is fully accountable and responsible for its own condition, though many forces cooperate to achieve the needed consequences. All of the causative (interactive) forces (on all of the various levels) enter into the (karmic) system, including those of the individual himself; these forces comprise an endless multidimensional causative chain. All such forces affect the individual, though most are negligible and self-generated forces prevail.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 258 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (2)

The second tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'Providence: First Treatise.' Providence is divine guidance, the power which sustains and guides human destiny. Providence implies some (grand) purpose that brings about a qualification of the manifested universe, but not to the extent of any (absolute) controlling influence. Providence is therefore partial (relative) and allows the various lives to interact creatively with their own destiny.

The primal cosmos is perfect (unmanifested). The manifested universe comes about through a birthing process of differentiation into countless elements. This derived lower cosmos is an estrangement (reflection) of perfected divinity; the various (apparent) imperfections arise from the process of differentiation (a scattering of life forces), discord being an inherent property of differentiated manifestation. But universal purpose (providence) brings all of the scattered elements together into an ordered system; and that purpose provides the meaning of existence (the basis of evolution) for all lives. Pure spirit is considered divine reason; matter its greatest (deepest) reflection (corruption); and consciousness the moderating principle.

The world (system) is considered beautiful (noble) in its entirety, regardless of the appearance (illusion) of its parts (divine unity remains beyond the grand illusion of separateness). But even the apparent discord within the system can be resolved, since (divine) law and order prevail; the student need only embrace the whole to see how interrelated are the forces and events of experience. For every apparent imperfection or injustice there exists a causal chain of meaningful purpose (justice). The apparent evil (conflict)(contrast) is not necessarily deliberate, but it may be accepted as incidental to the greater plan (purpose) and advantage taken of the opportunity (contrast) for further evolutionary experience. This relative absence (imperfection) of goodness coupled with teleological forces (evolutionary principles)(karma) provides the drama of human experience.

Human beings are responsible for their own actions, regardless of impelling factors and their own ignorance (lack of self-control); the forces of consequence (providence) take into consideration all aspects of merit (motives, quality of consciousness, etc.)(since each aspect is part of the causal chain). The power of man lies in his (relative) freedom (creativity). But each of his causes must return to fruition, one way or another, eventually, for the good of all. Consequences are determined under law, while man the actor determines the specific actions (and responses to effects). Nothing is left to chance in the sense that all that happens is determined by some causal chain, though much that happens under law has little or no significance (being natural and incidental).

The conflict (contrast) of divergent elements brings about an ultimate harmony. Meaningful opposition (interaction)(cooperation) supports coherence and being (since it is internal). Evolution within the lower cosmos proceeds as diverging (contrasting) elements are properly resolved. The Logos actually creates difference (the differentiated universe) to the widest possible extent, and completes Itself through the resolution of diversity and contrast. Differentiation can be viewed as a breathing forth of a tremendous energy-field, and as the field reaches its greatest expanse, it interacts with itself in a dynamic, creative way, resolving all differences, through integration, ultimately returning to its original, unified state, greatly enhanced in experience (quality)(potency). The original sending forth is a birthing process, while its fulfillment (fruition) (return) is a process of maturity.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 262 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (3)

The third tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'Providence; Second Treatise,' where again Plotinus considers the nature of providence and its relation to humanity in particular. The human being is considered a complex organism having both spiritual and material aspects. The individual human being is considered sovereign, capable of making decisions affecting his immediate experience and his existence in general. But even though man is sovereign, having some degree of free will (according to his particular capacity for free will), each decision is made subject to the guidelines of the grand (providential) plan. Those guidelines may be relatively general (as is usual) or relatively specific (where particular karma is involved). The decision of the individual is not determined by the plan, but the decision (and its consequences) must necessarily (somehow) fit into the scheme of things.

Providence plays a role in man's interaction with his experience, at least with regard to free will. But the role of providence extends far beyond decision-making. Providence is also an illumination of higher (life) (principles) upon the lower (consciousness). As a multiple organism, the human being embodies a number of principles subject to illumination (stimulation) (encouragement) along evolutionary lines. The highest of human principles is presently beyond the capability of exercise for virtually all of the lifewave. The lowest of human principles is exercised almost continuously, though unconsciously. The lower principles are those of material substance, far removed (in this perspective) from the illumination of higher principles. Yet man (the indwelling consciousness) is expected to respond to the higher principles (encouragement) and deal appropriately with the lower.

Though the various principles are ever present (and subject to illumination), it is up to the individual to properly exercise them. The basic human (multiplex) principle is greater than that of the animal, since the human principle carries with it self-consciousness and concomitant self-responsibility (and accountability). The animal is governed by group instincts and is not accountable for its actions, yet the human being inhabits an animal (material) form and is responsible for the conquest of its own (coarse) material constitution, such constitution being relatively far removed from the illumination of spiritual existence.

Providence is clearly not a uniform (equally distributed) function, but is properly proportioned according to need and merit (taking all things into consideration). There is a universal equality in the sense that each species, individual member, category, aspect, etc. (regardless of order of apparent magnitude) is equally relevant and valuable to the overall whole, but certainly there is no equivalence or equality in every respect. The elements (members) of any category (species) are actually unequal in the sense that each is different (relatively unique) and in the sense that the capabilities (experiences) of each are different. Providence serves also as karma (or at least is irreconcilably interrelated with karma), a force of evolutionary encouragement and restoration.

Since providence embraces a universal, compound, self-interactive living being, it is impossible to discriminate with any real accuracy. The act of discrimination (observation, interpretation, evaluation, realization, etc.) even affects the overall system and the observation (and overall process) is necessarily limited by the quality of the instrument and the imperfection of its consciousness. Thus the discrimination of providence deals with probabilities and possibilities rather than certainties.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 266 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (4)

The fourth tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'The Tutelary Spirit.' The tutelary or presiding spirit is that aspect of spiritual existence which guides the experience and expression of the lower, personal self, or that aspect to which the lower self is responsive. In the highest sense, that presiding spirit is the monad, the highest aspect of human existence; in the lowest sense, that spirit is the animal group soul. The presiding spirit is, consequently, dependent on the individual consciousness; the greater the consciousness, the greater is the spiritual influence or guiding spirit.

The character or quality of the waking-consciousness can vary widely. Those who are relatively unevolved, yet human, are guided to a large extent by the animal instincts and urges of the lower vehicles, by the animal group soul and the preponderance of external (circumstantial and karmic) forces. Those who are relatively evolved respond much less to the natural animal forces and much more to the forces of the self-consciousness (the mind of the personality). As the individual continues to progress (evolve), he responds more and more to higher (internal) impression, to the subjective quality of the soul, and ultimately to the vast impersonality of the monad. Throughout these processes (of evolution in consciousness), the higher aspects (the soul and the monad) are for all practical purposes detached from the personality, willing to provide only the broadest (subjective) qualification and encouragement. But as the individual evolves, that subjective quality becomes more and more pertinent.

In a sense, the individual is, according to his character and consciousness. The individual who lives an animalistic life is little better than the animal (in consciousness). The individual who lives the spiritual life of identification with the soul is that soul in manifestation. Man's spiritual existence (as a soul or monad) is related by threads of consciousness (correspondence) to the macrocosm. Reincarnation is a progressive evolution leading ultimately to creative (cosmic) existence (divinity). That process includes passage into the next higher kingdom as the individual and group circumstances (and consciousness) warrant. But that process does not allow transmigration into a lower kingdom. An individual may retrogress to a certain extent, even to the point of identification with animal existence, but karmic forces will (ultimately) draw the individual onward and upward.

Prior to any incarnation, the tutelary or presiding spirit is the soul which subjectively determines the most appropriate (available) circumstances for birth. But during the early years (childhood)(and even during the early adult years), the individual (waking-consciousness) is not (normally) responsive to higher impression, so that the external forces and family environment prevail. As the individual progresses along spiritual lines, the energies and character of the soul are increasingly reflected into the mind and personality. But a great deal depends on the interest and determination of the lower self to achieve the most noble state. The guiding spirit is not bound up with the lower self, yet it belongs to the individual (or more correctly, vice versa).

If the individual expects more (apparently) favorable circumstances or opportunities (or abilities) in the next life (incarnation), then the individual must work and progress sufficiently to earn those new circumstances. But the consequences of any particular circumstances depend almost entirely on consciousness and how the individual responds to the experience (and to the presiding spiritual influence). Thus the enlightened esoteric student is a master of his own consciousness, regardless of circumstances.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 270 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (5)

The fifth tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'Love'. Plotinus draws upon the philosophical writings of Plato and some of the characters of Greek mythology to clarify the quality or nature of love. Considered are both human and divine aspects, and the relationship between the two.

Love is first considered as a state of consciousness or character. In human (personality) terms, love is an experience (interaction) on emotional and/or mental levels. In the lower sense, love is a very personal or personality-centered experience related to desire and some degree of selfishness. In the higher human sense, love is more impersonal and related to divine recollection or realization (the recollection or realization of divine beauty (truth) (goodness)). In either case, love is related to beauty and depends on the object of devotion or aspiration. In the lower sense it is a matter of ego and/or related directly to sense-impression. In the higher sense it is the love of beauty (truth) (goodness) itself.

In the human sense, the primary source of love is found in the tendency or character of the soul towards pure beauty (perfection)(unity). Such love is related to the harmony aspect of God (ordered manifestation)(the unity of all life and consciousness)(the balance of evolutionary forces). In this sense, love is concerned with absolute things (wholes) rather than partials, with ideals and archetypes rather than images and reflections. Those who know not the beauty of higher existence are content with the images and reflections of mistaken reality. But the beauty of earthly things may lead ultimately to the beauty of reality (the world of archetypes)(divine beauty) as the consciousness is gradually improved. That beauty represents immortality, the eternal principle (the divine urge toward perfection).

Love is essentially an attractive force (if not the force of attraction), the underlying qualification of all existence which interrelates the entire ordered whole (as a coherent unity). As the character of the soul, the love principle draws the consciousness toward beauty, toward truth (reality) and goodness. The rising of the mental state is an attraction of the lesser self toward the resident divinity (the soul). Pure love seeks beauty (truth) (goodness), without desire; but that (pure) love is indwelling, the spirit within all. In the relatively impersonal, abstract form, love is a universal principle, embodied within (through) the Logos. In this sense, the soul (the aspect of consciousness) is the love principle, a reflection of the cosmos.

As an attractive, unifying force there is the (impersonal) love of God for its creation, a bond or relationship that, in turn, leads to the conscious love of creation for its God. In this latter sense, love is manifested as the energy of aspiration, of striving onward and upward toward divinity. Love is the act of a soul seeking good. Love is a vertical mechanism linking the mind with its soul, and the soul with its divine monad. Love is also a horizontal mechanism, a celestial spirit linking all in oneness.

Thus love is seen to be much more than a state of consciousness or an act of experience. It is a divine principle and a spirit-being of very high order, whose character is reflected into the lesser realms, through a continuous spectrum. That spectrum extends from the dispassionate existence (love) of God, through successive stages, to the more human forms of love (enchantment). As an evolutionary force, love leads from the random attraction (of lesser things)(of images and reflections) to the absolute and authentic good (the greater ideas and archetypes)(reality).

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 274 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (6)

The sixth tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'the Impassivity of the Unembodied.' Plotinus discusses the relationship of matter to material existence and the relationship of the soul to the personality and its material existence. In Plotinus' terminology, the soul may refer either to the higher (abstract) mind of the soul itself, or to the lower (concrete) mind of the (involved) personality, and matter refers to the base of material existence, not to material substance. A parallel is shown for the soul (spirit) and its personality (form), where the personality is impressed (reflected into) matter. The lessons of either (personality or form) can be related to the other. But an inverse (double) parallel is also shown, for the soul is impassive with regard to the personality, while matter (the base) is impassive with regard to form.

The soul is virtually immune from personal energy, while its reflection can be involved in personality matters. The soul views objective experience impersonally and subjectively, in consciousness. Feeling and thinking are considered actions upon experience rather than states of consciousness, and are attributed to the lower self (personality) rather than the soul. As the lower self proceeds from latency to actuality (as it approaches the soul in consciousness and contributes to the quality of the soul), that personality (mind) simply achieves the intention of its nature. In that course, the personality may experience (develop) virtue, harmony (natural concordance) with the true (higher) self, drawing upon the higher faculties and consciousness. Conversely, the lesser self may experience vice (the breach of harmony) (discord), through the disregard of the higher faculties (through the distraction of the independent (extended) (objective) experience).

Likes and dislikes, pleasure and pain, all of the personal emotions, opinions, etc. are attributed to the lower self; whereas steady aspiration and spiritual strength (mature detachment) are attributed to the personality that is able to draw upon the quality of the higher self. The (impassive) soul constitutes a much higher awareness, without participation on lower levels. But the personality is subject to direct experience and disturbance, since only material substance can be disturbed. Disturbance (modification) (interaction) lies within the domain of illusion (the pretense of matter). Modification (change) arises from difference (opposition) (contrast). Matter (the base) cannot be destroyed or dissolved, but the form can be modified.

When Plotinus speaks of matter, he speaks of the nature of matter, as matter, not as form (thus are discerned matter from form and matter (form) from archetype). Matter is the receptive (not reactive) base, accepting the presence (shape) (character) of form. Modification implies acquisition or release and holds for form not matter. Forms are compounds of (patterns impressed upon) matter (impressions of ideals (archetypes)). Thus matter participates in form but remains unaffected. Material (objective) existence would be impossible without matter (the substratum), since it is the character of reflection (as is all of material existence) to appear in something not itself. The base is a mirror, the extreme (immutable) boundary of the sphere of manifestation. Spirit is the other extreme (boundary) (while consciousness is interactive).

The lower self is a form impressed in matter and subject to the limitations and distractions (modifications) of material existence, such as resistance (inertia), glamour (illusion), absorption, and modification. In understanding matter (form), the indwelling consciousness can ultimately conquer the material existence and achieve an elevated state.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 278 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (7)

The seventh tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'Time and Eternity.' Plotinus considers the nature of time and eternity and the relationship that exists between these two concepts. Eternity is considered to be a concept quite superior to time, yet related to time through various processes of manifestation. Eternity is closely related to being, while time relates more closely with the realm of process. Time is thus considered a representation in image; in a sense, a reflection into lower-dimensional existence.

Eternity is much more august. As the divine envelops its parts, so does eternity embrace its content as a whole, rather than as a dimensional extension of time (multi-dimensional existence approaches non-dimensional (timeless) existence) (the other extreme is one-dimensional existence). Eternity requires repose and a unity that excludes interval (duration). Consequently, perpetuity in the time-order does not constitute eternity. Eternity participates in being (subject), movement (life), and repose (self-identity). Eternity embraces a concentrated diversity, 'a life changelessly motionless.' Eternity is the announcement of divine identity, 'which characterizes what has no futurity but eternally is.'

Engendered things (such as personality) exist in time from some beginning (creation)(emergence) to some end (dissolution)(obscuration)(being amenable to futurity), while unengendered things (such as the soul) exist beyond time. This unengendered existence (eternity) is beyond even perpetual existence (which is merely an extension of time rather than a quality of being). Eternity is considered God made manifest in the sense of the whole (a plurality of lives, limitless, self-possessed) of manifestation rather than any objective perspective (dependent on derived manifestation). Thus eternity may be considered the aura of the One, the imperishable being, without regard to process (interval)(term). The everlasting (unbroken continuity) implies duration (time-dependence), where duration in a stream (flow) of time (space) (energy). But eternity is a multidimensional whole (field), beyond duration (having no time-dependence).

Sequential existence describes things and beings in the time-order (being bound in time), while eternity exists as partlessness, complete without sequence. Time is related to movement, though movement can be intermittent while time is (ever) continuous. Time is an attribute or characteristic of externalized existence, distinct from any temporal measurement. Eternity is 'unwavering' life, undivided totality, limitless, knowing no divagation, at rest in unity and intent upon it,' while time is described as a derived quality, a product of perception (or at least dependent upon perception). Time is a product of the processes of manifestation, contained within (dependent upon) differentiation. Thus, engendered (sequential)(spacial) existence sustains the appearance of time (and space) and the perspective of diversity (differentiation)(dimensionality), while unengendered existence remains free from the bonds (processes) of time and space and constitutes a perspective of unity (non-dimensionality)(timelessness)(non-sequential, limitless coexistence).

Time flows with the ceaseless forward movement of life in manifestation. Time is the life of the soul in reflection, as it progresses through (objective) experience; thus (objective) time is a product of the outgoing (personal) phase of the soul. The internal phase of the soul knows only eternity. As the student progresses the consciousness from objective time-perception through subjective time, he is led ever closer to eternity and the One.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 282 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (8)

The eighth tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'Nature, Contemplation, and the One.' Nature is the underlying creative and controlling force for the manifested world. Nature is by its own nature a contemplative act, a guiding force distinct from its works. Nature is an intelligent intermediary mechanism, filled with (related to) sweeping lives and forms, a creative mechanism bridging between the creator (logos) and the field (of nature). Nature possesses an indwelling effectiveness, creativity as a consequence of contemplation. Nature is simultaneously an act and an object of contemplation.

Nature is an instrument of evolution, of the same order as karma (and irretrievably merged with karmic processes), an intelligence that has no apparent (objective) evolutionary tendency in its own right (yet the manifold lives which form its activity and mechanism are inherently evolutionary). As an intelligence nature possesses a vast subjective knowledge and understanding, but has no objective faculties of its own. Nature is simply a synthesis of force serving as the agent of archetypal existence. The production of nature is an externalization of the archetype, yet much more complex, as it interacts with externalized phenomena. As an agent, nature participates in creative processes and is governed by various (natural) laws and principles (conditions).

The cause and effect relationship of manifestation is related to a broad, unified chain of contemplative experience. The creator (creative being) (a logos on some level) contemplates some objective. Intermediaries (lives) (laws) (principles) come into being and are impelled or conditioned toward bringing about the objective. The intelligent intermediaries further contemplate their own experience as they participate in the magnetic (creative) vortex of the original (sustained) (overshadowing) contemplation. The immediate general objective is brought into manifestation via a succession of intelligent lives (actors) (agents) (participants) as nature (karma) continues to sustain manifestation (being energized by the original momentum (contemplation)) and the more specific (cultivated) purposes of manifestation are worked out. As the ultimate object is fulfilled, the sustaining forces are withdrawn and the universe gradually dissolves into obscurity (as the lives pass into chaos to await a new beginning), the wisdom of the experience being incorporated in the higher, contemplative life (logos).

All of this grand process involves a chain of contemplation, from the precursor (logos) to the elementary lives of manifested form. The elementary lives are actually more aware of their own contemplation than the majority of human personalities, who, in their extreme condition of apparent separation, remain asleep with regard to their true, inner nature. That (inner) soul principle extends throughout the universe in a chain of lives within lives, each succeeding from its prior and being different though related and an extension of the contemplation of the prior. The relative strength of the soul varies according to the particulars, but all are encompassed within the greater vision. Action is the result of contemplation and leads to contemplation. Activity springs from incompleteness, as each is incomplete with respect to its prior. As the soul achieves relative completion, it gradually withdraws its instrument from the lower activities and maintains its repose.

All springs from vision. Every life is a form of thought, an emanation more complex than its source. Contemplation is ultimately one with its object; it is for the student to achieve such realization. The advancing conscious contemplation of the student leads to that (divine)(inner)(limitless) union.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 286 - THE THIRD ENNEAD (9)

The ninth (last) tractate of the Third Ennead is entitled 'Detached Consideration.' Therein Plotinus considers a number of ideas concerning the intellectual principle and the intellectual object, analysis and correspondence, the partiality (relativity) of the soul, and the relationship of goodness (as an abstraction) to consciousness.

According to Plotinus, the intellectual principle and the intellectual object are distinct, yet the former is contained within the latter (and conversely). The intellectual object is the intellectual principle in repose, the principle being an active manifestation. This leads to a concept of a unity which admits distinction, so that the contemplative being (repose) contains (sees) the intellectual realm within itself. When Plotinus speaks of the intellect, he speaks of a much higher concept than that of the ordinary, brain-dependent intellect. This higher concept involves the third aspect (creative intelligence, manifestation) which holds the separative principle (which is illustrated by a perspective spectrum of differentiation having an underlying coherent unity). The student may as easily perceive the differentiation (diversity) of life (and form) as the whole, the partials as well as the overwhelming unity, without violating the merit (reality) of either.

A somewhat loosely related concept is the scientific reduction (analysis) of a body of knowledge 'into its separate propositions' without shattering its unity, for 'in each distinct item is latent the entire body of the science.' The analogy for man is similarly relevant, that man as a separate proposition contains inherently within himself the essential nature of the whole, and, similarly, that the principles or character within any person are qualified to some extent by the whole (personal) nature (aura) and to some extent by the overshadowing soul (the higher nature). Thus the highest residual of man offers a link to the divine. Man is a divine microcosm, a potentiality that contains within itself the entire universe (manifestation).

Man's immediate link to divinity and potential universality is the all-soul which does not come and go (as its reflection does). The all-soul remains as being, outside of time and space (unrelated to the time and space of the partial soul (reflection) which incarnates for experience and returns for fulfillment). The soul is ever one with the all-soul (the universal soul aspect), yet related to its reflection to the extent of its maturity. The universality of the soul aspect achieves multiplicity by its omnipresence (through its (reflected) instruments). Plotinus suggests that 'universality demands a previous unity,' that the unity is greater than the totality of its parts, being both omnipresent and nowhere-present. The (unenergized) parts alone in their totality cannot approach the significance of their unity.

The soul is, on its level, matter with respect to the monad, but spirit with regard to the personality, for matter and spirit are merely the extremes of a continuum, and the soul persists (pervades) a middle ground or region. Or in other words, consciousness gives rise to perception, a relativity of perspectives, equally valid, but dependent on the view and leading to different (related) conclusions. Similarly, potentiality and actuality stand as one in a succession of derived states, where one is an actuality with regard to its successor and (simultaneously) a potentiality with respect to its precursor. As a potentiality it is free to grow; as an actuality it rests in eternity (reality) (in relation to its successor). The source of consciousness lies beyond consciousness, as the source of life lies beyond life.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 290 - THE FOURTH ENNEAD (1)(2)

The first and second tractates of the Fourth Ennead are entitled 'On the Essence of the Soul,' (1) and (2) respectively. In these two tractates Plotinus clarifies the existence of the soul; its place, its tendencies, its paradox. Existing in the middle ground (between spirit and matter) (between the monad (its precursor) and the personality (its successor (reflection))), the soul has a dual tendency. On the one hand, the soul is cognizant of unity (reality), responsive to spirit, and (quite) impersonally detached from its reflection (differentiation) (multiplicity). On the other hand, the soul is drawn into (onto) reflection for experience (divisional existence) (succession) (partition) through karma (and higher evolutionary tendencies). The soul is indivisible in its actuality, bound to the supreme (divine), yet nevertheless sends forth its energy for reflection. While the soul itself maintains its higher vision (repose), its reflection tenders experience and expression.

Reflection depends upon a material base. Matter tends towards separation (partition)(disintegration) due to its relationship (identification) with chaos (and the laws of entropy). Each atom of space-time is a point of tension impressed upon the void, a compressed spring held in place (under tension) by the creative (divine) will. The tendency of such a spring is to return to its natural (zero energy) state, but the pressure of higher forces holds the matter in place and permits the manipulation of matter by intelligence. Consequently, organization (the integration of matter on some level) requires a coherent force to balance the otherwise prevailing forces. Reality (real being) is not identified with the lesser forces (of material fabric) (tension) but is identified with the greater (higher) forces of union and synthesis. When the will is withdrawn, the binding forces are dissolved and the fabric of time and space is released into the void from which it came. Standing midway between the will aspect and the material foundation upon which the will operates (via the soul), the soul is a qualified intermediary for the force of consciousness.

The reflection of the soul is a diffusion (an impression of energy upon a material base) that must be held properly in place by higher forces. The basic patterns of the reflection (the personality) are held in place on subconscious levels, but the higher (spiritual relevant) patterns require that the personality instrument be responsive far beyond the lesser, sustaining patterns (those which sustain the physical, emotional, and mental form). The higher patterns constitute the inner motivation (the development of consciousness and adherence to the spiritual path) (the will of the soul which can only encourage a responsive instrument). The bridging between the implacable (indivisible) higher nature and the independent (separative) lower nature is accomplished entirely through the second aspect (consciousness).

The paradox of the soul comes from its prismatic stance, reflecting to some extent in both directions. The soul is everywhere, simultaneously partible and impartible. For the reflection, it is the unifying (overriding) consciousness that links the various parts together. The various parts (of the body or personality) are not self-evident nor are they aware of relationships or even of the existence of the other parts to which they are related, yet they exhibit a degree of independence drawn from the material nature and respond to some extent to the unifying force of the integrated personality (consciousness). That personality consciousness may or may not be integrated, though the soul (consciousness) is always integrated on its level. The soul is the instrument of self-consistency and of the higher coherence reflected into the personality.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 294 - THE FOURTH ENNEAD (3)

The third tractate of the Fourth Ennead is the first of three commentaries entitled 'Problems of the Soul.' Therein Plotinus considers the relationship of the individual soul to the oversoul and the relationship of the soul to its body (personality). Also considered is the manner in which souls originate, but the central question concerns the divisibility and sharing of the oversoul with regard to the particular (individual) soul.

The central conclusion is that the oversoul remains intact and undivided (unparted) (indivisible), yet nonetheless related to the finite number of particular souls. The individual soul may be considered as a localized expression of the oversoul, though the soul knows no spatiality as it deals only with quality. Individual souls are of the same genus as the oversoul and attain to the same objects (i.e., have the same potentiality), yet remain relatively distinct. The soul (on any level) represents quality, and quality cannot be parted, having neither size nor measure. The soul can be differentiated (in terms of quality) but it cannot be divided; though individual souls appear particular (distinct), they remain nonetheless mere extensions or expressions of the oversoul. Therefore souls of particulars exist only incidentally, while the oversoul exists essentially. The soul (oversoul) is a unity everywhere present but with differing functions.

All souls originate from (and return to) the oversoul; on their level all share a common bond; on the level of their reflection (i.e., on the level of the personality), differences prevail. The various souls are equal but different (not identical in character or quality) (due to the differentiation of ray lives). Plotinus adds that 'differences may be induced also by the bodies with which the soul has to do and, even more, by the character and mental operations carried over from the living of previous lives.' The soul reflects its own potentiality into the form (which evolves on its own material level, in later cycles to pass through higher stages); thus, within the form are found many correspondences to the soul and the higher life. Each form is linked with its archetype, and all levels participate in the life of the oversoul (divinity). The soul is the mediation between the monad (intelligence) and the body (form). The monad is not reflected upon matter; the body is a reflection of the reflection of the monad. The influence of the monad is felt only to the extent that the form (mind) (personality) is responsive to the mediation of the soul.

The soul descends without deliberation, creating its instrument and incarnating as a consequence of karmic force (the soul creates its own destiny and then must live in accordance with that which it has created). The creator is bound subjectively to its creation, at least until its destiny (usefulness) is fulfilled, whereupon the creation (in matter) is dissolved and the creator is further liberated. All occurrences in the lesser world are subject to order (enlightenment) and are therefore interrelated. The monad is as a center of light, the soul as a reflector of light, and the personality (mind) as a shadow partially enlightened. The soul (the reflector) does not belong to the body (the personality) (the shadow); the body belongs to the soul. The soul contains the body (but not vice versa) and overshadows the body without spatiality. The body is merely accessory to the principle (the soul). The body resides within the soul, but the soul persists far beyond the personality (as well). The purified (elevated, completed) soul so transcends the personality that it is no longer subject to the attraction of external existence (incarnation) and the personality matrix (archetype) is dissolved.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 298 - THE FOURTH ENNEAD (4)

The fourth tractate of the Fourth Ennead is the second of three tractates entitled 'Problems of the Soul.' According to Plotinus, the life of the oversoul flows through the lives of the particular souls, being a unity simultaneously present in all things. The oversoul does not abandon its reflections (as does the particular soul); the soul (oversoul) is both transcendent (relating to the monad) and immanent (relating to all lesser (internal) lives), ever brooding over its expression, ever at rest (repose) with regard to the objective manifestation. The passions of the soul are its cycles of existence (reflection), in accordance with the natural order. The soul possesses an interior disposition and does not reason; it is simply aware (subjectively) (on its own level); only the lesser self (the personality) is drawn to reasoning (until the intuition or realization of the soul can be evoked). All knowledge exists and can be accessed, and in this sense, the soul embraces an integrated memory in addition to its own recollectedness, but that memory involves the integration of energy patterns rather than specifics.

The consciousness of the soul on its own level is the contemplation of the order of its own level. The soul has no knowledge (memory) of earthly experience, only quality. The contemplation of the soul involves no discursive thought or reasoning, since the (contemplative) intuition enfolds the entire subject and its inherent (internal) correlations without recourse to analysis. In contemplative vision there is no awareness of the personality (or anything ordered in space-time), only an identity of essence. However, if the focus of consciousness is perfectly balanced between the abstract mind of the soul and the concrete mind of the personality, then the vision can extend to some extent in both directions (simultaneously). The memory of the personality is temporary (transient) and involves specifics, while the memory of the soul is long-lived and involves quality (character). There is a mechanism of recognition between souls regardless of form that passes beyond the short-lived memory and involves a rapport based upon the quality embraced by the souls themselves. Such a rapport need not be related to any historical significance.

The soul is a participant (directly or indirectly depending on the level or quality achieved) in the ordering of the universe (by higher impression). Such ordering is not by direct manipulation of specific affairs, but by the adjustment (qualification) (conditioning) of energy fields which impart their adjustments (character) upon the fabric (domain) of manifestation. The leading principle (order) is unity; thus the administration of the universe proceeds as action determined internally, according to natural law. Wisdom (peace) on any level is far superior to reasoning (a struggle). Reasoning (perplexity) (memory) pertains to the lower order; wisdom (peace) (quality) (knowledge in repose) pertains to the higher order. Nature is a consequence of wisdom. Wisdom transcends time; that which is imbedded in time (the medium of diversity) (i.e., the human personality) is of an order less than that of time itself.

All events in time and space (and all non-events) exist simultaneously; it is only to the lesser (partial) (time-dependent and/or space-dependent) vision that specific (uncorrelated) (distinct) existence can be perceived. Within the one vision, all events in time and/or space appear interrelated one with another, and the only reality is that which embraces all. Sense-impression occurs only in the (lesser) domain of partials (what need would a totality have of such impressions?). An enlinking exists between all lives which is an instrument of the (universal) oversoul. Unbound life is not possible.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 302 - THE FOURTH ENNEAD (5)

The fifth tractate of the Fourth Ennead is the third of three tractates entitled 'Problems of the Soul.' In the fifth tractate Plotinus considers the nature of vision, its relationship with the soul, and its higher correspondence in terms of integral consciousness (the continuity of consciousness) (the interrelatedness of all life and consciousness). The basic (superficial) question pertains to whether or not sight is possible in the absence of any intervening medium, and the ultimate conclusion is that all things (lives) that exist are related by an underlying medium, albeit not necessarily physical, which makes communication (the exchange of energy) possible. Even in the extreme case of light received from a distant sun (star) (logos), there exists an interrelationship that transcends even the range (scope) (domain) of light (for light is merely radiant energy which happens to have a large velocity (and therefore a correspondingly large range) compared with lesser forms of energy).

Physical seeing is a form of sense perception that requires a physical instrument of vision and an interpretative faculty to consider the sense impressions received through the intervening medium. In the case of light (as opposed to sound), the transmission does not require that the intervening (dense physical) space be (itself) impressed, though such space may be a hindrance. The medium required is a very subtle one relative to the dense physical, the key element being a sympathetic alignment (responsiveness) of the source and its communicant. Plotinus suggests that the sympathetic quality of the universe depends upon its being one living thing, and that continuity is a condition of any perception of a remote object. Objects of vision must be either self-illuminated (in the case of a source of radiant (light) energy) or illuminated (in the case of reflective objects), but not wholly absorptive.

Air is a diffusive medium, while space is a relatively pure non-diffusive medium for light. Space is the only necessary medium for the passage of light energy (in the physical (etheric) sense). The phenomenon of hearing is an altogether different case than that of vision (though both sound and light are forms of energy and that both are involved in sense-impression), since sound requires a compressive medium (such as air) which allows its transmission. The range (domain) of sound is very short in spatial terms and relatively long in temporal terms (for ordinary sound energy) in relation to light. But even in the case of sound, a self-sympathetic living whole is required. Like sound, light is an expression (outpouring) of the source, and sustained only to the extent that the original impulse is maintained.

But Plotinus enquires further, according significance to the disposition of light energy. The presence or withdrawal of light energy is not pertinent, as the essential existence of light is (itself) an activity. Though light energy is ultimately (continuously) absorbed (and therefore removed from the field), it is the form of the activity (illumination) (quality) that matters (and therein lies the most obvious correlation to the light of the soul and the reflection or diffusion of that light), and the relative sympathy (responsiveness) of the communicant. Every living being (at whatever stage of relative enlightenment) is self-sensitive (though not necessarily consciously self-sensitive) and bound within the one life. A higher order of vision (necessarily subjective) (and therefore much more potent) is evolved through the soul by virtue of its close alignment in consciousness with a higher order of underlying medium (continuity). That vision knows no limits of time or space, for it is a projection of consciousness rather than a receipt of communication.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 306 - THE FOURTH ENNEAD (6)

The sixth tractate of the Fourth Ennead is entitled 'Perception and Memory,' wherein Plotinus discusses the nature of sense-impression, perception, mental impression, and memory. Sense-impression refers to the impression of information (energy) upon the personality senses. Sense-impressions are filtered (distorted) by the senses, the (physical (etheric)) brain, and the aura. The notion of direct (unfiltered) sense-impression upon the mind is rejected; moreover, the mind is seen as working with impressions filtered by a process of perception without being itself impressed.

Sense-impressions may be retained for some time by the aura, depending on their intensity, the attention or interest of the waking-consciousness (and subconsciousness), and the quality of the aura. In a properly trained and disciplined personality, the sense-impressions are quickly released and only the perception is retained (or in other words, experience is elevated to the mental temperament rather than left to the senses (chaos)). In the lower sense, the (concrete) mind looks through the senses outward, while in a higher sense, the mind projects beyond the senses, and in neither case are inner imprints made. In the lower sense, the mind accepts perceptions (filtered experience) which are retained not as indelible marks but as mutable impressions (memory) (memory threads). In the higher sense, the mind projects beyond the senses and perceives directly.

The mind affirms through perception or direct realization. Impressions received are distinguished from their corresponding (consequential) mental acceptance, though for the untrained mind, mental impressions (if any) follow directly from the sense-impressions and (passive) filtering of the senses. Knowing is distinguished from sense-impression, for knowing is a mental activity while sense-impression is merely an impaction of external auric impressions.

In the greater sense, direct mental impression (realization) (intuition) suggests a projection (or receipt), an indwelling identification, and a withdrawal replete with memory of the experience. Thus the higher mind achieves intuition by memory upon approach, the rapport of the object (subject), enlightenment by virtue of dispassionate participation (impersonal alignment). Such intuition is not normally a consciously guided process (such as mental projection), but an inherent power of (higher) consciousness (non-psychic) which flares into fulfillment as a consequence of inner alignment (and the quality of consciousness). On an even higher level, the soul (higher mind) integrates the perception (experience) achieved by the lower mind. Throughout, the soul remains poised (beyond the personality life) while the mind deals with both higher order (the soul) and lower order (the personality).

The memory is a reservoir of mental impressions (products of perception) and the process of recollection. The reservoir is two-fold: personal memory exists relative to the individual perception (experience), and an impersonal memory exists in collective substance relative to all that has transpired (a memory of nature) (of which a trivial part pertains to the particular individual). The personal memory depends upon the attention (focus) (intensity) of the waking-consciousness and the correlative faculty. The focussed mind can be trained to function correlatively, while an unfocussed mind cannot be trained, save toward focus. The personal memory is normally clouded by perception (self-interest) (personal energy); but with proper training, perception can be greatly improved and the process of recollection improved to the extent that the total content can be selectively recovered, at will.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 310 - THE FOURTH ENNEAD (7)

The seventh tractate of the Fourth Ennead is entitled 'The Immortality of the Soul,' wherein Plotinus discusses the essential distinction and relationship of the immortal soul with its mortal reflection. That soul and its body (personality) are two (major) constituents of the (incarnated) human being (individuality). The personality is a composite instrument, being inherently material and subject to material processes. The personality is a passing thing, destructible as an organism or instrument, indestructible in its constituents (atoms). The soul is the (relatively) immortal, true individuality.

The soul contains the ingrained (human) life, while the body (personality) contains far lesser (material) lives. The soul is the coherent force which holds the personality together, without which the personality would dissolve into its constituent elements (unless artificially sustained). The soul is self-sensitive (self-realized)(aware)(beyond material insensitivity). It is the soul which modifies matters, molding the material form to its purposes. Similarly the body of universal manifestation is material, held in place by an overshadowing (indwelling) soul (consciousness). In both cases (particular and universal) the soul provides the potential order, reason, and intelligence.

With respect to the personality, the soul is a prior configuration of impersonal energy, beyond the realm of time and material substance, which projects its personality matrix (pattern) upon the (lower) material world, and induces a personality-consciousness within the form which is related (distantly) to the soul's own stage of evolution (completeness). The soul possesses a stable variability (subjective interactiveness) in consciousness, while the body is inherently reactive (conditioned by its material and self-centered nature). The soul is a qualitative essence, not a quantitative one. As a qualitative essence the soul through its mental instrument is an integrating mechanism for the entire personality.

The soul and the mind are both beyond the intellect (as the intellect relates to the physical, brain-centered consciousness while the mind relates to mental experience). Through the enlightened and properly balanced mind, the soul leads the personality beyond material and emotional pleasure, ultimately even beyond mental pleasure, to quality (consciousness) (being) itself, as the ego (self-centeredness) is overcome, transformed, and elevated in accordance with the will (selflessness) of the soul. Matter (of which the entire personality is formed) is not self-qualified; it is qualified by the impression of consciousness. The soul is incorporeal, as it traverses the personality as a whole rather than as a self-separative essence. The soul is not accord (health), but induces accord to the extent that the material form (personality) is vibrationally (qualitatively) responsive. The soul is neither body nor experience, but is action (subjective causation) and creation.

The soul is immune to objective energy, but incorporates subjective (integrated) energy of the proper quality. The soul possesses wisdom and authentic (divine) virtue, both potentially and to the extent of its relative completion (perfection). The soul on its own level is without distraction, being in repose and relatively complete (the young (?) soul is empty but qualified nonetheless as a soul). The soul remains a reservoir of assimilated experience (love) (wisdom) (consciousness), and though the soul possesses a self-springing life and cannot be destroyed in the sense that forms can be dissolved, the soul can be transcended and the essence of the soul reduced to a matrix on an even higher level, in accordance with the will of the monad.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 314 - THE FOURTH ENNEAD (8)

The eighth tractate of the Fourth Ennead is entitled 'The Soul's Descent into Body.' The soul is principally a transcendent (immanent) essence (aspect) (being) with respect to the body (personality). On a cosmic (solar) scale, the (greater) (one) soul is the aspect of consciousness (coherence) which governs (supervises) the universe as an unbroken (subjective) transcendence. That soul is an essence of divinity, as are all souls differentiated within the One (life). Though that divine aspect has no weakness (save some degree of incompleteness), neither is it entirely fulfilled. It remains a pure essence, in contrast with the personality which becomes entangled in material (emotional) (concrete mental) substance. The soul (aspect) deepens (evolves) (approaches completion) as a consequence of assimilation. That experience is obtained through manifestation (incarnation), the reflection (projection) of the soul (not the soul itself) onto a transient and a recurring life (death) in the lower (objective) worlds.

The soul (its reflection) descends into the material world as a consequence of the incessant (inexhaustible) evolutionary pressure (power) (God) (divine will). The reflection (the personality) is normally absorbed by its experience, being involved (enchanted) in (by) the maya (glamour) (illusion) of that (necessary) experience. The entanglement provides a major obstacle (opportunity) for the personality (mind) (form) to progress (evolve), as the inner (evolutionary) urge for experience (understanding) ultimately leads the mind to overcome all of its fetters (obstacles) thereby achieving far more than would be the case for imposed (direct) training. The immediate (long-range) purpose is for the soul (its mind) to become a potent, creative, constructive, and cooperative force within the framework of the greater life. Thus the soul is a God-in-the-making, and its instrument (the personality) does essentially all of the work (effort) while the soul merely assimilates and contributes its increasingly potent quality to the group lives to which it is linked.

The descent of the soul is involuntary in the sense that descent (experience) is obligatory (evolutionary) until a certain degree of quality (completeness) (character) is achieved, but voluntary in the sense that the soul has some freedom of choice, particularly in cooperation with karma, in determining the conditions and context of the incarnation. The urge to advance is considerable, though on the lower levels that urge is almost obscured by absorption. As the lesser self progresses and responds more and more to the quality (nature) of the soul, it begins to feel the urge to return to the source, and the evolutionary processes are quickened.

The compulsory alternation (progressive cyclic incarnation) is necessary for advancement, for otherwise the reflection (the mind) would become irrevocably absorbed by material (objective) patterns and progress (change) would cease. (Physical, emotional, and mental) matter has many inertial (resistive) properties that must be overcome (by evolutionary force) (constructive change) (as a consequence of natural law). The magnitude of the mind's deception (illusion) by matter is considerable. Much of serving humanity concerns the encouragement (in consciousness) of humanity for overcoming the enchantment of the senses. Such (necessary) experience nonetheless requires eventual withdrawal and assimilation if it is to contribute to higher consciousness (the process of transcending the senses (glamour) (illusion) (self-centeredness) that provides the bulk of effective experience; the actual sensory experience is preliminary (incidental) to the real work).

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 318 - THE FOURTH ENNEAD (9)

The ninth tractate of the Fourth Ennead is entitled 'Are All Souls One?' The soul is recognized as omnipresent indwelling and overshadowing unity, indwelling in the sense that the soul is everywhere related to its reflection and overshadowing in the sense that the (ordinary) personality-form is relatively (objectively) independent of the soul (while being subjectively quite dependent). From the individual (soul) unity to the group (whole) (soul) unity extends one (grand) soul, an omnipresent, eternal, universal entity (consciousness). While the mental principle is universal (unitary), the minds that utilize that principle are quite discrete, though related to the group (universal) mind via the soul. While the soul principle is universal, the various differentiated (individual) souls are a single, continuous entity. Thus reasoning is a discrete process while intuition (realization) is (beyond reasoning) a continuous process (a common thread of unitary consciousness).

Though the one soul flows through all (lesser) things, each such flowing depends upon the individual expression (personality) (form) for its distinct manifestation. Thus a single essence (the soul) flowing through (reflecting itself into) various personality-forms will have different experiences and expressions. Emotions and thoughts are both individual and group (mass) experience (expression), but neither emotions nor thoughts are of the soul for the soul (the repose of the soul) is beyond such transience. As the expression (character) of the individual (personality) approaches the soul in quality (consciousness), so shall that character become more obvious in its commonality. Those (personalities) who function more or less independently are relatively far removed from soul contact (along with those who respond to the (lower) mass consciousness), while those who have built the bridge of consciousness between the mind and the soul will function more or less interdependently.

As the properly integrated and aligned personalities merge in spiritual (impersonal) consciousness there is a natural sharing of (refined) emotions and thought-forms along with a natural sense of brotherhood and cooperation (based upon the common thread of the (one) soul). Each individual has its own character, temperament, and degree of responsiveness with respect to the soul, yet each contributes and responds in its own way to the common thread (the soul). Thus humanity (as an evolutionary entity) is one soul living through a multiplicity of forms (and on a higher level, humanity is a localized expression of a greater unity). Through the agency of the soul, a sympathetic relationship exists between all forms (lives), though not all forms have a conscious realization, for the higher activity (repose) (recollections) of the soul does not operate directly through all forms, but only through the bridge of consciousness and to the extent that the form is suitably responsive.

Reasoning is an individual function; (true) realization is a group (soul) function. Disease (disharmony) (independence) is an individual function; (true) health (harmony) (cooperative interdependence) is a group (soul) function. The (one) soul is not corporeal and cannot be divided, but it can be differentiated (differentiation maintains the integrity of the soul). The differentiation of the one (soul) into many localized souls (localization implies only that the one soul is related to a particular, individual expression) suggests bimodal simultaneity: the indivisible (one) soul and the many differentiated souls, each linked implacably to the whole yet linked uniquely to its respective objective reflection (expression). Thus does the one (soul) give itself 'without self-abandonment, to its own multiplication.'

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 322 - THE FIFTH ENNEAD (1)

The first tractate of the Fifth Ennead is entitled 'The Three Initial Hypostases.' A hypostasis is a substantial existence (a conceptual reality (construct)) (a philosophical foundation). Plotinus' three initial hypostases constitute a triplicity (trinity) of correspondence, but that triplicity has (as well) several forms (sets) of correspondences, depending on context. One such (major) set is (1) the One, (2) the One-Many, and (3) the One-and-Many. Another major set is (1) philosophical primaries (first class): qualities and principles, (2) philosophical secondaries (second class): their relations, and (3) philosophical tertiaries (third class): their application. Even the major set ((1) the One, (2) the Dyad, and (3) the Triad) contains several minor sets.

The three hypostases are considered in relation to the soul. The (apparent) forgetfulness of the soul with regard to the father (source) (monad) refers to the mind, not to the soul directly. The source of evil (ignorance)(of the mind) is self-will. The unconscious entity (personality) purposively cast into the lower worlds (for experience) has no basis of remembering the higher save as the higher (inner) qualities are unfolded from inherent (divine) potential (the soul is potentiality). The mind (initially) lacks discernment of its own nature and becomes attached to (immersed in) (enchanted by) the lower world and the (mundane) things of that lower world. There is no dishonor in exile; the exile of the soul (via the mind) is non-malicious, imposed for the lessons to be learned thereby. But the soul is not the mind (though Plotinus persists in using the word (soul) as a mask); the soul is that aspect which remains unentangled, while the mind is the lesser aspect that deceives itself.

The soul envelops all and guides all (to the extent that lesser elements are responsive). The presence of the soul brings worth (quality). God (thus) is hidden within the human form (all forms). But the soul is in this sense a secondary, an image of the first principle (the monad) (the father aspect) and the relevant set (of hypostases (rays)) is a succession: (1) monad (life) (spirit) (uncompounded), (2) soul (consciousness) (preservation) (relatedness) (between the compounded and the uncompounded), and (3) mind (personality)(form) (matter)(compounded existence). The soul is a triple hypostasis (upper triad) while its reflection (personality) is a lesser (triple) hypostasis (lower triad). The archetypal world (authentic existence) (a timelessness which does not require changelessness) (quality) is the reality of which all lesser things are shadows; the lower triad finds its reality in its archetypal existence on the level of the soul (as a matrix).

The individual (localized) soul cannot be severed from the one (soul), except by deliberate dissolution. The soul as principle belongs to the One (first hypostasis); as a derivative (reflection) of the One, it (consciousness) (the soul) belongs to the Dyad (second hypostasis); yet it functions as a triplicity (Triad) (third hypostasis). The two sets of hypostases relating to the soul are (1) the principle, (2) the essence or quality, and (3) its manifestation, and (1) atma, (2) buddhi, and (3) manas. The primal (one) remains self-gathered, and (simultaneously) a 'profusion of the manifold.' The first hypostasis (of this particular set) is origin (unfailing self-intention); the second is movement (circum-radiation, induced by the primary (being)); the third is consequence (the result of movement). The One is the potentiality of all existence (energy). The Dyad is the force of that potentiality. The Triad is the principle of manifestation. These three initial hypostases form the basis of all life and its evolution.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 326 - THE FIFTH ENNEAD (2)

The second tractate of the Fifth Ennead is entitled 'The Origin and Order of the Beings Following on the First.' Plotinus considers the relative cosmogenesis of the basic hypostasis (trinity) (set): (1) origin, (2) movement, and (3) consequence. Each of the three members of the set is considered a derivative (reflection)(differentiation) of its prior, with the One being the prior for the origin (and therefore a prior to all derivatives). In more theosophical terms, this basic set is (1) being (the monad)(spirit)(life), (2) soul (consciousness)(quality), and (3) all things (personality)(body)(matter).

The manifestation (creation)(differentiation) of the universe is a triple, harmonic generation, with each of the three generations linked so that the lowest order (matter) is in direct, simultaneous relationship to the source (God immanent), with a flow of energy passing circularly from the highest order to the lowest and back to the highest. In each successive generation (and in the composite), the prior contains the lesser (in some transcendental sense) and draws the lesser to return, fulfilled. The source of being is not being; the source remains itself, while giving birth to its reflection (derivative) (i.e., perfection overflows) (and gives birth to an imperfect reflection which, in turn, becomes perfect and increases the perfection of the source). The source is beyond seeking, beyond possession, and beyond need.

Similarly, the source of consciousness is being, not consciousness; and the source of matter is spirit (consciousness), not matter. At each level, the lesser contemplates the greater and gradually evolves toward the greater. That evolution constitutes a principle, at each level, and that evolution is itself a triplicity, as the three processes occur simultaneously and interdependently (matter evolves consciousness as consciousness evolves being as being evolves toward non-being (its precursor)) (the absolute recedes). Coincident with each respective greater generative (creative) principle, the lesser holds the entire potential of the greater. Thus God lives within the least (matter) and provides the potential and encouragement for all things to evolve.

But each aspect (each member of the set) and each element (each member of the aspect) has a two-fold nature, a lower self and a higher self (a higher correspondence). This follows from the least, being a reflection of the highest generation, as the first generation (spirit) forces into manifestation the illusion of its non-existence (which is matter) by virtue of its own existence. This occurs at each level, so that each is simultaneously a relatively basic construct and an induced reflection; e.g., matter is simultaneously non-existence and a reflection (shadow) of (induced) consciousness, while consciousness (the soul) is both non-existent (relative to spirit) and a reflection of spirit (the monad). The non-existence has a greater reality than the reflection, though the reflection contributes vastly more to its prior, as an instrument, while the non-existence evolves in its own right (while the reflection is merely a transient phenomenon). Consequently, illusion prevails in the lower worlds.

Each derivative is a movement relative to its prior, giving rise to its image. Each intermediary looks upward (inward) to its source and downward (outward) to its image or reflection. In all of manifestation there is no separation. For every outgoing (motion) there is an ingoing (current) to provide balance (conservation). For every reality there exists an illusion, until the essence (life) at any level passes beyond such duality (and beyond reality), as all things are integrated in the One.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 330 - THE FIFTH ENNEAD (3)

The third tractate of the Fifth Ennead is entitled 'Knowing Hypostases and the Transcendent.' Considered are the knowing principle, the various means to knowledge, and the relationship of knowledge to transcendence and immanence. External knowledge involves the senses, perception, and the interpretation of impressions; internal knowledge involves the mind free from the distractions of sense-perception. Reasoning involves the mind in consideration of some object or subject, and is related both to external and internal knowledge, short of realization. Knowledge obtained via sense-perception and interpretation, and knowledge obtained via introspective reasoning represents a small portion of the field; the totality of the field can only be embraced internally in the higher sense, via realization and the agency of the soul.

Knowledge based upon reasoning is relatively more valuable than that obtained via casual or passive interpretation of sense-impressions. Even more valuable is self-knowledge or consideration of oneself as a being or consciousness. But all knowledge based upon perception or reasoning is necessarily superficial and inferior to true knowledge or realization. The lesser knowing may or may not involve understanding; the higher knowing involves both comprehension and realization based upon the oneness of all life, as the knower becomes the field of knowledge: the self-knowing of an uncompounded being, where self and content are one and the same. Subhuman consciousness is capable of indirect knowledge (e.g., instinct) as a consequence of group experience, while human consciousness is capable of self-knowledge, in the sense of self-observation. In a higher sense, self-knowledge can be extended to include a consideration of conscious thoughts, feelings, and motives; even further, to a realization of subconscious and superconscious qualification.

True subjective realization is superior to objective reasoning (which is superior to emotional subjectivity). Via the soul the properly qualified mind can participate in self-identification or self-realization, as the individual consciousness enters the greater, becoming that greater all-embracing self and obtaining knowledge (insight) directly. There is no partition of consciousness in that higher sense; there is only a nondeliberate focussing of consciousness, within the integral whole. All glamour and illusion are left behind, as the reality of the soul is entered, and as the knower, knowledge, knowing, the object of knowledge, and the field become one in the higher sense.

Truth (reality) thus obtained via the soul carries with it compulsion (compulsive acceptance of the reality of truth) rather than the persuasion ordinarily demanded by the mind (ego) (except where the ego is self-deceived). Consequently, the mind needs qualification to overcome its self-interest (independence), for soul-infusion is not otherwise possible. The double phase of the mind, concrete (objective) (external) focus and abstract (subjective) (internal) focus, is fully overcome in true self-realization (immanence).

The transcendent is the source, beyond vision, beyond self-vision. Transcendence (being in the highest sense) is beyond knowledge, incapable of knowledge, incapable of being known. The transcendent confers, and cannot be confounded, even by its own induction. The emanation (radiation) (conference) (conveyance) of the transcendent is inferior to the source, and is induced within that which is not the source. Thus the major set of ultimate reconciliation is (1) the Transcendent, (2) the all, being the total of which the Transcendent is the source, and being different from the source, and (3) the Many (diversity) (distinction).

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 334 - THE FIFTH ENNEAD (4)

The fourth tractate of the Fifth Ennead is entitled 'How the Secondaries rise from the First, and on the One.' Plotinus considers further the relationship of the All (the second aspect) to the One (the first aspect) and the Many (the third aspect). Each of the three aspects can be considered as an independent reality, but only the One is entirely self-consistent. The One is without need, while the All and the Many are derived realities (dependent on cause and effect relationships for their relative and respective reality) (the One is causal but not effective). In the reference frame of the first aspect, the One is the only reality, with the All and the Many constituting a void. Within that void, the All (secondaries) are intervenients and the Many (tertiaries) constitute a grand illusion.

The first aspect (simplex) stands before all, remote (self-gathered) and unaffected by its derivatives. The One is authentic (pre-existing) unity rather than synthetic. Anything that exists after the first aspect must be derived by order and succession (via intervenients (consciousness) as needed). A cause and effect relationship exists for all secondaries and tertiary, even though the intervenients may be obscured. The One is 'untouched by multiplicity,' absolute in itself. Anything less than the One needs the pre-existence of the one (and all intervening relations) as a prerequisite of its own composite existence. There can be only one first aspect, being not a body, a process, or a thing of generation. Any successive unity is not utterly simple, but is imitative, a composite and derived unity. The authentic unity (transcendent being) must exist (as a source), regardless of the reality or illusion of any subsequent or lesser existence.

The One is an inductive source, the beginning of all (induced) power, by virtue of its own existence. The one is perfect; all else is a dim reflection, compounded and with little resemblance. The One imparts but is not imparted; all others impart and are imparted (such is the equilibrium of derived reality). Successive derivations are more remote (less perfect) than the source, with consciousness being superior to matter (with spirit being the least interactive (and most inclusive) extent of consciousness, representing the first act of induction (being superior to consciousness)).

The One is the reality of potentiality, the source itself in its self-repose. The first action is the act of essence (potentiality). The second action is the act of essential induction, as potentiality is reflected into the void. The third action is the act of response, as the void accepts the induced potentiality (which is immanence) and begins to evolve. The second action or movement constitutes actuality, the inevitable consequential existence. The One has no reference frame for relativity; the Many lacks true awareness of relativity, being compounded and bound by illusion. The All is the medium of awareness and relativity, and is the highest attainable reality (the absolute recedes upon approach), having no limit to the number of layers (levels) of consciousness (except that higher and lower extent thresholds of consciousness are related to the integrated focus, so that higher (lower) consciousness enters (leaves) the system of consciousness as the focus evolves (i.e., some ultimate limit may exist for the number of orders of magnitude in consciousness embraced by any given focus)(as one extent may be slaved to the other)).

What is true concerning the One, the All, and the Many is also true by correspondence and analogy for the monad, the soul, and the personality, respectively, as for any correlative atomic sphere in general.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 338 - THE FIFTH ENNEAD (5)

The fifth tractate of the Fifth Ennead is entitled 'That the Intellectual Beings are not Outside the Intellectual Principle; and On the Nature of the Good' (what has been translated as intellectual refers to something far superior to the human intellect (the human intellect being inferior also to the mind and its processes)). Plotinus considers the various means of knowledge and enlightenment, and relates realization to his concept of God (good).

The least dependable knowledge is sense-knowledge, which depends on an apparent reality (illusion) in which sense-perception cannot discern between the existence of the (superficial) perception state and the (external) material state. The senses deal entirely with images and cannot enter any objective. Reasoned knowledge, being superior to sense-knowledge, is mere consideration of conceptual reality (and may be enlightened by higher processes or otherwise), and it too is inferior to realized knowledge. Realized knowledge comes from interior processes through participation in the All (rather than externalized experience in the Many). The All (on its own level) is a grand intelligence, essentially recollective, which accesses all knowledge. Via the soul, the mind can draw upon that linking essence to know (realize) clearly, without hesitation. True knowledge (confidence) comes therefore from inner (higher) realization which is linked to the communion of all life; realization provides a sense of appropriateness (discretion) and insight far superior to rational processes. The interpretation of that knowledge falls into a lesser class.

Every object possesses consciousness, a conjunction of the soul principle. Principles are conceptual realities which have distinct (entirely subjective) existence. Truth can only be found within, and any projection leading to true comprehension (realization) (rather than presumed comprehension) must necessarily involve an interior rapport. External (objective) observation and evaluation is at best superficial (the image is not the reality). Identification of reality with the image leads to further deception. Consequently, sense-perception involves belief not truth. Esoterically, truth cannot be found externally (though external knowledge recognized for what it is is nonetheless useful) (by providing threads which might otherwise not be afforded).

The instrument of realization (not reasoning) possesses self-knowledge; thus higher knowledge is self-accordance. The domain of argument and debate is relatively pointless, for no truth can be determined externally. With (true) self-realization all appropriate knowledge is available. But such realization requires an elevation of consciousness far beyond the personality. The highest realization involves an authentic unity, undistorted by multiplicity or diversity. Enlightenment comes to those who fit themselves without seeking (enlightenment comes only via detachment). Objects irradiated reflect light; seeing via that reflected light is inferior to dealing directly with light itself (i.e., without objective vision). The pursuit of God (the good) (truth) results only in detection of its trace.

God is infinite via pure unity. The outer signs of God are the great logoi, themselves dim reflections; the trace of God establishes intermediate reality, as archetypes (ideal-forms) emerge from the One and as the All is induced from the archetypal existence (and similarly for the All and the Many). Transcendence is indefinable; the One is the negation of plurality. The ultimate source is uncontained. Beauty (a relative illusion) is secondary to good (truth). Any good thing (simplex) has become so by communion. God (good) can only be embraced via proper qualification.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 342 - THE FIFTH ENNEAD (6)

The sixth tractate of Plotinus' Fifth Ennead is entitled 'That the Principle transcending Being has no Intellectual Act; What Being has Intellection Primally and What Being has it Secondarily.' Intellection of the external (duality) (observer and object) is relatively inferior to self-intellection, where 'the subject is its own object.' The primally intellective principle is that of self-intellection, a unity in duality (a unity without duality is non-intellective), while the secondarily intellective principle is that of observer and object related by some greater unity. The primally intellective act is a 'duality by the fact of intellection and single by the fact that its intellectual object is itself.' That which is below the intellective principle is non-intellective by reason of deficiency; that which is above the intellective principle is non-intellective by reason of transcendence, being 'perfect in its own essence' and thereby needing no intellective activity.

A unity must underlie every aggregate or manifold, as the unity is required for its source and field (relatedness). The source is a necessary precursor (creator); the field is necessary for sustenance (persistence). Without such unity there could be only isolated elements without aggregation and each would not exist relative to any other. That unity (manifold coherence) must be self-existent, but it is only self-evident to those who consciously respond to that unity (or higher principle within the self-realization) and actually participate in it. Or in other words, for each manifold there must be a precedent unity, a simplex unity independent of identification.

The First (good) is simplex and without need; it possesses nothing and remains non-intellective, while all that exists in a lesser sense possesses participation in some unity in duality (diversity). That participation may be conscious or unconscious, and the perspective (and consciousness) may vary considerably. Each unity (simplex) exists in its own right and needs no derivation relative to the contained manifold, but each manifold is a dependent existence relative to its underlying unity. All things are therefore interdependent, and independence is at most a relative phenomenon.

The manifold (and its elements) ever seeks the One (its identity), under law (accordance) (harmony), meeting the emanation of the One through the intermediary of consciousness (the second aspect). All lesser things are attracted toward their greater, as each greater is a vortex (projecting forth and simultaneously) drawing the reflections ever inwardly. In the lesser can always be found the likeness (image) (inherent goodness) (potential) of the greater, albeit symbolic and far from similar in form. Realization of unity is the reward of persistence of vision. Duality exists in any thinking being. That duality can only be transcended as thinking processes are overcome in the act of self-realization (being) (which is beyond consciousness).

The higher principles possess as virtue the consummate fullness of being, which contains existence, intellection, and life. That aggregate is an interdependent multiple consisting of ideas (principles)(concepts) and representations. But the idea is more real than the manifestation or representation (i.e., the concept of justice is more real than justice), for the representation is merely a reflection or derivative of the idea (archetype) (i.e., the idea persists far beyond the transience of manifestation). But ideas (principles) (concepts) are not thought-forms; thought-forms belong to the realm of transience; ideas exist beyond concrete mental levels (beyond transience), yet ideas nonetheless exist in consciousness, being inferior to life (the One).

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 346 - THE FIFTH ENNEAD (7)

The seventh tractate of the Fifth Ennead is entitled 'Is there an Ideal Archetype of Particular Beings?' Plotinus considers the relationships between archetypes and particular beings (i.e., individual existence or manifestation). In the case of humanity, for example, there are two basic archetypes on the highest level of significance for the human lifewave (the highest level for which a distinct pattern or thread can exist relating a greater life to humanity (beyond which humanity ceases to exist as a potentially distinct lifewave)): one primary archetype for humanity as a collective evolutionary organism and another primary archetype for the generic human being.

What is conceptually true for the generic human being and its particulars is also, analogously, true for the archetypal lifewave and its collective manifestation. In the case of individual existence, the individual archetype on whatever level is derived from the primary in several ways. The (generic) human being is a threefold archetype, with a distinctive (secondary) generic archetype for each of the three levels (monad, soul, and personality). The generic monadic archetype exists on a level just beyond the monadic plane, and that archetype is differentiated into seven types of energy qualification. From the monadic archetype of a particular qualification are derived the individual archetypes which correspond to the manifested (individual)(particular) monads.

Within each (manifested or individually existent) monad exists an archetype for the individual soul, relating both to the monad (and its archetype) and to the archetype of the generic soul for a particular (one of seven) energy qualification. The individual is then derived from its archetype under the subjective qualification of the monad. Similarly, the personality is created by the soul from a particular personality matrix or archetype of a generic nature, but qualified in particular by one of the seven rays and qualified in particular by the soul itself (based on prior experience and the intentions of the soul for personality experience). All is subject to individual and group karma, as well as the qualifications and guidelines for the human lifewave.

Within each major root-race, there are archetypal qualities and characteristics that are reflected in a large but finite number of personality matrices (patterns) from which a soul may choose (albeit subjectively) (within karmic and practical bounds) to provide the basis (basic personality pattern) of incarnation. The more experienced souls have relatively more freedom (and ability) to modify the basic pattern according to their particular (individual) experience and intentions, but the basic pattern can be recognized nonetheless. In essence, there are far fewer personality patterns (each with distinctive mental, emotional, and physical attributes (and racial implications)) than there are individual personalities in incarnation. But each is nonetheless individually qualified, and therefore can be found both similarities and differences in particulars from one to another.

Notwithstanding the prevalence of individual differences on the objective levels of manifestation, an archetypal continuity (commonality) of basic quality and character and inherent relatedness makes each and every incarnated human being basically the same (equal but not identical). The archetype contains all of the basic quality and character, but the manifested personality only resembles that more basic existence, for the circumstances (environment) and experience of the personality are conditioning factors. The integrated (assimilated) experience and development of the personality is nonetheless reflected in the continuing qualification of the archetypal personality pattern.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 350 - THE FIFTH ENNEAD (8)

The eighth tractate of Plotinus' Fifth Ennead is entitled 'On the Intellectual Beauty.' Considered are the substance of beauty and its ultimate conclusion in divine vision (union). Beauty (the idea) (ideal) is conceived or realized (potentially) on a far higher level than it is manifested through some work. In transference of the idea to material form the beauty is necessarily lessened relative to the integral (more complete) beauty of the concept.

The sense of beauty depends upon the quality of consciousness and the level upon which beauty can be perceived (and the ability of the individual to properly translate). Beyond the human sense of beauty, and beyond human creative expression is the divine beauty associated with natural, creative manifestation. There is the natural beauty of works produced by nature, but behind each is the creative thought-form; beyond even that truth (source). The human being in general is 'undisciplined in discernment of the inward, knowing nothing of it, running after the outer, never understanding that it is the inner which stirs us.' So easily is the human personality-focus deceived by appearance.

The relationship of beauty in art (the idea) to beauty in material form closely parallels that of reality (realm of ideas (causes)) and illusion (realm of outer manifestation (effects)). Beauty within the form is more significant than the beauty of form. The beauty of wisdom (spiritual quality) is related to the beauty of the soul in its character and quality, the beauty of divine mind and its inclusive focus, and the beauty of the underlying unity of all life (the beauty of divine being, where each is all and the being of each is mirrored in every other). On whatever level, beauty (repose) (poise) (harmony) relates to that grand wisdom (totality) of being. All lesser forms of existence utilize derived wisdom, dimmed by translation and limitation.

An example of manifested beauty (wisdom) is the representation (qualification) of philosophical concepts by symbols rather than conventional language (and its attendant limitations). Wisdom is a matter of realization rather than reasoning; thus properly qualified (more abstract) symbols more properly convey the (higher) philosophical content. 'Each manifestation of knowledge and wisdom is a distinct image, an object in itself, an intermediate unity, not an aggregate of discursive reasoning.' From wisdom can come the explanation of philosophical content, a necessarily inferior discourse derived from the realization of wisdom, but potentially helpful.

The manifested universe exists as an effect of higher being, not thought out or created in a deliberate, detailed manner, but the inevitable result of the quality and subjective intention of that being. By sending forth qualified energies (under natural law), a being creates as a consequence of an implied causal chain, where the lesser, most removed levels of manifestation are the incidental details (statistical noise) of which higher and intermediate processes (consciousness and being) are the more significant.

The spiritual (mental and intuitional) vision is (potentially) much superior to physical vision or astral impression, being (potentially) closer to creative realization. The potency of spiritual vision lies in its vast inclusiveness. The reality of the great, inclusive vision is the aspect of inner, subjective, group vision on the broadest practicable scale. The process of realization of beauty (wisdom) leads through inclusive vision to the union of the individual with God. The human being possesses (true) beauty to the extent that he (she) remains true to the real (higher)(God) nature (being) within.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 354 - THE FIFTH ENNEAD (9)

The ninth tractate of the Fifth Ennead is entitled 'The Intellectual Principle, the Ideas, and the Authentic Existence.' The typical incarnated human being lives from birth mostly according to the senses rather than the mind. The individual is generally absorbed by material values and governed largely by the (personal) senses. But those who having prepared themselves have embraced (a higher) reality, are no longer bound by material, emotional, or personal values. The ascension is gradual; it begins as the student reaches a balance between the personal life and the impersonal; the power (encouragement) for ascension (progress) comes from the indwelling soul. The beauty (wisdom) of the evolving human being is related (proportionally) to the quality of mind and the clarity of the bridge between the mind and the soul.

The intellect is associated with the physical and etheric brain, indirectly related to the mind, while the intellectual principle is the principle of mind (not intellect) from which are loosely (partially) derived the human mental abilities and activities. Principles are superior to their manifestation or application, yet it is through such application that the student can usually participate in the principle. With a more abstract, contemplative ability, the mystic (occultist) can embrace the various principles more directly.

The soul is specific relative to the soul principle. It is the principle that (indirectly) induces actualization, as intermediate forces link the principle and its effective realm. First principles are self-complete and actual. All that is incomplete is subsequent to first principles, as even the soul on its level is incomplete. The intellectual principle is actual, eternal intelligence. Intellection (mentation) is therefore a derived activity or application. The object is inseparable from its intellection (the objective world is a case of entrained illusion in which objects are apparently distinguished in a separative fashion, while in truth all that is objective takes place within consciousness, and not without, as it may appear). Separate (distinctly differentiated) powers and principles are revealed by application and perspective, yet on their own level remain a single, inclusive aspect.

The reasoning soul is the mind (the soul is beyond reasoning), concerned with objects (ideas), knowledge, etc. The knowledge embraced by the concrete (lower) (objective) mind (of the personality) is necessarily superficial. Authentic knowledge requires the abstraction of the soul and the participation of the soul in the being thus represented. 'Intellection is an act upon the inner content,' yet on a lower, human level, intellection appears to deal with external content. The essence of creative impulse (outgoing divine idea) lies within this concept of inner content, as the existence of a principle and a universe (field of manifestation) capable of sustaining (receiving) that principle will inevitably (spontaneously) (instantaneously) (gradually) draw into manifestation the various associated creative impulses (waves).

Human achievement (creativity)(accomplishment) in the arts and sciences (and philosophy) is largely a matter of response to impression, higher (spiritual), intermediate (intellective), or lower (sense-based) as the case may be. The fallacy of ego should be self-evident to one of higher impression. Ordinary (generic) man tends to deal with particulars and specifics, while the more contemplative, being closer to the source of higher impression, tends to deal with universals and more abstract, impersonal, subjective qualities (principles). The ordinary world of sense impressions is filled with (internal) (apparently external) images far removed from the archetypes of more authentic existence.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 358 - THE SIXTH ENNEAD (1)

The first tractate of the Sixth Ennead is entitled 'On the Kinds of Being: First Treatise.' The first tractate is a collection of thirty related essays wherein Plotinus considers and ultimately dismisses two organizational schemes based upon logic and reasoning from the basic assumption of matter as reality and sense-perception as a 'trustworthy guide' for discernment. Plotinus asserts that a proper (natural) organization (of universal manifestation) can only (properly) be derived from the One (rather than the many), that the many can be derived from the One, but not vice versa. The unity of life (via universal manifestation) is 'not accidental but essential and underived.' From that unity, then, the various principals and derivatives (secondaries) can be properly recognized and their relationships can be properly discerned.

Proceeding from a material (objective) basis leads to arbitrary organization of elements (and some contradiction) while proceeding in a more inclusive manner leads to the natural order of things (the self-consistent scheme of divine manifestation) (viewed however dimly). The problem (of proceeding from a material basis) is that of associating reality with the body (the objective world) (matter). All logic and rationale based upon objective experience (sense-impression) is necessarily misleading by virtue of partiality (partial (limited) vision and bias) and the illusion of substantiality. False assumptions usually lead to erroneous conclusions. Beginning with the One (inclusion), the all can be derived. The natural order of things demonstrates relatedness between all elements or components, in a hierarchial sense (secondaries derived from primaries) as well as in a categorical sense (where elements are recognizable as being of a similar order). The real key to discernment is realization rather than reasoning, for reasoning is necessarily fallible.

Specifically, Plotinus considers two contemporary theories of organization; the first being an organization of being into ten 'well-defined' genera or categories (a 'tenfold division of the existents'): substance, quantity, relation, quality, date, location, action, passion, possession, and situation; the second being a theory of a single genus having four species: substrates, qualities, states, and relative states. In neither case is the organizational scheme self-consistent in view of subjective (spiritual) reality. The metaphysical reality of Plotinus begins with the One, an absolutely transcendent God, 'beyond all thought and all being, ineffable and incomprehensible,' prior to all existents. The One emanates while remaining self-contained and unmoved (the absolute recession), and through reflection (the world (universe) proceeds from God and remains with God (absolutely dependent) though God remains 'beyond'). The One lives within, by successive reflection.

The first emanation corresponds to the world of archetypal existence, where multiplicity first appears, being eternal. The second emanation corresponds to consciousness (quality) in two aspects, the higher being transcendence (the soul), the lower being the indwelling aspect that is involved with the personality (i.e., the consciousness of the personality). In broader terms, the second emanation is the World-Soul (Christ-consciousness) from (within) which are differentiated individual souls. The soul, being real, survives the dissolution (death) of the personality, and progresses (evolves) by virtue of experience. The lower realm (below the world of the soul) is the material objective world (matter) (inertial existence). Spirit, consciousness, and matter thus constitute a major (natural) triplicity of manifestation, with all other elements being relatable to any or more of the three aspects.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 362 - THE SIXTH ENNEAD (2)

The second tractate of the Sixth Ennead is entitled 'On the Kinds of Being: Second Treatise.' Considered are the five existents having primary generic status; being, stability, motion, identity, and difference, the four latter genera are principles of being (and referred to as the four genera). Becoming is considered inferior to being, as being is eternal. Being is not an undifferentiated unity, but is, instead, 'many as well as one,' a diversified (pluralistic) unity. Being (substance) is not a 'predicate of any given thing.' The secondary genera (plurality of existents) are derived from a unity (but not fortuitously), each genus being separable yet intrinsically bound to being.

The One is beyond existence, the transcendent source, a unity external to the genera. The body is a composite (manifold)(divisible) unity, while the soul is an unextended (pluralized) unity (single nature). The soul is one and many, one in nature, being differentiated only in the sense of self-contemplation, the being of the soul being derived 'from no source external to its own essence.' In the higher sense (reality) the soul (being)(substance) is an inseparable unity, but in the lower sense (of manifested existence in the lower, more objective worlds) that unity is separable into its four genera and their many species (particulars). The genera are inextricably related (mutually concomitantly), but not subordinately or superordinately.

Being (substance)(the higher aspect of the soul) is a unity on its level, while the soul (lower aspect)(mind) is a unity on its (lower) level. The origin (destination) of the soul is unity (goodness); i.e., there exists an irresistible tendency toward unity (equilibrium). But unity is not a genus, being beyond genera (in principle, but inherently manifested). Being (actuality) can be considered as a single genus of what is common to life (consciousness)(matter)(and energy). The genus motion is life inherent (vibration), while the genus stability is 'unalterable condition' in the primary sense. The genera identity and difference arise from perspective, yet are nonetheless principal. Each genus 'exists as a whole in each of the things whose genus it is,' the unity of a genus being a whole-in-many. The five (four) genera (primaries)(contemporaries) constitute reality.

All other genera are posterior to the five (four) primaries and are therefore not genera in any primary sense. The posterior genera qualify or particularize, while the primaries are inherent. The posterior genera (at whatever level) are derivable, but necessarily subsequent to being. Quality, quantity, relation, situation, passivity, and possession all presuppose the primary genera and/or admit posteriority. Likewise, beauty, goodness, knowledge, intelligence, and the various virtues are all posterior (manifested) (characteristics and particulars). None of the primary genera are species predicates; all of the primaries are beyond the distinction of posteriorities.

Being (essential substance)(the monad) is the unity beyond (within) the existents (the four genera)(the complex (simplex) of consciousness)(the soul), while existence is the unity beyond (within) all manifested experience (the mind)(the objective world)(the realm of particulars). As being looks outward, the soul (consciousness) is produced. The (subjective) activity of the soul is twofold: upward (inward) towards its source and downward (outward) towards its reflection, the lower phase (the personality)(the objective world). 'Everything exists forever, unailing, involved by very existence in eternity. Individuals have their separate entities, but are at one in the (total) unity.' The complex (of all) is being, 'holding all existence within itself.'

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 366 - THE SIXTH ENNEAD (3)

The third tractate of the Sixth Ennead is entitled 'On the Kinds of Being: Third Treatise.' Plotinus considers the principle or domain of becoming (the sensible realm). Sensible existence embraces the manifested universe in its material aspects, subject to perception and the various limitations of personal existence, but cannot be properly considered without realization of its relationships to the higher, causal worlds. The lower, sensible realm is analogous to the higher, but only in an abstract sense, certainly not identically analogous. The soul (of that higher realm) 'does not enter into the structure of what is called sensible being' (i.e., the indwelling (over-shadowing) soul is not absorbed in sensible experience, but remains detached).

The sensible realm is the realm of manifestation (matter)(form)(appearance) and activity, largely a realm of effects and consequences, while the basis of the higher realm is life (spirit)(consciousness)(quality), largely a realm of interactive causes (causal forces). Primary causes are higher causes, which qualify sensible existence. Secondary causes are generated by virtue of experience and activity in the sensible realm, qualified by higher intentions (primary, evolutionary causes)(karma), and returned to the sensible realm as effects (circumstances)(karmic consequence). Orthodox classification schemes are normally either (relatively) arbitrary and/or take into consideration only the appearance of things and their (sensibly) apparent (material) relationships. But since everything in the lesser realm is related to higher, causal forces, those (intermediate) relationships must be considered in order to realize properly a natural scheme of things.

Becoming (the sensible realm) 'may be divided into matter and the form imposed upon matter.' Another distinction is made between essence and attributes; essential (material) being is the primary sense, while attributes are a secondary sense (descriptors)(characteristics). Nothing is accidental in the conventional sense; all is related to causal forces, some significantly, others incidentally. Form 'is higher in the scale of being than matter,' for in essence matter is a dim reflection of higher existence, while (imposed) form is somewhat closer to the source of lesser (sensible) existence. All substances are qualified, and that qualification provides the real basis for classification (recognizing the natural order of things).

There are a number of interdependent qualifications imposed upon things in the sensible realm (or at least a number of natural perspectives which relate sensible things with higher sources of qualification). One such distinction is that of earth, fire, air, and water. Another involves the various lifewaves and their respective kingdoms: elemental, mineral, plant, animal, human, deva, etc. Yet another involves the essential qualification of the seven rays (in particulars, cycles, planes and sub-planes of consciousness, etc.). Still another involves astrological qualification. Numerological schemes are not significant unless properly correlated with a natural scheme. Likewise, numerous schemes may be recognized based upon particular characteristics, but these will not be particularly significant unless properly correlated with an essential (natural) scheme (e.g., the seven rays).

The problem of correlation arises from the natural, multiply qualified character of any object in the sensible realm. But where the consideration begins with the natural scheme and then correlates that scheme to the particulars, the relationships become more apparent. Understanding is, of course, beyond 'the province of sense-perception' and requires detachment.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 370 - THE SIXTH ENNEAD (4)

The fourth tractate of the Sixth Ennead is entitled 'On the Integral Omnipresence of the Absolute Existence: First Treatise.' Plotinus considers the issue of the soul and its omnipresence. The All (being)(the one soul) is an integral, self-fulfilled totality, embracing the manifested universe at every coordinate. The identity (soul) is undistributed, not diffused, uncontained, yet omnipresent. The (subordinate) universe embraces all of time and space, yet remains less than the All (which is beyond). The Path leads not from place to place, but from place to placelessness as the All is (increasingly) realized.

Any life (consciousness)(form) which participates in the All reflects that presence (emanance) to the extent of its participation (i.e., the extent of its character and quality), yet the All 'remains the quested' (meaning there is no appropriation of omnipresence). Completeness requires placelessness (timelessness). Life is the one, unfragmented vitalization of the All. Consciousness is the degree of participation in life. The various (higher) attributes are simply derived of the quality of consciousness (as that consciousness provides an interface for the higher aspects of manifestation. The All is self-abiding, universal, 'immaterial and without magnitude,' yet provides for dimensional stability and dynamic evolution.

The (self-gathered) All engenders. Particular souls come into being as local manifestations of the one (soul), yet such particularization is a perspective only within the objective domain (a greater reality is the oneness which embraces all souls). The differentiation of the one (soul) provides integral diversity (variety in unity)(in reality, without even spatial or temporal (individual) distinction). The greatness of the soul lies in its universal existence, imparting only a reflection of itself into the material (objective) universe. The differentiated soul that overshadows (indwells) a particular personality is linked to every other, one soul flowing simultaneously through a multiplicity of forms, yet each having some indication of individuality. Through the soul, one can participate consciously (selflessly) in that (soul) consciousness that flows through all things.

The soul admits no partibility. The soul is the universal medium of consciousness, the source of unrelenting power, imperishable relative to the personality. The soul is 'at once a self-enclosed unity and a principle manifested in diversity.' 'Anything other than this All that may be stationed therein must have part in the All, merge into, and hold by its strength' (as non-being within being). Thus the (one) soul is the sustaining force, the preservation of life (on whatever levels of existence). Successively differentiated principles coexist; 'the one principle reaches to the individual but none the less contains all souls and all intelligence.' The soul exists before (and after) the cycle of successive manifestations (incarnations) (personalities). In each (incarnation), the soul remains what it is (highly qualified consciousness)(being), while the personality and an aspect of the soul are bound for the usual interval (duration) of life in the lower worlds.

The material coarseness of the human (animal) form binds that aspect of the soul to the form (that coarseness being considered a necessary evil (evil in the sense of being unresolved)). Every incarnation is a blessing (opportunity). Karma is never punishment, but ever consequence leading to enlightenment. The karma of matter finds fulfillment as the individual gradually (properly) qualifies all of the consciousness and form. The karma of consciousness finds fulfillment as the individual achieves inclusion (the All).

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 374 - THE SIXTH ENNEAD (5)

The fifth tractate of the Sixth Ennead is entitled 'On the Integral Omnipresence of the Authentic Existent: Second Treatise.' Plotinus continues consideration of the god in each, being one and the same in all. The principle of unity is the principle 'that all things seek their good' (which is unity on a progressively broader scale). The quest for good (unity)(perfection) is the evolutionary path, which qualifies all of life and all things, being self-evident to those who are consciously responsive to the evolutionary encouragement. The movement toward reality (unity) begins with the one, passes through the domain of multiplicity (appearance)(without degrading the essential unity), and ultimately returns to the one. Those who are truly aware of the path become that movement, and actually enter into the qualification of the path (and therefore all of life). Good is 'truly inherent' and cannot be found externally. All beings are one (in life and consciousness), since all are one with the self-contained Good.

The reasoning (concrete mental) faculty is material (corporeal)(mental, albeit materially mental, not physical or emotional, yet potentially vulnerable to physical and emotional experience (bias)). As the mind becomes more broadly coherent (stable)(less personal), it gradually embraces unity (inclusiveness) (the capacity for internal correlation) and becomes less materially mental (more refined) and consequently more responsive to higher impression. As the vision (focus) (perspective) of the (enlightened) mind is ultimately broadened, all aspects of life become essentially correlated, without inherent paradox or contradiction.

The god within is ever present, but each relates to that (one) god differently, according to character, consciousness, and temperament (ability, values, etc.), and is therefore accordingly (relatively) responsive to that divine, inner presence (good). The immediate goal is for man to so forego the outer life (the self-centered, mundane personality)(in the sense of essential, relative values), that the inner, all-pervasive sun may be fully embraced. Even in the case of the human animal (i.e., coarse, wholly self-centered, and absorbed in physical and emotional sense-experience), god lives within nonetheless (albeit thoroughly masked by the outer nature). This is the basis of brotherhood, that all are one, regardless of appearances of distinction.

Differentiated existence (expression) is itself merely an appearance (perspective); in fact, differentiated existence is a constructive illusion, or rather, existence is a complete (integral, multidimensional) continuum. Locality also is an illusion, as is discretion in time (but nonetheless possessing practical significance). Multiplicity arises via the infinite nature of unity. It is the principle of (generic) man that enters the form and appears as a particular expression. The reality of man is his higher nature, to which he (the localized consciousness) returns as his evolutionary experience is fulfilled. The external vision, however, deceptively (naturally) ignores unity (reality), while the internal vision, properly cultivated, embraces that unity and breeds enlightenment.

Enlightenment comes in the simplicity of internally-realized atonement. It is the essential unity of the soul that allows the (individual) soul consciousness to participate in life (consciousness)(appearance). The key to unity is identification (self-realization), as the individual consciousness identifies with the greater life (reality) and loses its sense of independence, overcoming the illusions of ego, and allowing the god within to be realized.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 378 - THE SIXTH ENNEAD (6)

The sixth tractate of the Sixth Ennead is entitled 'On Numbers.' A distinction is made between number (principle)(abstraction)(reality) and numbers (symbols). The most significant number (the first or primary order) is one (not in the sense of an isolated singularity, but in the sense of unity (the whole) (completeness)). The next (secondary) order is the duality (the two extremes) of zero and infinity, each masking the essential number (one)(the median).

Of greater significance is the concept of number and the concepts of unity, duality, triplicity, etc. Multiplicity (infinity)(limitlessness) may appear (in perspective) to be a departure from unity, in the sense of the compounding nature of extension (differentiation), yet the inherent reality of multiplicity is the infinity within unity. Consciousness is the link between unity (reality) and multiplicity (illusion)(transience)(exile), the medium through which unity is manifested in diversity. Of more practical significance is the simultaneous flowing outward (toward multiplicity and manifestation) and flowing inward (toward completion (unity)), the outward movement being involution (ignorance)(evil) and the inward movement being evolution (wisdom)(goodness). Expansion in the material sense (outer expansion) serves involution (diversity), while expansion in the sense of consciousness (inner expansion) serves evolution (the urge to unity and perfection). Movement (rest), unity (multiplicity), and infinity (finiteness) are all merely perspectives.

One is a discrete singularity; monad (unity)(oneness) is an integrated whole (quality). Two (three) is a collection or composite of discrete elements; dyad (triad) is an integrated whole (unity), having two (three) aspects. The potentiality (principle) (reality) of number precedes any manifestation (expression) (extension). The application of number conveys process; the expression of number succeeds application. Thus number precedes distinction (being) (movement) (identity). In a sense, number actually produces distinction. Natural numbers (in contrast to arbitrary numbers) are produced as consequences of creative (conceptual) manifestation (order) on each respective level. The principles (unity, duality, triplicity, etc.) are necessarily interactive and convey ordered movements within manifestation.

Number (in principle) is a causative force, each aspect inducing alignment by virtue of responsiveness to the particular (associated) (derived) character (of the particular relative significance (energy)). Numbers have significance only in principle, or in alignment (coincidence) with (relationship to) qualified (ordered) energy. Numbers do not possess inherent power; numbers exhibit potency only in their symbolic or relational sense (correspondence) (i.e., natural numbers possess significance). Only the force or energy related to has power (and consciousness is necessarily required for its evocation or manifestation).

'Unity and number are precedent.' The notion of unity precedes its expression, and cannot be taken from the object so possessing. Unity is affirmed to the extent that reality is embraced, yet unity ever precedes affirmation (or even expression). For every manifold there exists a precedence (unity). The continuous has a greater significance (in principle) than the continual or merely multiple. 'Unity must precede reality and be its author.' Primal numbers (principles) (qualification) (unity, duality, triplicity) are distinctly superior to derived numbers (acting for the primals) and numbers of association or reckoning, respectively. Number represents inherence, while quantity is circumstantial or consequential.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 382 - THE SIXTH ENNEAD (7)

The seventh tractate of the Sixth Ennead is entitled 'How the Multiplicity of the Ideal-Forms came into Being; and on The Good.' In sending 'souls to their birth,' God provides various forms and senses and powers. This providence is precedent, in the sense that all development and provision on manifested (lower) levels is embraced at least generally (conceptually) by the divine (evolutionary) plan. 'The alone and one and utterly simplex' does not plan or reason in the human sense, for the truly creative act is necessarily complete in itself, a realization (conception) and evocation. For the creator, on its level, succession (cyclic manifestation) pre-exists in the totality of creation.

Cause and effect are inseparable. The idea ultimately reveals the inherent cause. The higher the realm, the greater the degree of inherence. Manifested works are the consequences of archetypal existence. The personality is simply an (inferior) activity of the soul. It is the soul which holds the pattern (matrix) of the human form (personality). And it is the soul which illuminates the form (mind) (person) to the extent of the soul quality and the extent of the personality response.

Since life (reality) is an inclusive continuum, an entire spectrum of life (consciousness)(form) is manifested. Lives (forms) are greater or lesser not in any absolute sense, but only in the relative sense of position (development) (precedence) (character) within the spectrum (scheme). Each distinction contributes significance to the whole. Under natural law, archetypal existence (the only real existence) necessarily evokes reproduction (reflection) (manifestation) (fulfillment), for (creative) self-concentration necessarily produces an outflow of energy. The manifold (manifested universe), being a succession, requires each precedent to exist simultaneously (in some form) with each succeeding lifewave (kingdom).

The distinction of self-consciousness (reasoning) exists between the third (animal) and fourth (human) kingdoms (of the Earth scheme), just as other distinctions exist between each of the various kingdoms. Intelligence is (potentially) vastly broader than simply reasoning in the human sense. Variations in intelligence exist in (at least) several dimensions (e.g., there exists intelligence vastly superior to the human, yet wholly without the ability to reason). The manifold consists 'of things progressively differing,' yet essentially one (in the higher context). All lives (kingdoms) and elements (air)(water)(fire)(earth) are ensouled and exist in consciousness as a higher (greater) reality than in their objective form, albeit vastly different in appearance (e.g., symbolic rather than literal correspondence). Everything in the lower sphere exists in higher correspondence.

Once life (love)(light)(unity)(reality)(the One)(the Good)(Truth)(the all-inclusive) is actually embraced, all else is recognized as darkness (ignorance) (ego)(illusion)(the petty, mundane world and its values). The power of the Good embraces all; the Good can be found (potentially) in all things, however masked by appearance. The inherent good (light)(love)(life) tends to stir the lesser (outer) being to the greater (source)(God). The divine glow within the form, albeit masked by (coarse) matter, 'gathers strength, awakens, and spreads' in the natural course of evolution toward the Good. Pleasure is inadequate, transient (illusion). The Good is eternal (real) and ever worthy. The quest of the soul is the Good. Once embraced, the radiance of the One draws (impels) (compels) the lesser onward and upward. And thus all distinctions are released in 'the august repose' of the Supreme.

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 386 - THE SIXTH ENNEAD (8)

The eighth tractate of the Sixth Ennead is entitled 'On Free Will and the Will of the One.' Freedom absolute is possessed only by God (the One), being beyond even will. God is; all else follows. The One is 'self-existing always, needs no containing, no participating.' All else participates to some extent in the One. 'The Supreme is everywhere and yet nowhere.' The One does not will; the will of the one follows by induction. The (induced) plan embraces all that is manifested, effectively bounding and qualifying all of manifestation. By providence, the manifested universe is as it is intended to be, though the particulars (specifics)(variety) are merely bounded.

Nothing is as it happens so to be. Everything is consequential, not necessarily significantly so, but nonetheless consequential. The causes are a combination of qualified higher intention and the relational interactiveness of the manifested constituency (forms (matter), consciousness, and spirit). Nothing is wholly accidental, for all follows from cause and effect relationships. Yet a measure of freedom exists, to the extent that intelligence (consciousness) is not absorbed by (in) the manifested environment and/or the lower (psychological) nature. True freedom is beyond opportunity, beyond the realm of conditions (external and internal constraints) and actions.

Freedom is therefore relative, and, for all practical purposes, is possessed only by those who live according to higher reason (the soul) and are thereby free from the demands of the unqualified (reactive) lower nature. Thus desirelessness (freedom from glamour) is a prerequisite of voluntary action. Wherever an individual (group) is enslaved by experience (which is nonetheless necessary for evolutionary consideration), there is little if any freedom, for actions (reactions) (interactions) are determined by (earned) environmental forces (conditions) and the individual's (group's) own character and temperament (lower nature). Freedom follows the extent of self-mastery and alignment with the soul (yet freedom applies ever to volition, not ever to imposition).

Practical (relative) freedom is measured by the extent to which voluntary action is possible, without compulsion, without need of circumstances or conditions, without the bias of desire, glamour, or other aspects of the lower nature. Relative freedom is the extent of self-disposal, based upon will (atma)(which is not the 'will' of the lower nature), which is in turn based upon (right) reasoning, knowledge, and realization. The 'presentment of fancy is not a matter of our will and choice', but is merely the demand of the lower nature. The presentment of fancy arises 'from conditions of the body' (i.e., physical, emotional, and/or concrete mental conditions), and has naught to do with self-disposal or voluntary action. 'Self-disposal belongs to those who live above the states of the body.' 'To desire is still to be drawn', thus, 'act rising from desire' cannot be voluntary.

Freedom is thus diluted (masked) (constrained) by embodiment and immersion (in the objective world). Freedom in the context of external conditions, albeit limited or bounded by karmic forces, is conveyed also to the extent of alignment with the (evolutionary) path. Progression in the direction of greater consciousness conveys some degree of freedom; attempted movement contrary to that direction conveys restriction and further bounding (karma) leading inevitably to realignment. Or in other words, 'effort is free once it is towards a fully recognized good.' However, in the final analysis, 'freedom of act, our self-disposal, must be referred not to the doing, not to the external thing done but to the inner activity.'

THE UPPER TRIAD COMMENTARIES

No. 389 - THE SIXTH ENNEAD (9)

The ninth tractate of the Sixth Ennead, being the last tractate of the last of Plotinus' Enneads, is entitled 'On the Good, or the One.' The Good (the One) (the Soul) (Unity) is the most essential principle, after the life principle, for any existence (manifested being or expression). 'It is in virtue of unity that beings are beings.' There exists a greater (absolute) unity that embraces all things, all consciousness, all life. There is a lesser, relative unity that can describe any form, focus of consciousness, or life (monad) that embraces the greater unity, and to the extent that unity is embraced and manifested. That having greater unity is able to bestow upon the lesser (derivative) (reflection), some extent of that unity.

The soul is a unifying aspect that draws the (integrated) personality into greater (higher) unity (alignment). The integrated personality is a unifying aspect that draws the elements of the personality together into coherence. Each element of the personality, in turn, is (potentially) a unifying aspect for the (corresponding) form. But it is the soul, for all practical (higher) purposes that is the aspect of unity for any manifested being. Yet all things (consciousness) (life) are merely participants in some greater unity (the One). In collective existence, all things are embraced by the One. The being of any aspect or element (form, focus of consciousness, monad, etc.) is one with every other, regardless of order, in the highest conceivable sense. That human vision should be turned outward to the illusion of externalized manifestation in no way lessens the essential unity of all life.

Intermediate unities embrace unified elements and reflect the extent of participation in the (respective) higher unity. Any unity is not merely a totality; it is more, for unity is a relational inherence, utilizing a single, coherent force to qualify all of its elements, a oneness that goes beyond collection or coordination. The way of unity is not the way of the senses, for unity is an internal experience (realization) (since the senses are naturally deluded by the external appearance of the manifold). While being has 'the shape of its reality,' unity lies beyond even being. The vision of unity leads beyond knowledge, beyond even realization, to absorption in unity. To be merely aware of the Light is to fall short of the One, for one must rather be that One, in transcending all that constitutes a masking of the One.

Yet to be, falls short of that One; to be One is not to be. The greatest embraceable unity is merely symbolic of the One. The human being is a manifold, yes even the monad, the utter oneness of human being. But the path (higher, inner vision) leads to awareness of unity, as the consciousness is transcended by being and all that is transient (personal) is left behind. The movement of the soul is toward the center, yet toward that center moves every soul. Only One reaches that center, the One of all. Everything that lacks awareness of that center suffers the (relative) illusion of separation, the 'otherness' of differentiated existence.

It is for human consciousness to seek the One (God) within, to attend to that calling and the necessary (prerequisite) qualifications. It is for human consciousness to evolve beyond the world of shadows, for the lower phase of the soul to be uplifted to the higher, for the higher phase of the soul to return to its source, completed and fulfilled. For the One (the Good) (God) calls softly and gently over the aeons of manifested existence (evolution), calling the essence of God within each, persistently onward and upward, closer and closer, forever and ever.