

**THE DOCTRINE OF THE
SOUL IN THE THOUGHT
OF PLOTINUS AND ORIGEN**

by

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To My Mother

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PART II

PLOTINUS' DOCTRINE OF THE SOUL

Chapter II

THE ORIGIN AND DESCENT OF THE SOUL

Plotinus studied the various thoughts and views of his predecessors, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Neo-Pythagoreans, the Middle Platonists and especially those of Plato. He carefully analyzed them, discarded some, developed and reinterpreted others and produced a profoundly original philosophy, more coherent and systematic than his immediate predecessors, the Middle Platonists. His philosophy is an attempt to give an accurate and objective view of the cosmos, which he represents as a "great chain of being"—a continuous chain of living realities which emanate eternally from the first principle, the One, descent through Nous and the Forms within it to the World Soul and to the last and lowest bodily forms. It is also a careful explication of the individual soul's ascent to the One, which is the main goal of Plotinus' thought. In his attempt to integrate these two accounts, Plotinus often creates a tension in his thought which he never fully reconciles. This is especially true in his evaluation of the soul's descent into body and in the soul's freedom of choice while in the body.

Like the Middle Platonists, Plotinus postulates three divine principles; the One (*τὸ ἓν, τὸ πρῶτον, τὸ ἀγαθόν*), Universal Intelligence (*νοῦς*) and World Soul (*ψυχὴ τοῦ παντός* or *τῶν ὅλων*). Unlike his immediate predecessors, however, Plotinus makes each a separate and distinct hypostasis. He also elevates his first principle, the One, beyond mind or being, and thus beyond all activity and thought.²⁵⁷ The One, to him, is absolutely transcendent; an absolute unity, eternally perfect, infinite and indivisible. Although it is the source of all things, it is none of these things. This does not mean that the One is an unconscious formless nothing, but that it is more than these things,²⁵⁸ more than anything man knows or is able to comprehend. For this reason Plotinus is reluctant to attribute any predicates to it. To do so is to limit and make it a particular thing which it is not. Even the term

"One" is inadequate, but it is the best term available.²⁵⁹ From the essence of the One, through the spontaneous outpouring of its energy or power, is produced the second principle or hypostasis, Universal Nous. This act of generation involves no thought, act of will or any type of movement on the part of the One.²⁶⁰ It is conceived as a sort of emanation or radiation which Plotinus compares to the outpouring of light from the sun. Similar to the sun which experiences no change as a result of the outpouring of its power, the One remains untouched and unmoved by the emission of its substance.²⁶¹ The principle of emanation, cardinal in Plotinus' thought, was first explicitly formulated by Numenius and further developed by Plotinus.²⁶²

It is Universal Nous, the second hypostasis, that, in the Plotinian system, is the highest and most perfect form of being. It is Nous that contains, or rather is, the totality of all being, the Forms or Ideas of all things in the universe; of all individuals and all classes of living things.²⁶³ Nous first proceeds from the One as an indeterminate spiritual matter (*ἀόριστος ὕλη*),²⁶⁴ or in the Platonic and Neopythagorean terms, as an indefinite dyad.²⁶⁵ It then turns back upon the One in contemplation and becomes informed and limited, receiving all the entities which it contains,²⁶⁶ i.e., Nous receives the power of the One in a multiple number of forms.²⁶⁷ These archetypal forms exist within Nous as separate entities and as the whole.²⁶⁸ That is to say, each is an eternally active mind which thinks and is the whole. The idea of the individual, eternally active thinking mind which is the whole, Plotinus adopted from Aristotle; nous is both subject and object.²⁶⁹ Thus, the Plotinian Nous is a unity in multiplicity (*ἄντὸς ἐν πολλὰ*),²⁷⁰ a world of individual minds or forms, each of which is the whole. As archetype of the material universe, container of the forms of all existing beings, Plotinus calls Nous the maker and demiurge of the universe (*ποιητὴς καὶ δημιουργὸς τοῦ παντός*),²⁷¹ but Nous is not the direct maker of the world. It is in no way concerned with the ordering or governing of the entities in the cosmos. This task is performed by the World Soul, the third divine hypostasis.

The World Soul of Plotinus is basically the World Soul of Plato as found in the *Timaeus* or the *Laws*, but more elaborate than in the Platonic doctrine. It fulfills the functions of both the second god of Numenius and the celestial mind of Albinus and of their world souls. To it Plotinus attributes the responsibility of ordering and governing the cosmos, and it is the World Soul which forms the connecting link; it is the intermediate, between the world of Nous and the sensible world. Soul emanates from Nous and turns back to it in contemplation in the same manner as Nous emanates and returns to the One; but there is a closer relationship between Soul and Nous. As an emanation of Nous, Soul is an image of it and less perfect than it. Unlike Nous which is eternally at rest and possesses all objects within itself simultaneously, the universal Soul possesses its beings not as a whole but one at a time in continuous stages, one following the other (*τὸ ἄλλο μετ' ἄλλο*).²⁷² Thus it is continually on the move, moving from one life to the other. This endless movement of the Soul from part to part Plotinus calls "time", and is, according to him, the life or act of the Soul in movement as it passes from one life to the other,²⁷³ and the cause of all physical movement in time and space. In its incessant movement, Soul produces or generates an image of itself,²⁷⁴ which simultaneously with time patterns and orders the material universe. Time, therefore, is the activity of that part of the Soul which is not turned towards itself nor within itself, but lies in creation and generation.²⁷⁵ To the creative aspect of the cosmic Soul, Plotinus gives the name nature (*φύσις*) or logos.

Soul's movement in the production of the universe is, therefore, twofold. It at once contemplates Nous and perceives and is fulfilled by Nous, i.e., it is filled with all the Forms or Ideas found in Nous. It then proceeds in the opposite direction and generates an image of itself which penetrates the material universe, fashioning it and governing it.²⁷⁶ Just as Soul turns its gaze upon Nous and produces, the logos or image of the Soul contemplates the higher soul and receives from it an image of the World Forms or Ideas which the higher part of the Soul had received from Nous as a re-

sult of its contemplation of Nous. The images of the World Forms found in the logos, Plotinus calls logoi spermatikoi, a Stoic expression but not used in a strictly Stoic sense. To him the term logos or logos spermatikos denotes an active, formative intelligible reality which, at a lower level, is an image or representative of a superior principle.²⁷⁷ The Stoic and Plotinian logoi do, however, possess a common function; both act as creative and organizing principles of the sensible world. Thus, according to Plotinus, it is the logos in accordance with the logoi spermatikoi found within it that orders and patterns the cosmos. The creative activity of the logos is likened by Plotinus to the activity of the soul or mind of a craftsman which draws upon his craft for the plan of his work.²⁷⁸

It has been said that the Plotinian logos is a fourth and distinct hypostasis.²⁷⁹ This view is derived primarily from the treatises, *On Providence* (III. 2, 3), where Plotinus speaks of the logos as if it were a separate entity. This, however, is not the thought that Plotinus wishes to convey. It is merely his way of explaining and emphasizing in greater detail the function of the Soul's creative power. In his treatise, *Against the Gnostics* (II. 9), he clearly denies that there are more than three levels of reality, i.e., the One, Nous, and the World Soul.²⁸⁰ Thus, the logos of the cosmic Soul is not a fourth hypostasis but its formative and creative power which organizes and animates the material universe and maintains it in the best possible order.

The creation and administration of the universe is a spontaneous act of the logos involving no deliberation, planning or willing.²⁸¹ Just as Soul emanates spontaneously from Nous as a result of Nous' contemplation of the One, so the cosmos is formed and administered by Soul as a result of its contemplation of Nous. Although Soul is the creator and administrator of the world, it remains apart from it. The World Soul never descends into the world of sense and change, is never confined by it, but timelessly illuminates and informs it, and it remains unchanged and unmoved at once immanent and transcendent. Plotinus compares the creation of the cosmos by Soul to the building of a stately mansion, whose

architect never abandons it, but continuously beautifies it and gives it every possible care, yet is never tied down to it. The maintenance of the edifice never becomes a burden to its architect, who directs and presides over it from above.²⁸² Similarly, it is the cosmos that lies in Soul, not Soul in the cosmos; it is the cosmos that is mastered, not the master, is possessed, not the possessor.²⁸³

Arguing against the Gnostic belief that the creation of the material universe was due to the fall of the World Soul and hence it is evil, Plotinus maintains that the cosmic Soul never left the intelligible universe, never entered into the activities of the cosmos, but merely illuminates it from above.²⁸⁴ Elsewhere he states that the World Soul is incapable of sinning or committing an evil act.²⁸⁵ The creation and governance of the universe is, for the Soul, an effortless overpowering (*ὑπερέχουσα ἀπόνως*).²⁸⁶ Unlike that of the individual souls, its ministrance does not involve a reasoned successive discourse, but proceeds by a purely intellectual act—an instantaneous act of intellectual intuition that is exemplified in the artist's instantaneous conception of his project.²⁸⁷ Thus, the creation of the cosmos is not the result of the Soul's arrogance (*ἀλαζονείαν*) and audacity (*τόλμα*) as the Gnostics claimed, but is the fulfillment of a necessary function according to the laws of nature. The material universe is not evil, it is the image of the intelligible universe and, although being an image it is inferior to its archetype, it is the best of all possible images.²⁸⁸

Within the World Soul are found as logoi the individual souls of all existing beings.²⁸⁹ These logoi or souls exist within the Soul, each as a separate entity with a character of its own, and yet all are in their total one being.²⁹⁰ As a part of the universal Soul, the individual soul is incorporeal and eternal. In its pure state it is of equal rank with the World Soul and superior to everything material or corporeal.²⁹¹ It is subject to no change or to time, is without memory, self-consciousness or reflection, but it directly contemplates Nous. Being a logos, a creative principle, each individual soul at an appointed time in its existence declines (*νεύει*) towards the material universe for the purpose of illuminating—giving

life to that which does not live by prior right, i.e., to an object in the material universe.²⁹² At its appointed hour, each soul spontaneously, without choice or act of will, descends and enters or illuminates the body which best corresponds to its nature or disposition.²⁹³ This does not mean that the individual soul breaks completely from the World Soul, but rather that it extends or radiates downward from it. The procession of the souls into the material universe is likened, by Plotinus, to the sun's rays which extend from their source into the universe, radiating to various habitations of men, yet remaining one and indivisible.²⁹⁴ As parts of the undivided Soul, individual souls share a common feeling (*συμπάθεια*) with each other and with the Soul of the All. Thus, each soul's feelings and experiences are felt by the All and consequently by all the other souls.²⁹⁵

The individual souls first descend into the heavenly regions where they are clothed in an ethereal body.²⁹⁶ From there each proceeds to the body best suited to it. When a pure soul reaches the heavenly regions, it immediately turns back in contemplation to the intelligible universe. As a result, these souls enter the bodies of celestial star-gods. Like the World Soul which is never burdened by the body—the cosmos that it illuminates—the souls of the celestial star-gods are never concerned with the care of the bodies which they illuminate and administer. The celestial star-god bodies in no way hamper the spiritual life of the souls which they embody.²⁹⁷ For this reason, Plotinus regards their embodiment as a cosmological necessity carrying no trace of guilt. According to Plotinus, the majority of the souls, however, are not pure. They possess an audacity, an irrepressible desire to be independent of the universal Soul and live a life of their own—a voluntary inclination toward the material world. The descent of a soul into an earthly body is considered both as a fall and a necessity. It is a fall because the soul voluntarily, by an irrepressible internal force which Plotinus calls "tolma" (*τόλμα*), becomes separated from the perfection of the Whole and descends into a material body, which is devoid of all being and prone to evil. On the other hand, earthly embodiment is seen as a necessity; for it is a univer-

sal law in Plotinus' system that all things in the intelligible universe must also be represented in the world of sense.²⁹⁸ In addition, soul must become incarnate in order to realize its own implicit powers and thus insure the government, life and ordering of the universe. In fact, Plotinus claims that soul without its powers developed would not really exist.²⁹⁹ As Rich so well describes it, the embodiment of the soul is the "felix culpa" that is necessary to the divine economy.³⁰⁰ Therefore, the soul's incarnation is not really a sin; it is no more a sin than is the casting of a shadow.³⁰¹

There is a slight tension in Plotinus' thought regarding the descent of the soul. It appears that Plotinus is attempting to make the "tolma" or voluntary act of the soul, which implies moral weakness and freedom of choice, compatible with his conception of the universe as an ordered structure of living realities, where everything that happens is a logical necessity in accordance with the laws of nature.

When an individual soul declines toward the material universe, it produces an image or logos of itself, a lower self or ego. It is this lower self which enters the material body and gives it form; and it is this composite (*σύνθετον*) which produces the various sensations in men and animals and the growth in plants.³⁰² The higher self or phase of the soul never comes into contact with the body, but remains always in the world of intellect, free and undisturbed by the cares of the body and of the material universe. It is its logos or reflection that illuminates and animates the body.³⁰³ Against this background of conceptions, Plotinus can speak of each individual human being as an intelligible world,³⁰⁴ i.e., man's soul is produced and administered by universal Nous and is able to keep in contact with its source. This is a very important concept in Plotinus' thought and the basis of his theoretical mysticism. As previously mentioned, a similar view regarding the human soul is expressed by Numenius.³⁰⁵ It is safe to assume that Plotinus probably adopted the doctrine from him.

It is the responsibility of the individual soul, according to the laws of nature, to look towards the intelligible world and receive guidance and understanding. With the understanding

that it receives, the soul is responsible to order, administer and govern the body to which it has been attracted. As long as a soul follows the dictates of Nous, or of its higher phase, there is no real wrong involved nor is the soul in danger of suffering any permanent harm. Sometimes, however, a soul becomes over zealous in its concern for the body; it is then that the actual sin occurs. The soul selfishly and exclusively devotes itself to the interests of the body, descending farther into the body, i.e., farther than the law of nature requires. Its close association with the body hinders its intellectual act and fills it with pleasure, desire and pain, misfortunes which can never befall a soul that has never penetrated deeply into the body (*εἰς τὸ ἔισω ἔδν τοῦ σώματος*)—a soul that is not enslaved to the body but rules over it like a sovereign.³⁰⁶ If a soul remains in this state too long, i.e., intensely concerned with the care of the body, it eventually separates (*ἀναχωρεῖ*), becomes fragmented and is isolated (*μονοῦται*) from the whole. It is weakened and alone, concerned only with its own particular product. This self-isolation is, for Plotinus, the real fall of the soul, the "loss of its wings".³⁰⁷ From that time on, the soul is no longer its own master, but has become a slave to the body, a prisoner jailed in a bodily cave.³⁰⁸ To paraphrase Plotinus, the soul in this state is like the pilot of a ship who is so concerned with his vessel that he is weighed down and sinks with her.³⁰⁹

The soul's deep penetration into the body means, in Plotinian thought, that the middle or discursive phase of the individual soul has been drawn towards the lower phase. Although Plotinus speaks in terms of a higher and lower soul, a higher soul and a logos, he really believes that the individual human soul is tripartite, that it has three main parts or phases; a purely intellectual or intuitive part which is always directed to the contemplation of the intelligible realities, an irrational or vegetative part which is concerned with the body and the things of this world, and a discursive phase which is midway between these two.³¹⁰ The intuitive part never comes into contact with the world of sense; the irrational and discursive, which are parts of the logos, constitute what is usually regarded as "man". This does not mean

that the soul is divided into three separate parts. The soul is one nature, but it consists of various powers or levels, each of which is the whole.³¹¹

According to Plotinus, the middle part or level of the human soul is the most important, with regard to man's destiny. It is characteristic of the rational human being, man's reasoning faculty, the "we"—man's self. This part of the soul receives the activities of intellect from the upper soul or level, those of sensation and sense-perception from the lower phase and then selects the level on which it wishes to remain.³¹² It can join with the upper soul, with the lower soul, or remain a separate power and fluctuate between the two. The choice of the mid-soul also affects the lower soul. If it is attracted upward, the entire soul is raised to the intelligible world; but if it is drawn downward, it is isolated from the upper part and the world of Nous. The upper part, the purely intellectual, can never be drawn down to the lower level. It remains always in the intelligible universe of which it is a part.³¹³ Thus, it is not embodiment, as such, that is for Plotinus a sin and a degradation of the soul, but the soul's deep descent or penetration into an earthly or animal body, i.e., soul existing on its lowest level. It is the attitude of the soul, its choice in the type of life it wishes to live, that makes the difference.

When Plotinus speaks of a soul's descent into body, it should not be understood as a literal descent. There is no spatial movement of the soul from one place to another.³¹⁴ Plotinus claims that a soul never enters or unites with a body, but unspatially envelops and permeates it, always remaining a separate entity.³¹⁵ The relationship of the soul to the body is considered by Plotinus as an operative force to its instrument, a notion also found in the thought of Aristotle.³¹⁶ Using his most popular analogy of the presence of light in air, Plotinus states that the soul's relationship to body is similar to that of light which penetrates the air completely, but without ever becoming divided or fused with it.³¹⁷ Again, this example should not be considered as an exact explanation of what actually takes place between body and soul. Like all his other spatial descriptions of the soul's

entry into the body, it is a metaphorical illustration used by Plotinus to aid the mind in better understanding certain abstract facts.³¹⁸ If soul is indivisible, omnipresent to the body and not confined within its boundaries, why then do we speak of the soul as being in body? Plotinus claims that it is because the body is visible and the soul is not. If the soul were visible, we would speak of the body's being in the soul.³¹⁹ The question of how the soul associates with the body is of great interest and importance to Plotinus and one to which he gives considerable attention. An indication of his interest in the subject can be seen from Porphyry's statement in *Life*. In chapter 13, he states that Plotinus spent three days discussing with Porphyry the soul's connection with the body. At a point in the discussion, a certain Thaumasius joined the group. After listening to the questions and answers for a while, he commented that he would prefer to hear a general treatise on the subject by Plotinus rather than a series of questions and answers. Plotinus replied that without questions and answers, there would be no material for the type of treatise that Thaumasius desired. It appears that Plotinus did not consider any question or discussion concerning the soul's association with the body minor or unimportant, or not worthy of discussion. He apparently believed that only by the method of question and discussion—by consideration of every question posed, by exploring various possible answers to each question, and by careful pursual of each alternative to its conclusion—could a topic of any importance be properly treated.

²⁵⁷I. 7:1.

²⁵⁸τὸ ὑπερ πάντα ταῦτα εἶναι III. 8:9.

²⁵⁹V. 5:6.

²⁶⁰V. 1:6.

²⁶¹I. 7:1; V. 1:6, 3:12; VI. 8:18, 9:9.

²⁶²E. R. Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius," *Entretiens Hardt*, Tome V: *Les Sources de Plotin* (Vandoeuvres-Geneve, 1960), p. 23. In speaking of the Divinity, Numenius states that when it is communicated, and passes from one thing to another, it remains unalterably in its original state and loses nothing of what it gives (τὰ δὲ θεῖα ἔστιν οἷα μεταδοθέντα, ἐνθέν δε ἐκεῖθι γεγεννημένα, ἐνθέν δε οὐκ ἀπελήλυθε. Fr. 23).

²⁶³V. 7:1; VI. 7:12.

²⁶⁴II. 4:5

²⁶⁵ἀόριστος δύας V. 1:5.

²⁶⁶II. 4:5.

²⁶⁷ἄλλο ἀεὶ λαμβάνων ἐν αὐτῷ πληθυνόμενον V. 3:11.

²⁶⁸V. 9:8; VI. 5:6.

²⁶⁹*De Anima* III. 4, 429b-430a.

²⁷⁰V. 3:11.

²⁷¹II. 3:18; V. 9:3.

²⁷²III. 7:11.

²⁷³χρόνος . . . ψυχῆς ἐν κινήσει μεταβατικῇ ἐξ ἄλλου εἰς ἄλλου βίον ζῶν εἶναι *Ibid*.

²⁷⁴ψυχὴ . . . κινήθεισα ἐγέννα εἰδωλον . . . V. 2:1.

²⁷⁵χρόνος; . . . ψυχῆς τινος ἀεὶ οὐσῆς ἐνεργεια, οὐ πρὸς αὐτὴν οὐδ' ἐν αὐτῇ, ἀλλ' ἐν ποιήσει καὶ γενέσει III. 7:12.

²⁷⁶ψυχὴ . . . βλέπουσα δὲ πρὸς μὲν τὸ πρὸ ἐαντῆς νοεῖν . . . εἰς δὲ τὸ μετ' αὐτὴν κοσμᾷ τε καὶ διοικεῖ ἄρχαι αὐτοῦ . . . IV. 8:3; [ψυχῆ] . . . ἐκεῖ μὲν οὖν βλέπουσα ὅθεν ἐγένετο, πληραῦται, προελθοῦσα δὲ εἰς κίνησιν ἄλλην καὶ ἐναντίαν γεννᾷ εἰδωλον αὐτῆς αἰσθησιν καὶ φύσιν τὴν ἐν τοῖς φητοῖς. V. 2:1.

²⁷⁷A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus," *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), p. 252.

²⁷⁸ψυχὴν δ' αὖ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς τέτρασι τὴν κόσμον μορφῇ δοῦναι ταύτη δὲ νοῦν χορηγὸν τῶν λόγων γεγονέναι, ὡσπερ καὶ ταῖς τῶν τεχνιτῶν ψυχαῖς παρὰ τῶν τεχνῶν τοὺς εἰς τὸ ενεργεῖν λόγους V. 9:3.

²⁷⁹A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1940), p. 102.

²⁸⁰Οὐ τοίνυν δεῖ ἐφ' ἑτέρας ἀρχὰς ἰέναι, ἀλλὰ τοῦτο προστησαμένους, εἶτα νοῦν μετ' αὐτὸ καὶ τὸ νοοῦν πρώτως, εἶτα ψυχὴν μετὰ νοῦν—αὐτὴ γὰρ τάξιν κατὰ φύσιν—μήτε πλείω τούτων τίθεσθαι ἐν τῷ νοητῷ μήτε ἐλάττω. II. 9:1.

²⁸¹λόγος . . . ποιῆ ὄνκ επαυτῶ γνώμη ὄνδὲ βουλήν ἢ σκέψιν ἀναμείνασα . . . IV. 3:10.

²⁸²IV. 3:9.

²⁸³ὁ κόσμος . . . ἔχων ψυχὴν οὐχ αὐτοῦ ἀλλ' ἀπῶ, κρατούμενος, ὃν κρατῶν, καὶ ἐχόμενος ἀλλ ὄνκ ἔχων, κέεται γὰρ ἔν τῇ ψυχῇ ἀνεχούσῃ αὐτὸν καὶ ὄνδὲν ἀμοιρόν ἔστιν αὐτῆς IV. 3:9.

²⁸⁴II. 9:11.

²⁸⁵ψυχῇ τῇ δὲ λεγομένη τοῦ παντὸς εἶναι τὸ μηδ' ἔν τῶ χείρονι ἔργω γεγυέναι ἀπαθῆι δὲ κακῶν ὄνση θεωρία τε περινοεῖν τὰ ὑπ' αὐτὴν ἐξηρητῆσθαίτε τῶν πρὸ αὐτῆς αἰῆ IV. 8:7.

²⁸⁶IV. 8:8.

²⁸⁷Ibid.

²⁸⁸ὁ κόσμος . . . εἰκόνα ἐκείνου, ἣτις ἂν ἐγένετο ἄλλη καλλίων εἰκῶν ἐκείνου II. 9:4.

²⁸⁹ψυχῇ . . . λόγους ἔχει . . . ἔχει δὲ καὶ θεῶν καὶ πάντων IV. 3:10.

²⁹⁰ψυχῇ . . . μένετε ἐκάστη ἔν, καὶ ομοῦ ἔν πᾶσαι . . . IV. 3:5.

²⁹¹V. 1:2.

²⁹²IV. 8:2, 5; IV. 3:11.

²⁹³IV. 3:13.

²⁹⁴IV. 3:4.

²⁹⁵IV. 9:1.

²⁹⁶IV. 3:15.

²⁹⁷IV. 8:2, 5; IV. 3:11.

²⁹⁸IV. 8:1.

²⁹⁹ὄνκ ὄνσα, μηδέποτε ὄντως ὄνσαν IV. 8:5.

³⁰⁰A. N. M. Rich, "Body and Soul in the Philosophy of Plotinus," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, I. (1963), p. 3.

³⁰¹Ἄλλ' εἰ ἢ νεῦσις ἔλλαμψις πρὸς τὸ κάτω, οὐχ ἁμαρτία, ὡσπερ ὄνδ' ἢ σκιά, ἀλλ' αἰτιον τὸ ἔλλαμπόμενον I. 1:12; also IV. 8:5.

³⁰²V. 2:1.

³⁰³I. 1:2.

³⁰⁴ἔσμεν ἕκαστος κόσμος νοητός III. 4:3.

³⁰⁵Numenius believed that the individual soul is indistinguishably one with its source or grounds (ἀρχαί), and that it contains within itself the intelligible world, the gods, the Good and all prior kinds of being. T. 33, 34; cf. p. 27 above.

³⁰⁶IV. 8:2.

³⁰⁷IV. 8:4.

³⁰⁸Ibid.

³⁰⁹IV. 3:17.

³¹⁰II. 9:2.

³¹¹Ibid.

³¹²ἢ αὐτοὶ μὲν οἱ λογιζόμενοι καὶ νοοῦμεν τὰ ἔν τῇ διανοῖα νοήματα αὐτοὶ τοῦτο γὰρ ἡμεῖς τὰ δὲ τοῦ νοῦ ἐνεργήματα ἀνωθεν ὄντως, ὡς τὰ ἔκ τῆς αἰσθήσεως κάτωθεν, τοῦτο ὄντες τὸ κύριον τῆς ψυχῆς, μέσον δυνάμεως διττῆς, χείρονος καὶ βελτίονος, χείρονος μὲν τῆς αἰσθήσεως, βελτίονος δὲ τοῦ νοῦ V. 3:3.

³¹³II. 9:2.

³¹⁴VI. 4:16.

³¹⁵I. 1:18.

³¹⁶I. 1:3; IV. 3:21.

³¹⁷IV. 3:20, 22.

³¹⁸IV. 3:9.

³¹⁹εἰ δὲ γε ὄρατὸν ἢ ψυχῇ . . . οὐκ ἂν ἔφαμεν τὴν ψυχὴν ἔν τῶ σώματι εἶναι, ἀλλ' ἔν τῶ κυριωτέρῳ τὸ μὴ τοιοῦτον καὶ ἔν τῶ συνέχοντι τὸ συνεχόμενον καὶ ἔν τῶ μὴ ῥέοντι τὸ ῥέον IV. 3:20.

Chapter III

THE BODY-SOUL COMPLEX—MAN

The individual human soul, according to Plotinus, is amphibious (*ἀμφίβιος*), it lives its life in both spheres, the intelligible and the sensible. In its intuitive or intellectual phase it resides in the intelligible universe, completely transcendent and never coming into contact with the material universe. In its lowest phase, the irrational or vegetative, which is a mere shadow (*εἰδωλον*) of the intuitive phase, it lives in the world of sense.³²⁰ Using the mythical language of Homer's *Odyssey*,³²¹ Plotinus compares the amphibious existence of the soul to the myth of the demigod Hercules, whose shade or shadow lingers in Hades while he himself dwells among the gods in heaven.³²² It is the conjoint (*συναμφοτερον*) of the vegetative phase and the body, together with the discursive phase, which constitutes what is commonly known as the being "man". Adopting the Platonic definition, Plotinus defines man as a soul using a body.³²³ How does the soul associate with the body? Plotinus struggles with this problem throughout his work. Most of the discussion of the soul-body association is found in *Ennead IV*, in which Plotinus attempts to find an adequate explanation. The difficulty in answering this problem is that body and soul are both ultimately derived from the same source, the One, each representing a different level in the chain of realities, the soul a higher level than body; however, they are of a completely different nature. Body is corporeal and perishable, whereas soul is the life-giving and structuring force of the bodily constituents, and is therefore non-corporeal and remains always imperishable. Only a non-corporeal principle could perform the functions which belong to the soul.³²⁴ In his attempt to answer the problem of the soul-body, Plotinus strongly stresses the non-corporeality and immortality of the soul. He argues against the Stoic doctrine that the soul is a special type of body, a fiery material breath (*πνεῦμα*), which exists in a certain state (*πως ἔχον*).

He also argues against the Epicurean view that the soul is the product of a group of lifeless atoms or partless entities.³²⁵ Against these materialistic theories, Plotinus states that as the animating force and the agent which brings order and structure to the body, the soul must be completely and indivisibly present to each and every part of the body. This characteristic action can only be attributed to an immaterial entity. Furthermore, he claims that it is impossible for a bodily substance to possess the unity and self-identity necessary in the processes of sense-perception and mental activity. Intellectual knowledge occurs only when the soul's attention is disengaged from bodily conditions. Thus, the soul must be a non-corporeal being. A further consideration: since the object of intellectual knowledge is non-corporeal, the subject which apprehends must also be non-corporeal. Plotinus asks how an object of magnitude can know something that has no magnitude, such as abstract concepts.

According to Plotinus, because the soul is non-corporeal, it is immortal, or eternal, since his doctrine of the soul's immortality includes more than just the view that the soul survives the death of the body. In one of his most famous treatises, which he devotes to the question of the soul's immortality,³²⁶ Plotinus states that the soul, as an immaterial entity, is of a divine and eternal nature.³²⁷ He claims that this fact is quite apparent if one views the soul in its natural pristine state, completely separated from all sensible things. If one acknowledges the fact that the soul in its pure state can behold and contemplate the eternal realities, one cannot possibly doubt that the soul is divine and, therefore, immortal. Plotinus continues his arguments on the eternality of the soul by stating three well-known Platonic views, that the soul possesses life and being within itself and, therefore, cannot be destroyed, that the soul's knowledge of the eternal Forms through reminiscence indicates that it existed before the body and must be eternal, and that the soul as a single and simple active being in living is not susceptible to being destroyed.³²⁸ Furthermore, Plotinus claims that if the individual soul were dissoluble, the universe would have long ceased to exist.³²⁹

However, although Plotinus stresses the incorporeality of the soul and its separateness from the body, the soul maintains a continual relationship with the body. The idea of the soul's continuing relationship to body is not clearly defined in Plotinus. He appears to accept the view that the human soul, the part of the soul which comes into contact with the earthly body, although it must leave the body, can never exist without some bodily relationship.³³⁰ The body with which the soul is continually associated is of a celestial or ethereal nature, and it is clothed with this body when it first descends from the intelligible universe.³³¹ Plotinus refers to this celestial body as "pneuma",³³² and describes it as diaphanous and luminous.³³³ It contains within it the vegetative principle,³³⁴ and it is by means of the celestial body that the soul descends into a more earthly body.³³⁵ It appears that the celestial body or "pneuma" is the shadow (*εἶδωλον*) that joins with the body to form what Plotinus calls the "συναμφοτέρον"; and it is the "pneuma" which serves as the connecting link between the pure, incorporeal soul and the earthly body.

Although it is not clearly stated in Plotinus, it seems that the soul's "pneuma" survives the death of the earthly body and reascends with the soul to the heavenly regions. It remains there until the proper time when it enters a new earthly body, in accordance with the type of life it chose to live during its previous existence on earth.³³⁶ According to Plotinus, it is only the completely purified soul, one that has arrived at the level of Nous, that can discard the ethereal body in the heavenly regions and reascend to the world of intelligible reality.³³⁷ The concept of the celestial body or "pneuma" appears to be of little philosophical importance or interest to Plotinus. He employs it primarily as a means of explaining the pure soul's connection and association with the earthly body, an issue which was of major importance in his thought.³³⁸

In his treatise on the immortality of the soul, Plotinus critically examines two theories that attempt to explain the soul's association with the body; the theory of harmony (*ἁρμονία*) or "attunement", as Rich³³⁹ translates it, which is dis-

cussed in the *Phaedo* (85ff) and which Plotinus attributes to the Pythagoreans,³⁴⁰ and Aristotle's doctrine of the soul as the entelechy (*ἐντελέχεια*) of the body.³⁴¹ The attunement theory compares the soul to the harmony or accord that is produced on the strings of a lyre when the instrument is tuned. Alluding to the *Phaedo*, Plotinus states that the theory of attunement has already been proved untenable. Nonetheless, he continues to present six of his own arguments based, according to Rich's research, on Aristotle's *Eudemus* and the *De Anima*.³⁴² Plotinus' first argument is that the soul existed before the body, whereas according to the model of attunement, the body would have to exist before the soul, as the lyre is prior to its attunement. Secondly, soul rules, guides and often resists the body; as an attunement of body it could not do these things. It would depend on the structure of the body. Thirdly, soul is a real being, an attunement is not. His fourth argument is that a compounding of the material elements which constitute our frame would produce merely health not soul. Fifth, according to this theory there would be more than one soul in each individual, for each part of the body, blended in varying proportions, would require a separate soul. Sixth, and most important of all, the attunement theory requires that prior to the soul that "occurs" to the body when attunement takes place, there would have to be another soul to bring about this condition. Just as in the case of a musical instrument, a musician is required to tune the strings; neither musical strings nor human bodies are able to put themselves in tune. To summarize briefly, the attunement theory treats the animate and orderly as inanimate and disorderly. It concludes that order (*τάξις*) is not due to the soul, but that soul itself owes its substantial existence to order—which is self-produced. This is quite obviously impossible; thus, the soul cannot be connected to the body as an attunement to its instrument.

With regard to Aristotle's doctrine of entelechy, Plotinus claims that this too does not correctly describe the soul's association with the body. For example, as the advocates of this theory believe, the soul is connected to the body as the shape of a statue is connected to the bronze from which it is

worked. It follows that when the body is divided, the soul also, as its form (*εἶδος*), will be divided with it; so that if any part of the body is cut away, a fragment of the soul must also be severed. Also, since it is necessary that an entelechy be inseparable from the being which it fulfills or brings to realization, it is then impossible for the soul to withdraw from the body in sleep; in fact, sleep itself is not possible. Further, if the soul is an entelechy, the resistance of reason to the bodily desires would be completely ruled out. The total organism, body and entelechy soul, must have one uniform experience throughout, and there can be no conflict between them. Moreover, according to the theory of entelechy, only sense-perception would be possible, the act of intellection (*νόησις*), which does not involve the body in any way, would be impossible. It is for this reason, states Plotinus, that the followers of this doctrine, the Peripatetics, posit another soul, the intellect. This intellect they place above the entelechy soul and consider it immortal. It is this superior soul which performs the purely intellectual functions. Finally, the same soul passes from one living creature to another. Plotinus asks how the soul of the former can become the soul of the latter if it is the entelechy of one particular being. Thus, he claims, the soul is not an inseparable entelechy. Its existence does not depend upon its serving as a form to anything, but it is an individual essence that exists as a pure and simple entity before it becomes the soul of some particular living being.

Plotinus firmly believes that the soul, until liberated by contemplation and the practice of philosophy, is in some way connected to and interacts with the body. What is the manner of their connection and interaction? Plotinus attempts to explain it by comparing the relationship of soul and body to the pilot and his vessel.³⁴³ He finds, however, that this analogy is unsatisfactory; it only indicates that the soul is potentially separable from the body as the pilot is from his vessel. It does not clarify the soul's mode of presence. Soul is omnipresent to the body, penetrating it at every point. This is not the case with the pilot and his vessel. Plotinus then attempts to compare soul and body to the pilot and his skill at

the helm, with which he controls and directs the vessel. However, even this analogy is not adequate; the pilot's skill is external to the instrument through which he works, whereas the soul is immanent within its instrument—the body. Furthermore, this parallel does not explain the soul's actual mode of presence in the body.

The best clarification of the soul-body relationship, Plotinus decides, is by comparison with that of light and air.³⁴⁴ Light is present to air completely, yet is never mixed with it at any point. Air flows in and out of light, but light remains constant. When the air passes beyond the illuminated area, it in no way diminishes the light. It is air that is in light and not vice versa. In the same way, soul is not mixed with body nor divided by contact with it. It is soul that contains the body, not the body soul. Also, like light that can penetrate the air and yet remain unaffected by it, soul can totally penetrate the body and still not be subject to its affections.³⁴⁵ Thus, by comparing soul and body to light and air, Plotinus establishes the concept of the soul as indivisible, omnipresent, not confined within the limits of the body, and able to remain independent and unaffected by the conditions and experiences of the body.

However, Plotinus admits that there exists between soul and body a communion, a certain accidental sympathy.³⁴⁶ This communion exists only between the two lower phases of the soul and body, for the highest phase of soul remains always transcendent of body. Adopting a comparison from Aristotle,³⁴⁷ Plotinus states that the sympathy between soul and body may be compared to a form that is immanent and inseparable from its material, like the shape of the ax imposed on the iron. In this case, it is the compound of matter and form, the *συναμφοτέρον*, the iron shaped in the form of the ax, which performs the various functions. In other words, the effectiveness of the iron is due to the fact that it has been formed in the shape of an ax. Thus, if one applies this comparison to the relationship between soul and body, one would conclude that soul associates or combines with body. This association produces an entity of two distinct natures, not joined but in contact with each other, i.e., an animate

physical frame, body, warmed and lit throughout by soul. It is this composite of soul and body, the ζῶον or συναμφότερον, that is the source of the various sensations, desires and feelings; and it is in this respect that we can say that soul and body are in sympathy with each other.³⁴⁸ Soul in isolation is impassable and body by itself is devoid of all life.

Plotinus takes great care to explain the various ways in which soul and body come into contact and interact within the living organism. He is especially concerned with the faculties of sense-perception, which are closely connected with the discursive reasoning. According to him, the various parts of the animated body participate in the soul's powers in a manner peculiar to themselves. Each bodily sense organ is fitted for a certain function, through which a particular power of the soul operates: the power of sight in the eyes, or hearing in the ears, of taste in the tongue, of smell in the nostrils. The power of feeling has no specific organ; the entire body is its instrument.³⁴⁹ This does not mean that the soul, in its contact with the body, becomes divided into separate parts. The soul, in its relationship to the body, is "all in all and all in every part."³⁵⁰ Thus, the soul can be described both as divisible and indivisible. It is in a sense divisible because it is present in every single part of the divisible body, but it is indivisible because it is present in its entirety in the whole body and in each of its parts.³⁵¹ All of the soul's faculties are inseparably connected by its discursive phase. Each sense organ interprets the material it receives in its own fashion. The data are then transmitted to the discursive reason, where they are judged and classified.³⁵² Therefore, it is through the faculties of sense-perception that the discursive phase of the soul comes into contact with the body. Since the faculties of sense-perception originate in the brain, the ancients, observes Plotinus, thought that the discursive phase of the soul is lodged in the head locally. Although Plotinus agrees that the brain is the center for the various organs that are in communion with reason, he does not believe that the discursive phase of the soul is actually located anywhere in the body.³⁵³

Pain and pleasure are also affections of the body-soul com-

plex, and are the direct result of the soul's association with the body. He claims that soul and body are two entities of a completely different level and nature. When these two contrasting natures attempt to associate together, a precarious and unstable alliance is formed, which gives rise to difficulties.³⁵⁴ Whenever the body is deprived of the soul's image which it possesses—when the body-soul balance is disturbed, causing a decrease in the body's energy or vitality—pain is produced at the precise point that is affected. Inversely, pleasure is felt when soul and body have once again been restored to a balanced working relationship. The painful experience begins in the body, but it is perceived by the reasoning faculty which localizes the pain. The soul never experiences the pain directly, is never affected by it, but perceives and is aware of it, because of its proximity to the body. Plotinus believes that this can be shown to be true by the fact that soul is present as a whole in every part of the body. If it were itself affected by the sensation, it would be unable to localize the pain, but would feel it in every point throughout the entire body. Perception of pain, which is what the soul experiences, is not the same as the actual sensation, but only a kind of knowledge of the suffering. Therefore, the discursive phase of the soul that acquires this knowledge is unaffected by it, or it could not accurately know or convey the message; just as a messenger, who is affected and overwhelmed by an event, is either unable to report his message or unable to report it precisely.³⁵⁵

As with bodily pain and pleasure, the corporeal desires belong to the living organism, the body animated by soul. According to Plotinus, neither an undetermined body nor a pure soul is able to be the subject of desire. Desire begins in the body as a vague, unconscious need. This need is then transferred to the vegetative phase of the soul, where it is realized as a fully conscious desire. An image of this desire is then transmitted by means of sensation to the reasoning faculty. On the basis of this image, the reasoning phase, without paying any attention either to the body or to the lower phase of the soul which manifested the desire, determines whether the desire should be satisfied or resisted.³⁵⁶

The extent to which an individual shares in the conflicts and affections of the body is determined by the level on which the individual has selected to live. Man's soul, as previously mentioned, is tripartite; one part directed to the contemplation of the intelligible world, one concerned with body and one intermediate.³⁵⁷ What Plotinus means by this statement is that there are three levels on which a man may choose to live. His choice determines his mode of living and his rank in the scale of being. An individual who elects to live on the level of *Nous* is beyond the reach of the bodily passions and feelings. This does not mean that his body cannot suffer or feel emotion, but that he is spiritually detached from the cares and conflicts of the body and the material universe. Life on this level can be attained through the pursuit and mastery of the cardinal virtues—courage (*ἀνδρεία*), wisdom (*φρόνησις*), self-control (*σωφροσύνη*) and justice (*δικαιοσύνη*)—the most important of which is wisdom. By living consistently on this level, man can eventually attain union with the One.³⁵⁸ The individual who lives in accordance with his reasoning faculty, and who therefore lives the life of a good and intelligent man, is aware of the various experiences and affections of the body and attempts to keep them in balance. Such a person is aware of the virtues that lead to *Nous* and finally to the One, but has not been able to master them.³⁵⁹ Lastly, man who lives purely by his senses, devoting himself selfishly to the care of the body, becomes a prisoner of them. He is burdened by the body's needs and continually troubled by its turmoil and sufferings. On this level of existence, man is separated from *Nous* and the intelligible world; he has morally turned from *Nous* to an inferior level of existence. As has already been noted, separation from the world of *Nous* is, for Plotinus, the gravest sin of man—the basis of all evil and unhappiness. It is expiated by the soul's being punished by chastising spirits (*δαίμονες*) and being reincarnated in animal or plant form, whichever is best suited to its nature.³⁶⁰

Plotinus' views of the nature and destiny of the soul reflect, to a certain degree, Orphic-Neopythagorean teachings about the soul. According to these teachings, the soul is

eternal and divine—each soul is a spark of the divine essence that irradiates the universe. The soul descends and is imprisoned in an earthly body, as punishment for an error that it committed while in its divine state. For thousands of years, the soul is doomed to periods of punishment in Hades. It alternates with incarnations in a variety of human, animal or plant bodies, depending on its moral conduct during its earthly existence. The soul, however, while in the earthly body, is capable of freeing itself from "the grievous cycle of births and deaths" and returning to its divine state. It can accomplish this through discipline and purification (*καθαρμοί*). This consists of the pursuit of virtue, abstinence from animal flesh and wine, celibacy, taking no oaths and not participating in any animal offerings. Orphism also included a system of sacraments (*ὄργια*), in which participation was essential if the soul were to regain its divine state. The Neopythagoreans, on the other hand, were inclined to minimize participation in popular worship and considered the pursuit of philosophy and the spiritual contemplation of the Divine as better means of reaching the god-like state. Thus, man, according to these teachings, is free to determine his own fate. He can, by purifying his soul, attain divinity, or he can sink to the lowest level in the scale of existence by living purely by his senses and not reflecting.³⁶¹

Plotinus attempts to deal seriously with the Orphic-Neopythagorean concept that man is the free and responsible cause of his fate. He rejects the Stoic belief in "*ἔμπαρμένη*", the idea that a single principle constitutes all causes and effects, because it deprives human behavior of freedom and individuality. He maintains that it is necessary to suppose that individuals always retain their identity, and that a person's good and evil deeds stem from himself and no one's evil conduct may be attributed to the All.³⁶² For this reason, it cannot be said that the course of the stars is responsible for such essentially human acts of will, emotions, vices and desires. The stars, the weather, the world, all have an effect on us, but the individual personality cannot be destroyed.³⁶³

However, the concept of the soul as a completely independent agent capable of choosing between good and evil is im-

plied but never completely developed by Plotinus. Therefore, the idea of the soul's freedom remains vague and inconsistent. According to Plotinus, while the soul is concerned with the body and the material universe, it is not in absolute control of itself or free. It is subject to the forces that control the body and the universe. Its actions, both good and evil, are subject to the desires and passions of the body, to the fate determined by its conduct during previous incarnations and to the necessary and uncontrollable forces (*τύχαι*) that direct the visible universe.³⁶⁴ A man performs a brave deed because it is an exigency of war; justice and order are established because a wrong exists. A doctor would not be able to demonstrate his skill if there were no patients. However, if he were truly a good doctor, he would prefer that there be no one in need of his help.³⁶⁵ This does not mean that man's virtuous acts are completely determined, automatically produced, without any human reasoning. Man has some choice whether or not to perform an act of virtue. The soldier does not automatically perform a brave deed, neither does an individual correct an injustice nor a doctor heal without conscious thought.

Since these virtuous acts are responses to external causes and events, Plotinus does not regard them as truly autonomous and entirely free. Free actions are rational actions. They originate and are governed by pure reason, and are not motivated or directed by any external causes.³⁶⁶ Plotinus expresses the same view in his examination of the individual's evil acts. Adhering to the Socratic-Platonic tenet, he states that evil is committed involuntarily. No individual commits an error knowingly or voluntarily; nevertheless, the individual is held responsible for it.³⁶⁷ What Plotinus means is that man selects the things that lead to sin, but he does so through ignorance. His lower nature is in control and he acts in accordance with it, instead of reason. As Rist³⁶⁸ points out, man has permitted his lower nature to delude him into thinking that the evil ways that he has chosen will bring him happiness. The concept of freedom expressed by Plotinus is an elaboration and culmination of the views found in Middle Platonism. In the views of the second century Platonists, primarily those of Numenius,³⁶⁹ Albinus³⁷⁰ and Pseudo-

Plutarch,³⁷¹ who presents a view similar to Albinus', are found the rudiments of Plotinus' concept.³⁷²

Plotinus believes that every man possesses a spark of the divine, the intuitive phase of the soul. This enables him, if he wishes, to escape his fate, his evil acts and the necessities of nature, by returning to his higher and true self.³⁷³ This can be accomplished by stripping himself of all earthly trappings (*ἀφελε πάντα*),³⁷⁴ and living in accordance with his reason.³⁷⁵ On this level, man is unaffected by any external forces operating in the physical world, but is in complete control of himself and free.³⁷⁶ His actions are governed by pure and impassible reason, and pure reason always chooses virtue.³⁷⁷ An individual who is concerned with the things of the material universe is also subject to the forces and events existing in the cosmos. His actions are not completely his own, but are controlled to a great extent by the existing external causes. The nearest an individual can attain complete freedom of choice is when he exists in the world of Nous. This freedom, however, consists not in having the power to choose between good and evil, but in being able to choose only virtue,³⁷⁸ in being free from the necessity of choice which the sense world imposes.

Man's goal, therefore, should be to return to his higher self and the world of Nous. In this way, he can free himself from "the cycle of births and deaths". The individual soul that has failed to purify itself from the body becomes, after the death of the body, the faculty that it developed the most in its previous life on earth,³⁷⁹ i.e., the life that the middle part of the soul chose to live. The intuitive phase of the soul always remains in the world of Nous and is not affected by incarnations.

Plotinus' doctrine of reincarnation is set forth, principally, in the second and fourth treatises of *Ennead* III. It is basically a restatement of Plato's theory. Adopting Plato's humorous tone and vocabulary, Plotinus states that the souls that have lived purely by the senses are born again as animals. If they not only lived by the senses but also possessed a volatile temperament, they become wild beasts; while those that were greedy and over-indulgent become lascivious ani-

mals. The dull and unreflective souls are condemned to live the life of a plant. Individuals, who in their earthly existence had been too concerned with music but otherwise lived a good life, become singing birds. Tyrant kings, who had no other vice, become eagles; while the boastful, idle dreamers turn into birds that always soar on high. A man who lived according to his reason and practiced the cardinal virtues, returns again as a man. If however, he had not been very successful in his pursuit of these virtues, he is reborn as a community creature, a bee or something similar.³⁸⁰ Elsewhere, Plotinus states that some unpurified souls are chastised in Hades by their demons, while other souls return as human beings in order to receive their retribution in kind. For example, cruel masters become slaves; men who had squandered their wealth become paupers; and a murderer returns to be murdered.³⁸¹ There appears to be an inconsistency between this statement and the preceding statements on reincarnation. The inconsistency, however, does not originate with Plotinus, but with Plato³⁸² whose views Plotinus has adopted. A soul, whose purification has not been completed, ascends to the heavenly regions and remains there, becoming the soul of a star or other heavenly being.³⁸³ The soul that has completely emancipated itself from the body ascends and dwells in the spiritual world, in the place of true being and reality and the divine. Such a soul will dwell with the divine and in God.³⁸⁴

There is a difference of opinion among scholars, regarding the significance of the doctrine of reincarnation in the thought of Plotinus. Armstrong³⁸⁵ and Rich³⁸⁶ believe that, although Plotinus adopts Plato's lighthearted manner when discussing the reincarnation of souls, he certainly understands the statements in a literal and serious sense. Inge³⁸⁷ and Pistorius,³⁸⁸ on the other hand, deny that Plotinus accepts or is really interested in the doctrine. They contend that he refers to it in the *Enneads*, either because it was a popular belief or because it is mentioned by Plato. In her article, Rich conclusively demonstrates that their denials are unjustified. The most important references to the doctrine found in the *Enneads*, which clearly indicate the significance

that Plotinus attached to the doctrine of reincarnation, are IV. 7:13, 19; VI. 7:6 and VI. 4:16.³⁸⁹ In IV. 7:13, where Plotinus is critically examining Aristotle's theory of entelechy, he employs the doctrine of reincarnation to refute the theory. He asks how an entelechy soul can pass into another body. He concludes that a soul, in order to transmigrate into another body, must be a simple, independent entity. Plotinus does not only believe in the reincarnation of the soul into a human body, but also in its transmigration into the body of an animal. This can be demonstrated by his remarks in VI. 7:6 and IV. 7:19. In VI. 7:6, Plotinus goes to great lengths to explain how it is possible for a human soul to transmigrate into the body of an animal. This can happen when an individual soul has deliberately chosen an animal nature, i.e., has developed only its animal faculties. In IV. 7:19, Plotinus makes a special point of remarking that even the souls that have erred to such a degree that they have entered the bodies of animals are still immortal. Both of these statements would be superfluous, unless Plotinus understood transmigration in a literal sense. Finally, in VI. 4:16, Plotinus himself testifies to his belief in this doctrine. He says that the ancient philosophical theory of the soul's periodic descents and returns, its punishments and banishments into animal bodies, is in agreement with his own that the soul basically is not capable of evil.

These statements clearly indicate that Plotinus accepted the doctrine of transmigration. His reason for accepting it seems to be that it provides proof for the individuality and immortality of the soul, and a continuing opportunity for the soul to purify itself, to rid itself of all earthly trappings, and thus rise to a higher state, which is Plotinus' principal aim and concern throughout his philosophy.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER III

- 320IV. 8:4.
 32111:601-2.
 322I. 1:12; IV. 3:27.
 323ψυχῆ . . . χρωμένη σώματι I. 1:3.
 324IV. 7:3.
 325Plotinus' arguments of the non-corporeality of the soul are found in IV. 7:2-8.
 326IV. 7.
 327τῇ θεωτέρᾳ φύσει συγγενῆς ἢ ψυχῆ καὶ τῇ αἰδίῳ. IV. 7:15.
 328IV. 7:11-12, 17.
 329IV. 7:12.
 330καίτοι τινές φασὶ τόδε μὲν [σώμα] καταλείψειν [τὴν ἡμετέραν ψυχὴν], ὃν πάντῃ δὲ ἔξω σώματος ἔσεσθαι IV. 3:4.
 331IV. 3:15. The belief in the celestial or ethereal body enveloping the soul was popular among the Platonists of the time. A summary of the origin and development of the theory is found in E. R. Dodds's edition of *Proclus, The Elements of Theology* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963), Appendix II.
 332παρ' ἡμῖν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν II. 2:2.
 333διαφανές καὶ ἑλλαμπόμενον IV. 4:26.
 334IV. 4:26.
 335IV. 3:9, 15.
 336IV. 3:9, 10; III. 6:5.
 337IV. 3:24; III. 6:5.
 338Life, chapter 13; IV. 3:9.
 339A. N. M. Rich, "Body and Soul in the Philosophy of Plotinus," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, I. (1963), 4.
 340IV. 7:12.
 341IV. 7:13.
 342Rich, "Body and Soul," p. 4.
 343IV. 3:21.
 344IV. 3:22.
 345I. 1:4.
 346διὸ καὶ τὸ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς οὕτω λέγειν συμπαραθεῖν τῷ σώματι καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ὄγκ' ἀτοποῦ ἴσως VI. 4:3.
 347De Anima II. 1. 412b. 12.
 348I. 1:4; VI. 4:14-15.
 349IV. 3:23.
 350[ψυχῆ] ὅλη ἐν πᾶσι καὶ ἐν ὁσούν αὐτοῦ [σώμα] ὅλη IV. 2:1.
 351Ibid.
 352IV. 3:3.
 353IV. 3:23.
 354IV. 4:18.
 355IV. 4:19.

- 356IV. 4:20, 21.
 357II. 9:2.
 358I. 2:3-7; IV. 8:2.
 359I. 2:7; II. 1:5; IV. 8:8; V. 3:3.
 360IV. 3:17, 6:3, 8:4-5; VI. 4:16.
 361E. Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, trans. L. R. Palmer, Meridian Books (New York: Noonday Press, 1955) pp. 25-35; 300-305.
 362III. 1:4.
 363III. 1:5, 6.
 364III. 1:8, 2:13; IV. 8:2, 3.
 365VI. 8:2, 5.
 366III. 1:9; VI. 8:4, 7.
 367III. 2:7, 10; IV. 8:5.
 368J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), p. 135.
 369Fr. 20; T. 30, 45. See above, p. 39ff.
 370Did. 26:35. See above, p. 45ff.
 371Moralia 568D-570B.
 372A brief summary of the Middle-Platonic views of freedom is presented in B. Darrel Jackson, "Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom," *Church History*, 35 (1966), pp. 17-18.
 373I. 8:7.
 374V. 3:17.
 375V. 3:17; I. 1:12, 6:7.
 376ἀνευ μὲν οὖν σώματος οὐσα κυριωτάτῃ τε αὐτῆς καὶ ἐλευθέρα καὶ κοσμικῆς αἰτίας ἔξω III. 1:8.
 377III. 1:9, 10; VI. 8:3, 4.
 378Ibid.
 379ἔξελθοῦσα δὲ, ὅ τι περ ἐπλεόνασε, τοῦτο γίνεται. III. 4:2; also III. 4:6.
 380III. 4:2.
 381III. 2:13, 4:6; IV. 8:5.
 382Phaedrus 249a-b; Laws X. 904a-905b.
 383III. 4:6.
 384IV. 3:24.
 385A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus," *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), p. 256.
 386A. N. M. Rich, "Reincarnation in Plotinus," *Mnemosyne* s. 4, 10 (1957), p. 232-238.
 387W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, Vol. II (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 33.
 388P. V. Pistorius, *Plotinus and Neoplatonism* (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1952), p. 99.
 389Rich, "Reincarnation." Miss Rich points out other passages that

might be interpreted as indicating Plotinus' interest in reincarnation, and she also presents several convincing arguments against the opinion of Inge and Pistorius. I have attempted to summarize from Miss Rich's article only those statements that I considered the most significant.

Chapter IV

THE SOUL'S RETURN TO THE ONE

According to Plotinus, man is an alien in the world of sense. His true home is his place of origin, the intelligible universe, and he should make every effort to return to it.³⁹⁰ The journey back (*πορεία*), however, is strenuous and the goal difficult to attain; it is a long process of purification involving great intellectual and moral training. In the philosophy of Plotinus, there are no short cuts or external aids to help man in his journey to the One. The sacraments and public worship, so popular in most religions as aids to concentration and ascent to the Divine, hold no major significance for him. This does not mean that Plotinus is entirely critical of popular worship. He accepts the idea that the universe contains beings, both visible and invisible, who are of a higher order than man; and strongly condemns those who deny their divinity and refuse them the reverence they are due.³⁹¹ His primary reason for being indifferent to the popular method of attaining the mystical union is that, according to his views of man's nature, they are superfluous and serve no purpose. Plotinus believes that man possesses within himself the power—the divine spark—to reach the highest realm; and he can do so by putting forth the necessary effort.³⁹² Therefore, his system has no need for any providential saving grace of the sort which aids a man's soul, through the mediation of prayers, rites or sacraments.

As previously indicated, Plotinus believes that man's higher soul, his intuitive or rational phase, never comes into contact with the sensible world. Emanating from *Nous*, it remains in the intelligible world, in constant and direct contemplation of the intelligible realities.³⁹³ It never enters into nor becomes concerned with the world of sense. Thus, the rational or intuitive phase of the soul remains eternally constant, pure and impassible, untouched and unaffected by the sins, passions and suffering, which are a part of the world of sense.³⁹⁴ In continuous and immediate communion with the

One, the soul receives from the One, through its spontaneous and undiminished outpouring of its power or energy, the continuous illumination, the power and the movement or desire to return to its source.³⁹⁵ According to Plotinus, the soul's love for the supreme One, and its desire to return to its source, is given to the soul by the One, who lifts the soul and turns it towards the Good.³⁹⁶ As Armstrong³⁹⁷ points out, the remark that best expresses this aspect of Plotinus' thought is the statement that the soul loves the supreme Good, because from its very beginnings it has been moved or stirred by the Good to love.³⁹⁸ Therefore, man possesses all that is required for his salvation. His pure rational soul continually and uninterruptedly receives from the Good the illumination or power required for its redemption. Man needs only to recognize or realize this power within him and to willingly and conscientiously utilize it to pursue the necessary moral and intellectual discipline involved in reaching the highest realm. According to Plotinus, if man wishes to attain salvation and if he is prepared to make the necessary effort, he can, without any additional or special divine grace, attain the vision of the One. The power to return to the One is always and continually present to each and every man; man has only to utilize this power. This view of man's nature, and his means of attaining salvation, is one of the principal differences between the thought of Plotinus and that of other religious writers, either pagan or Christian.³⁹⁹

Because of the divine element within them, all men are capable of reaching the highest level. However, few men are aware of this power, and still fewer are willing to undergo the very vigorous intellectual and moral discipline necessary to bring the divine element to perfection.⁴⁰⁰ Of the individuals who attempt to reach the intelligible universe, there are three types who, because of their training and self-discipline, are most likely to rise to the level of Nous. The types of individuals are the philosopher (*φιλόσοφος*), the musician or music-lover (*μουσικός*), and the lover (*έρωτικός*), which, in the Plotinian sense, implies an individual who enjoys and appreciates beauty as it is exemplified in forms and shapes.⁴⁰¹ Attempting once again to fit the various phases of

the soul into his structure of metaphysics, Plotinus states that according to the scheme of things, not all souls can exist on the level of Nous, and certainly not at the same time. The universe, in order to be complete, must include many different kinds of souls of varying degrees of goodness and evil.⁴⁰² To further explain his point, Plotinus compares the universe to a drama; which includes among its characters not only heroes, but also characters such as a servant and a peasant who speak in a vulgar way. To eliminate these minor characters from the play would spoil the beauty of the whole, for they help to make the play complete.⁴⁰³

The first step in the ascent back to the world of Intellect is the love and appreciation of the beauty existing in every aspect of the visible universe. The appreciation of the beauty in the sensible world awakens in the soul a passionate desire or eros for the true beauty, the beauty of the supersensible world, and for the ultimate beauty which is the One.⁴⁰⁴ Under the influence of eros, or the desire for the One, the soul undertakes a series of purifying processes which prepare for the final union. The first step is the practice and mastery of the cardinal virtues—wisdom, courage, self-control and justice. Mastery of the virtues results in man's stripping himself of everything alien, his lower nature and all external impurities, and returning to his true and higher self.⁴⁰⁵ When man has accomplished this successfully, he has entered the realm of the World Soul. On this level man no longer exercises his lower faculties. Sense-perception and faculties such as opinion (*δόξα*), memory and remembrance (*μνήμη - ανάμνησις*), and reason (*διάνοια*) are no longer necessary. It is only pure intellect, the intuitive phase of the soul, that functions on this level. This does not mean that man's lower powers or nature cease to exist, but that they are dormant; the individual is not aware of them on this level. Man, in his ordinary daily existence, is so preoccupied with the body and the things of sense that he is unaware of the intuitive phase of his soul, which remains always in the intelligible realm. In the same way, when an individual is living on the intuitive level of the soul, he is unconscious of his lower faculties.⁴⁰⁶

After the soul has reached the level of the World Soul, it must prepare itself for the level of the world of Nous. It does so by training itself to learn and understand the intelligible truths. This is accomplished first through the study of mathematics (*μαθηματά*) and then through training in dialectic (*διαλεκτική*). Dialectic is, for Plotinus, the last stage in the ascent before the final union.⁴⁰⁷ It is the way by which man's mind attains the intuitive, contemplative knowledge of the divine realities, but it is not the end of the journey. It raises an individual to the level of Nous, but not beyond. On this level there is still the distinction between the contemplator and the contemplated. To attain the highest level, union with the One, the soul must rise above thought, to a state of unconsciousness, a state of ecstasy characterized by the absence of all duality.⁴⁰⁸ However, this last stage can be reached neither by science nor by pure thought, but by a sudden presence which is superior to all of these.⁴⁰⁹ The One cannot be pursued. The individual, when he reaches the level of Nous, must wait quietly and patiently for the vision to appear and prepare himself to contemplate it, as the eye awaits the rising of the sun, which appears in its own good time above the horizon.⁴¹⁰ It must be noted that the term "appears", with reference to the One, should not be interpreted literally. The One does not come to the individual during the mystical union. It is always present in everyone, but during the mystical union it makes its presence felt. The "appearance" of this vision represents the attainment of ultimate purification; it is the final awakening and realization of the soul to its true self.

Ascent to the One is then, for Plotinus, not the mortification of the flesh and severe self-denial, but a moral process, a discipline of the mind achieved through the pursuance of a simple life. It is a life in which the needs of the body and the concerns of the sense world do not interfere greatly with an individual's mental activities. It is true that Plotinus was somewhat sensitive about himself and never discussed his personal life.⁴¹¹ However, he never adopts a hostile attitude towards the body, nor advocates that man should detach himself from society and his fellow men. What Plotinus em-

phasizes is not complete detachment from the world, but that the activities of the lower self should not distract the individual from his contemplation of the true realities. Regarding the body, he states that man should provide for the needs of the body, and should treat it with care and respect, in the same way that a musician cares for his lyre.⁴¹² However, man's care and concern for the body should be conducted in a disciplined and detached manner. According to Porphyry,⁴¹³ Plotinus was able to live successfully on the level of Nous, while still involved in the world of sense. He was a teacher, but he also served as a guardian for several children who were placed in his care after the death of their parents. Although he conscientiously fulfilled his social duties and responsibilities, he never permitted them to interfere with his contemplation of the intelligibles. It is reported by Porphyry that during his waking hours, he never for a moment relaxed from his contemplation; and that during the period that Porphyry was associated with him, Plotinus attained union with the One four times.⁴¹⁴

When the individual soul reaches the level of Nous, it becomes possessed with a more intense passion, a "straining" desire to become united with the One; in a union which, for purposes of clarification, Plotinus compares with the union of earthly lovers.⁴¹⁵ To fulfill this desire, the soul casts away everything, all it has possessed and known, all its attributes and even the Forms and the World of Nous. The soul remains, in its pure and unadulterated form, alone and passive, for only in this way will it be able to receive the Alone—the One.⁴¹⁶ Suddenly and unexpectedly, the vision of the One appears to the purified soul.⁴¹⁷ The mystical experience is difficult to describe. Plotinus, who on several occasions experienced such communion,⁴¹⁸ claims that the experience cannot be described adequately, either in terms of vision or in any terms of any action that is known or perceived. During this experience there is no longer the distinction between subject and object, for the two have become one.⁴¹⁹ The best that can be done is to attempt to explain the mystical union by means of inadequate metaphors. In attaining union with the One, the individual reaches a state in which

he is no longer himself; Seer and Seen are one. He is swept away, filled with enthusiasm, tranquil, solitary and unmoved—in a state of perfect rest—free from everything alien. Plotinus compares such an individual to a man who, having penetrated the innermost sanctuaries, leaves the images of the shrine behind him.⁴²⁰ In this state, the individual is completely fulfilled, all of his potentialities have been fully realized and he is totally at peace with himself. He has turned inward, his pleasures and happiness now come from within, and the things of sense have been relegated to the position of mere accessories. Finally, man has found himself.

Union with the One is not, as has sometimes been thought, the absorption or annihilation of the individual personality, but rather its completion or fulfillment. The individual does not become identical with the One.⁴²¹ As in the instance of earthly lovers, the individual surrenders to the One, he becomes one with it, not identical to it. Another analogy of the soul's union with the One is the relationship of universal Nous with the One. Universal Nous exists always in perfect union with the One, yet it never loses its identity. It remains eternally a separate entity, a unity in multiplicity, fulfilled and realized by the One.⁴²²

As long as the soul is in the earthly body, union with the One can only be rare and of very brief duration; for the body always interferes with the soul's total contemplation of the One.⁴²³ Permanent union is achieved at death when the soul is completely free from the body. However, although death is to be welcomed by the man who has reached the level of Nous for he can then attain complete and permanent union with the One, it should not be sought before its time. Interpreting Plato's statement in the *Theaetetus*,⁴²⁴ Plotinus states that flight does not mean leaving the life on earth, but remaining on earth and living in accordance with wisdom and justice.⁴²⁵ While in the body, man is not able to retain the vision of the One, but he can return to it by continuously preparing himself for it, by consistently living a virtuous and contemplative life. "This is the life of gods and the god-like and blessed men, a deliverance from the things of the sense world, a life which takes no pleasure in earthly things, a flight of the alone to the Alone."⁴²⁶

³⁹⁰I. 6:8.

³⁹¹II. 1:5, 9:9; V. 8:9.

³⁹²VI. 9:4, 8.

³⁹³II. 9:2.

³⁹⁴IV. 8:8; V. 1:10; VI. 4:14.

³⁹⁵V. 6:5; VI. 7:22, 31, 35.

³⁹⁶VI. 7:22, 31.

³⁹⁷A. H. Armstrong, "Salvation, Plotinian and Christian," *Downside Review*, 75 (1957), p. 128.

³⁹⁸ψυχῆ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰς τὸ ἐρᾶν κινήσεια VI. 7:31.

³⁹⁹The Christian view of man and his means of salvation, as presented by Plotinus' contemporary Origen, is discussed in Chapter VII. A detailed discussion of the Plotinian and Christian doctrines of grace and salvation are presented in J. Trouillard's, *La Purification Plotinienne* and *La Procession Plotinienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955).

⁴⁰⁰I. 6:8; IV. 3:6; V. 1:1.

⁴⁰¹I. 3:1-3.

⁴⁰²IV. 8:3, 3:6; III. 2:5.

⁴⁰³III. 2:11.

⁴⁰⁴I. 6:2; VI. 7:31.

⁴⁰⁵I. 2:1-4, 6:6; III. 6:5.

⁴⁰⁶I. 6:8; IV. 3:12-13; V. 1:10, 8:11.

⁴⁰⁷I. 3:1-4.

⁴⁰⁸I. 3:1; VI. 7:34-35, 9:4.

⁴⁰⁹VI. 9:4.

⁴¹⁰V. 5:8.

⁴¹¹Life, 1.

⁴¹²I. 4:16; II. 9:18.

⁴¹³Life, 8-9, 13-14.

⁴¹⁴Life, 9, 23.

⁴¹⁵VI. 7:34, 9:9.

⁴¹⁶V. 3:17; VI. 7:34.

⁴¹⁷V. 5:8.

⁴¹⁸IV. 8:1; Life, 23.

⁴¹⁹VI. 9:9-11, 7:34-35; V. 3:14.

⁴²⁰VI. 9:11, 7:35.

⁴²¹For a detailed examination of the important passages in the *Enneads* which describe the mystical union and substantiate this statement cf. J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), p. 226ff.

⁴²²VI. 7:35; V. 3:7.

⁴²³VI. 9:10.

⁴²⁴176-7.

⁴²⁵I. 8:6.

⁴²⁶VI. 9:11; also, as has been noted in Chapter I, the fundamental elements of this passage are found in Numenius' fragment 11, but without any mystical connotation.

PART III

ORIGEN'S DOCTRINE OF THE SOUL