

*Porphyry's  
Launching-Points to  
the Realm of Mind*

AN INTRODUCTION TO  
THE NEOPLATONIC PHILOSOPHY  
OF PLOTINUS

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK BY  
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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
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## INTRODUCTION

PORPHYRY OF TYRE<sup>1</sup> stands not only as the most notable disciple and successor of the great spiritual philosopher Plotinus, but also as a philosopher of many talents in his own right. After studying in the Levant and in Athens under Longinus, whom Plotinus considered "a scholar but not a philosopher," Porphyry became a pupil of Plotinus at Rome. This association was to prove extremely fruitful not only to the then thirty-year-old Phoenician, who subsequently published the numerous works to be seen listed in the appendix, but also to all later ages since it is thanks to him that we possess the *Enneads*.

### The Plotinian Levels of Reality

Prior to discussing the *Launching-Points to the Realm of Mind* it is useful to familiarize oneself, as far as is possible in limited space, with the key concepts of Plotinus concerning the levels of reality, since it is with reference to these that Porphyry wrote. The first principle and the source of all else is called the One. This name predicates nothing of its nature, but merely serves through the negation of all else in relation to it to identify the One as the most simple and self-sufficient concept which the human mind can reach. As Plotinus says:

if the One—name and reality expressed—was to be taken positively it would be less clear than if we did not give it a name at all: for perhaps this name was given it in order that the seeker, beginning from this which is completely indicative of simplicity, may finally negate this as well, because, though it was given as well as possible by the giver, not even this is worthy to manifest that nature.<sup>2</sup>

The concept “the One” is attained by pushing the One beyond all that exists or can be conceived to exist since, as primal source, it must be ontologically prior to that which comes from it—namely all Being.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore said to be *beyond Being* in accordance with the Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Good* of Book VI of Plato’s *Republic*<sup>4</sup> and the *One which is not* of the *Parmenides*.<sup>5</sup> But even this negation of all must itself ultimately be negated since “the One” is still a concept of a sort—of that which is beyond all things.

Since it transcends Being altogether, “the One” naturally approximates that which is prior to thought and language, and thus cannot be fully grasped by them. The One can only be experienced in an ineffable mystical glimpse which may occur once one has reached the very summit of Being as one’s true or noetic self. This “vision” is only achievable for a brief “time,” and when one has entered again into the realm of thought and language one is clearly unable to express the absolute truth about that which transcends expression even to

oneself, let alone to others. Thus, when a person who has “seen” the One, such as apparently Plotinus had,<sup>6</sup> attempts to provoke others to this glimpse, he will approximate the truth as closely as is possible, so as to point others along the road, but will make it clear that he can only utilize approximation. According to this idea it is evident that no religion or philosophy can legitimately claim to possess the absolute truth about God, because to state that God reveals or even that God exists is already a mental assumption about the nature of the Source. Perhaps this is why Porphyry could find no single universal way to liberate the soul,<sup>7</sup> and why the Emperor Julian says “for all of us, without having been taught, have attained a belief in some sort of divinity, though it is not easy for all men to know the precise truth about it, nor is it possible for those who do to tell it to all men.”<sup>8</sup>

The first level of reality derived from the One is the realm of Mind, the realm of true Being, called the *Nous* in Greek. It is here that the highest level of the human self lies. This sphere is Plato’s world of archetypes. For Plotinus the archetypal universe is not only composed of the pure form of a horse or man but also of the forms of individuals.<sup>9</sup> Each individual mind or *nous*, as well as the entire *Nous*, is a union of mental subject and object which thinks and therefore is itself. Thinking and being are one,<sup>10</sup> and it is here that one can first speak of Being because it is here that the distinctness necessary for anything to exist as itself, and therefore exist, is present.

The world of the archetypes is a living reality which eternally approximates the Source, from which it de-

rives, as a determinate, differentiated image of that which is completely beyond determination. The realm of Mind makes manifest as Being that which is transcendent of being. It "is" and "is something" (namely everything) whereas the One cannot be said to be anything at all since this would limit it. It is thus not consubstantial but "different in kind" from the One. This does not imply, however, the same kind of separation between the creator and the created as portrayed in the Judæo-Christian tradition, because the One transforms itself into the realm of the Mind without being subsumed in the process. It is precisely because the One is beyond the distinctness of Being that it does not lose its own "essence" in the transformation. The gulf between the Source and what comes from it is bridgeable by the mystical glimpse of those who have negated differentiation.

These ideas form part of the intellectual basis for the "pagan" conviction that there is One Source of all but also a multiplicity of gods making it manifest. The divine "exists" only insofar as it is differentiated.<sup>11</sup> Existence, as it is revealed to our senses and to our minds, is by its nature multiple and diverse. Even if one were to argue, as many "monotheists" do, that the One "is," but exists in a different way than its subsequents, one must ultimately be constrained to admit that this "is" really has no relevance when attempting to think or speak of the One, since it is only postulated on the basis of analogy with the "created," an analogy which certainly cannot hold if the "Creator" is truly different "in kind." It is far better to

allow our minds to receive any being, physical or spiritual, in the distinctness which the inherently defined and limited nature of Being—as both a concept and an experience—allow us, than to impart to the Source of Being something of our own being and nature.

There is distinctness but also unity. The Nous is a perfect unity-in-multiplicity in which each nous

has everything in itself and sees all things in every other, so that all are everywhere and each and every one is all and the glory unbounded; for each of them is great, because even the small is great; the sun there is all the stars, and each star is the sun and all the others. A different kind of being stands out in each, but in each all are manifest.<sup>12</sup>

The Nous is one God and many gods, as Plotinus says:

and may he come bringing his universe with him, with all the gods within him, he who is one and all, and each god is all the gods coming together into one.<sup>13</sup>

This description is not unlike that which Christians give their triune Godhead in which each person is the entire Divinity as well as individually himself.

The world of ideal forms combines the ancient Pythagorean notions of a pair of first principles: the principle of unity, limit, definiteness (the Monad), and the principle of unlimited indefiniteness (the Dyad). In the thought of Plotinus, as in that of the first century

Neopythagorean Moderatus,<sup>14</sup> the Monad is conceived of as the form of the realm of the Mind and the Dyad as the “matter” of that universe. The latter is the “indefinite sight” which proceeds timelessly from the Source, and the former is the form which it accrues upon its return toward the One.<sup>15</sup> These two processes are really eternally intertwined—not simply occurring always, but without any temporal or spatial separation since the noetic realm is not physical nor limited by the traits of the physical world.

From the Nous comes forth the third level of reality. This is the physical or sensible universe which is a moving, changing image of the realm of Mind, and is governed by the Soul which pervades all things giving form and life. The physical universe is composed of bodies formed by the imposition of form by the Soul onto matter which is conceived as a void, and souls which animate the bodies.<sup>16</sup> This universe, as one can readily perceive, is subject to spatial and temporal separation.

One should not despise the sensible world but appreciate it for the beauty that it possesses as the best possible image of the noetic realm within the constraints of space and time. It manifests Being as Becoming much as the Nous reveals the One as that which timelessly “is.” Using the perception of what is here, the Neoplatonist is able to “recollect” the archetypes and move from the transitory level of Becoming to the eternal one of Being. The individual soul is seen as consisting of a higher soul which remains focused on the life of the realm of Mind and a lower soul which associates with the body and

tends to its needs. The philosopher is able to seek full realization of himself through “awakening” to the presence of his higher soul and concentrating his energy toward the archetypal universe rather than expending it in excess attention to the body.

One may well wonder why the universe of Being and Becoming come forth from the One. It clearly cannot be said to be due to any necessity since the One should not be subject to such limitation, but at the same time one must be very careful not to speak of “free will” in relation to the One as if this concept of the human mind has any real relevance when speaking of that which is beyond all. Plotinus is quite explicit in pointing out that when he speaks of the will of the One<sup>17</sup> he is utilizing terminology which is “strictly not applicable.” This is one of the sections of the *Enneads* in which one can really feel how conscious Plotinus is of the total inadequacy of conceptualization in speaking of that which cannot really have anything said or thought about it. Accordingly, one must try to avoid confusing anthropomorphisms about creation which are unfortunately so prevalent in Judaeo-Christian thinking about a “personal” God. Perhaps it is better to simply say that the One gives forth eternally all that can be because, far from being subject to necessity, it needs nothing for itself in its surpassing perfection. An unimaginable multitude of power and divinity can pour “out” from the Source but not alter its awesome power in any way. Maybe this approximation is more suitable to those seeking their source than providing God with a host of “not applicable” human concepts such as plan-

ning, decision, or free will.

### ***The Launching-Points to the Realm of Mind***

In *Launching-Points* Porphyry sets forth a series of ideas of Plotinus relevant for those seeking to set out along the Neoplatonic path to the realization of one's true essence in the realm of Mind. *Launching-Points* seeks to elucidate the basics of the road to fulfillment of Plotinus' last words, a good summary of his entire philosophy: "try to bring the god in yourself back to the divine in the All."<sup>18</sup> The importance of this work as well as other works of Porphyry for the transmission of the thought of Plotinus to the Middle Ages is difficult to overestimate. *Launching-Points* may very well be the source of the discussion of the virtues in Macrobius' eighth chapter of the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* which has been cited as the origin of the Plotinian classification in the Medieval West.<sup>19</sup>

*Launching-Points* is primarily concerned with two essentials in the quest for the archetypical self. The first is an understanding of incorporeality and the second is a discussion of the different types of virtue and how virtue can bring one to the level of Nous. Metaphysical understanding and the practice of virtue are linked in Neoplatonism as in other ancient philosophical systems because philosophy in the Graeco-Roman world was not simply a way of thought but a way of life as well.

Porphyry distinguishes between the incorporeality of real beings such as the archetypical self and that of unreal entities such as matter. Porphyry, because of the

purpose of his tract, does not deal in depth with the nature of the latter. Instead, he concentrates upon the incorporeality of Real Being. That nature is invisible, placeless (hence omnipresent), and extensionless. Naturally it is not to be put in space or time which serve only to separate physical entities. Time, for Plotinus, is the movement of the Soul over matter,<sup>20</sup> and space is the separation of bodies.<sup>21</sup>

Since the incorporeal is not subject to spatial or temporal separation its relation to the corporeal is one of immediate presence. Our higher self does not reside within us as if some internal organ or hover somewhere about the galaxy, but is present to each of us with an intimacy far closer than any corporeal thing can have. One must therefore not look afar for one's self but awake to the existence and nature of an incorporeal entity. *Launching-Points* is well aware of the difficulty in conceiving of such a nature since our everyday experience, and the language with which we express it, are laden with corporeality and thus can lead to many misconceptions.

In our society such misconceptions are even more prevalent. Platonism has been much maligned because the idea of an incorporeal, archetypical realm has been seen as merely the projection in our minds of sense-objects, and thus less real than those objects. The materialist-positivist assumption that there are no such incorporeals and that the sense world is the summit of reality, however, has serious faults. The first is that mathematical consistency can be explained by the as-

sumption that mental objects have an objective existence, while it cannot be demonstrated through purely formalist theories, as incompleteness theories have shown. This has led certain logicians and mathematicians, such as Kurt Gödel,<sup>22</sup> to view mathematical entities as having an existence independent of the mind of the theorist. We do not create but discover them. A second difficulty is the obviously transitory nature of the moving, evolving physical universe in which all is born and perishes. This flux, down to the very shifts of minute particles such as molecules, atoms, and subatoms, make the supposed reality of the sense world quite fleeting. How can it be lauded as the only reality when its very essence is never quite the same? It cannot truly be said to "be" but only to "become," and if the reality of something is defined by its essence, what are we to say of that which never really is something but is always becoming something else? If one accepts the idea that the universe, including ourselves, is completely in a state of flux, one has to wonder how we can experience the stable essence of an object enough to be able to define and delineate it from others, or how we can even postulate the eternal. Either not all here is in flux, which would contradict our basic assumption, or we must partake of something transcendent but present to the flux in order to experience or conceive of unchanging essence at all. Sense perception is not mistaken in recognizing the presence of some substantial essence in an object, but in attributing this to the physical object itself and not to the archetype behind it. These points, if cer-

tainly not sufficient by themselves to demonstrate the validity of the Platonic theory of Forms, do at least show that there are serious flaws in the common assumption about what is truly real and that ideas like those of "idealists" should not be so swiftly dismissed.

The other facet of the seeking of the self in the *Launching-Points* is the practice of virtue. Porphyry, following closely Plotinus' tract *On Virtues*, divides virtue into four types—the practical or civil, the purificatory or cathartic, the contemplative, and the exemplary or paradigmatic. Porphyry treats each type as leading to the next in an interrelated movement toward the realm of Mind. This "ascent" allows one to achieve an understanding of one's divine nature, and in Porphyry's words to become "the parent of divinities," since in awakening to one's life in the archetypical realm one becomes "conscious" of being the source of the physical world and its divinities. The goal is to bring the divine in oneself into recognition of participation in the eternal universe of Real Being. This end is also expressed by Porphyry in the *Letter to Marcella*.<sup>23</sup>

Porphyry, like Plotinus,<sup>24</sup> is particularly concerned with the cathartic virtues as crucial for attaining the higher ones. They form a bridge between simply being a good citizen and living the life of the Mind. These virtues do not merely moderate the passions but detach us from them so that we can contemplate "no longer having to think of the need of freeing oneself from the passions."<sup>25</sup> It is a question of the redirection of our attention away from a concentration upon fulfilling our



bodily desires and toward the higher realities to which the soul belongs. The way to accomplish this is to discipline preoccupation with sexual desire<sup>26</sup> and unnecessary eating and drinking.<sup>27</sup> This sentiment is also echoed in Porphyry's advocacy of abstinence for his married life in the *Letter to Marcella*<sup>28</sup> and in his plea for vegetarianism in the tract *On Abstinence from Animal Food*.<sup>29</sup>

Philosophical purification would thus seem to involve detachment from precisely those things which tie us to the flux of the physical universe. For, indeed, the chief mechanisms of this flux are birth and death. They are the transition points in the ongoing cycle of change and decay. Since we cannot avoid being born here or dying, the best way to move from Becoming into Being is through the avoidance of participation in killing and the processes of birth.<sup>30</sup> It is not the action itself which makes us impure but the link which it forges to the body and to the changes of this universe. If we are to be like the gods, incorporeal and eternal beings, our soul must fulfill its commitment to the body in only the most basic and necessary ways and must imitate the life of eternity as far as possible. This is how the other major focus of *Launching-Points*, the understanding of incorporeality, is interwoven with the exercise of virtue. Just as we attempt to purify our actions through the conquest of bodily desires, so we must purify our thoughts of the corporeality which colors our everyday conceptualization.

Moral excellence and the noetic life may seem rather

self oriented and one may well wonder whether it can make us better in relation to our dealings with our fellow man. To answer this, without attempting a full discussion of Plotinian or Porphyrian ethics, one need only look away for a moment from the more narrowly focused attentions of *Launching-Points* and *On Virtues* to other writings of Plotinus and his pupil. For example, elsewhere for Plotinus perfection is always productive,<sup>31</sup> and for Porphyry similarity to the divine makes us entirely innoxious toward all living things.<sup>32</sup> The life of the Nous is the "true life of Kronos, a god who is both fullness and Intellect."<sup>33</sup> Such a life is full with power and self-sufficient perfection but also at the same time gives forth the physical universe through the "birth" of Zeus. Thus, concomitant with breaking the bond which superfluous needs and desires, often selfish, make to the body, is the freedom which allows for us to be outwardly giving in a way far surpassing ordinary altruism. By realizing our life on the level of the mind, we can achieve a state of goodness which is perpetually productive and generous. Just as the principles There, free of all needs save their dependence upon the Source, give forth and maintain the life of this universe, so the man living There will, in addition, be good to his fellow beings Here as long as he continues to live both noetically and in this world.

—MICHAEL HORNUM

## Notes

1) See the introduction to the Phanes edition of the *Letter to Marcella* for a fuller account of the life of Porphyry.

2) *Enn.*, V.5.6: 28-34. The quotations in English are taken from Armstrong's translation, Loeb Classical Library, 1966.

3) While it is evident from Plotinus that there is a single continuous "life" flowing from the One and making it manifest on a variety of levels, it is doubtful whether one is correct in understanding, as Dombrowski does in his essay "Asceticism as Athletic Training in Plotinus," the distinction between One, Nous, and Soul to be merely a logical abstraction and the Godhead to be a triunity. The idea that the One is not an independent "prior" reality but "exists" only because of its causing the many is based upon the idea that a cause cannot be conceived of without its effect. The One, however, is only the cause insofar as it eternally defines itself as the "One Source" in the outflow of the many from it, thereby making itself conceptually accessible. It is apparent that the One is defined as "One" or "Good" or "Source" only in relation to the conceptualization which its outflow allows, but not because of its own nature. We must not mistake the reality of the One for the concept which we are using to reach towards it. This is why Plotinus makes it clear that we should not take the "One" positively. To do so will ultimately leave us with a defined mental image, a definition which is in fact already among the subsequents, and interpretation of the One through the perspective of the outflow, not an experience of the One itself. It is because the One is not the "One" that it is really prior to the many.

4) *Republic*, 509.

5) *Parmenides*, 137-142.

6) Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 23.

7) Augustine, *City of God*, 10.32.

8) Julian, *Against the Galileans*, 52B.

9) *Enn.* V.7.

10) *Enn.* V.9.8.

11) The ancient Egyptians had some similar ideas about the diversity of divine existence. For more detailed information on

## NOTES

this see: Hornung, E. *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt*. Translated by John Baines. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1982.

12) *Enn.* V.8.4: 6-11.

13) *Enn.* V.8.9: 14-17.

14) Dillon, J.M., *The Middle Platonists*, 348-49. Moderatus is also said to have set a "First One" above the "Second One" consisting of Monad and Dyad. This book contains a good discussion of other Neopythagoreans as well.

15) *Enn.* V.1.5; II.4.5.

16) *Enn.* I.1; I.8; II.4; IV.3.

17) *Enn.* VI.8.12-21.

18) Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 2.

19) See W.H. Stahl's introduction to Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1952, 46.

20) *Enn.* III.7.13.

21) *Enn.* VI.4.8.

22) Rucker, R., *Infinity and the Mind*, New York, Bantam Books, 1983, 44, 177, 181, 301. This work contains a discussion and bibliography of Gödel's writings and further information on mathematical "Platonism" and the consistency of set theory.

23) Paragraph 17.

24) *Enn.* I.2.3-5.

25) *Launching-Points* 4:2.

26) *Launching-Points* 4.

27) *Launching-Points* 4.

28) Paragraph 28.

29) Book II.50.

30) It is interesting to note the transformation in the philosophical purification advocated by Porphyry of ideas already long present in ancient Greek religion. The impurity of birth and death in Greek religion is seen by such things as the lack of desire of the immortal gods to touch corpses (Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 1437-39; *Alcestis*, 22), and the Athenian sanctions against dying or giving birth on the holy isle of Delos (Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 104; a similar rule is mentioned at Asklepios' sanctuary at Epidaurus, see Pausanias' *Guide to Greece*, 2.27.1). The difference is of course not the mere

activity which is taboo but the links that it forms between our soul and the body.

31) *Enn.* V.1.7: 27-38.

32) Porphyry, *On Abstinence*, III.26-27.

33) *Enn.* V.1.4:10-11. The Nous is often identified by Plotinus with the mythological Kronos, the wise god and ruler of the "Golden Age," as in the great tract divided by Porphyry into *Enn.* II.9, III.8, IV.5, V.8. Within this interpretation of the Hesiodic generations of gods, the One is identified with Ouranos, the Soul with Zeus. An interesting effect of the identification of the Nous with Kronos is that the "Golden Age," with its few needs, proximity of the divine to man, and its harmony of man and animals, is not merely a long ago good time, but an ever present life which can be lived by those who realize their existence in the realm of Mind.

### For further reading

Dillon, J.M. *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1977.

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ΠΟΡΦΥΡΙΟΣ:  
ΠΡΟΣ ΤΑ ΝΟΗΤΑ ΑΦΟΡΙΣΜΟΙ

## CONCORDANCE

Guthrie's translation places Porphyry's text following the order of the *Enneads* which are summarized. The table below shows how the Launching-Points correspond with *Porphyrius Sententiae ad Intelligibilia*, edited by E. Lamberz, Leipzig, 1975, the latest edition of the Greek text.

| GUTHRIE | LAMBERZ | GUTHRIE | LAMBERZ |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1       | 32      | 23      | 29      |
| 2       | 8       | 24      | 16      |
| 3       | 9       | 25      | 15      |
| 4       | 26      | 26      | 11      |
| 5       | 19      | 27      | 24      |
| 6       | 17      | 28      | 14      |
| 7       | 23      | 29      | 13      |
| 8       | 18      | 30      | 30      |
| 9       | 7       | 31      | 41      |
| 10      | 20      | 32      | 44      |
| 11      | 21      | 33      | 43      |
| 12      | 10      | 34      | 22      |
| 13      | 12      | 35      | 42      |
| 14      | 25      | 36      | 33      |
| 15      | 1       | 37      | 34      |
| 16      | 2       | 38      | 35      |
| 17      | 3       | 39      | 37      |
| 18      | 4       | 40      | 38      |
| 19      | 5       | 41      | 39      |
| 20      | 6       | 42      | 36      |
| 21      | 27      | 43      | 31      |
| 22      | 28      | 44      | 40      |

## LAUNCHING-POINTS TO THE REALM OF MIND<sup>1</sup>

### First Ennead, Book Two: On Virtues

I.—There is a difference between the virtues of the citizen, those of the man who attempts to rise to contemplation, and who on this account, is said to possess a contemplative mind; those of him who contemplates intelligence; and finally those of pure Intelligence, which is completely separated from the soul.

1. The civil virtues consist of moderation in passions, and in letting one's actions follow the rational laws of duty. The object of these virtues being to make us benevolent in our dealings with our fellow-human beings, they are called civil virtues because they mutually unite citizens. "Prudence refers to the rational part of our soul; courage, to that part of the soul subject to anger; temperance consists in the agreement and harmony of appetite and reason; finally justice, consists in the accomplishment, by all these faculties, of the function proper to each of them, either to command, or to obey."<sup>2</sup>

2. The virtues of the man who tries to rise to contemplation consist in detaching oneself from things here

below; that is why they are called "purifications." They command us to abstain from activities which innervate the organs, and which excite the affections that relate to the body. The object of these virtues is to raise the soul to genuine existence. While the civil virtues are the ornament of mortal life, and prepare the soul for the purificatory virtues, the latter direct the man whom they adorn to abstain from activities in which the body predominates. Thus, in the purificatory virtues, "prudence consists in not forming opinions in harmony with the body, but in acting by oneself, which is the work of pure thought. Temperance consists in not sharing the passions of the body; courage, in not fearing separation therefrom, as if death drove man into emptiness and annihilation; while justice exacts that reason and intelligence command and be obeyed."<sup>3</sup> The civil virtues moderate the passions; their object is to teach us to live in conformity with the laws of human nature. The contemplative virtues obliterate the passions from the soul; their object is to assimilate man to the divinity.

There is a difference between purifying oneself, and being pure. Consequently, the purificatory virtues may, like purification itself, be considered in two lights; they purify the soul, and they adorn the purified soul, because the object of purification is purity. But "since purification and purity consist in being separated from every foreign entity, the good is something different from the soul that purifies itself. If the soul that purifies herself had possessed the good before losing her purity, it would be sufficient for the soul to purify herself; but in

this very case, what would remain to her after the purification would be the good; she can only participate therein, and have its form; otherwise the soul would not have fallen into evil. For the soul, good consists in being united to her author, and her evil is to unite with lower things."<sup>4</sup>

Of evil, there are two kinds: the one is to unite with lower things; the other is to abandon oneself to the passions. The civil virtues owe their name as virtues and their value to their releasing the soul from one of these two kinds of evil [that is, of the passions]. The purificatory virtues are superior to the former, in that they free the soul from her characteristic form of evil [that is, union with lower things]. "Therefore, when the soul is pure, she must be united to her author; her virtue, after her 'conversion,' consists in her knowledge and science of veritable existence; not that the soul lacks this knowledge, but because without her superior principle—without intelligence—she does not see what she possesses."<sup>5</sup>

3. There is a third kind of virtues, which are superior to the civil and purificatory virtues, the "virtues of the soul that contemplates intelligence." "Here prudence and wisdom consists in contemplating the beings or essences contained by intelligence; justice consists in the soul's fulfilling of her characteristic function—that is, in attaching herself to intelligence and in directing her activity there. Temperance is the intimate conversion of the soul towards Intelligence, while courage is the impassibility by which the soul becomes assimilated to

what she contemplates, since the soul's nature is to be impassible. These virtues are as intimately concatenated as the other [lower forms]."<sup>6</sup>

4. There is a fourth kind of virtues, the "exemplary virtues," which reside within intelligence. Their superiority to the virtues of the soul is the same as that of the type to the image, for intelligence contains simultaneously all the "beings" or essences which are the types of lower things. "Within intelligence, prudence is the science; wisdom is the thought, temperance is the conversion towards oneself; justice is the accomplishment of one's characteristic function; courage is the identity of intelligence, its perseverance in purity, concentrated within itself, in virtue of its superiority."<sup>7</sup>

We thus have four kinds of virtues: 1, the exemplary virtues, characteristic of intelligence, and of the being or nature to which they belong; 2, the virtues of the soul turned towards intelligence, and filled with her contemplation; 3, the virtues of the soul that purifies herself, or which has purified herself from the brutal passions characteristic of the body; 4, the virtues that adorn the man by restraining within narrow limits the action of the irrational part, and by moderating the passions. "He who possesses the virtues of the superior order necessarily [potentially] possesses the inferior virtues. But the converse does not occur."<sup>8</sup> He who possesses the superior virtues will not prefer to practice the lower virtues because of the mere possession thereof; he will practice them only when circumstances will invite it. The objects, indeed, differ with the kind of virtues. The object

of the civil virtues is to moderate our passions so as to conform our conduct to the laws of human nature. That of the purificatory virtues is to detach the soul completely from the passions. That of the contemplative virtues is to apply the soul to intellectual operations, even to the extent of no longer having to think of the need of freeing oneself from the passions. Last, that of the exemplary virtues is similar to that of the other virtues. Thus the practical virtues make man virtuous; the purificatory virtues make man divine, or make of the good man a protecting deity; the contemplative virtues deify; while the exemplary virtues make a man the parent of divinities. We should specially apply ourselves to purificatory virtues believing that we can acquire them even in this life, and that possession of them leads to superior virtues. We must push purification as far as possible, as it consists in separating [the soul] from the body, and in freeing oneself from any passional movement of the irrational part. But how can one purify the soul? To what limit may purification be pushed? These are two questions that demand examination.

To begin with, the foundation of purification is to know oneself, to realize that he is a soul bound to a foreign being, of a different nature.

Further, when one is convinced of this truth, one should gather oneself together within himself, detaching himself from the body, and freeing himself entirely from the passions. He who makes use of his senses too often, though it be done without devotion or pleasure, is, nevertheless, distracted by the care of the body, and is

chained thereto by sensation. The pains and the pleasures produced by sense-objects exercise a great influence on the soul, and inspire the soul with an inclination for the body. It is important to remove such a disposition from the soul. "To achieve this purpose, the soul will allow the body only necessary pleasures, that serve to cure her of her sufferings, to refresh her from her exhaustions, to hinder her from being annoying. The soul will free herself from pains; if this be beyond her powers, the soul will support them patiently, and will diminish them, while refusing to share them. The soul will appease anger so far as possible; she will even try to suppress it entirely; at least, if that be impossible, she will not voluntarily participate therein, leaving the non-reflective excitement to another [animal] nature, reducing the involuntary motions as far as possible. The soul will be inaccessible to fear—having nothing further to risk; even so, she will restrain every sudden movement; she will pay attention to fear only insofar as it may be nature's warning at the approach of danger. Absolutely nothing shameful will be desired; in eating and drinking, she will seek only the satisfaction of a need, while remaining essentially alien thereto. The pleasures of love will not even involuntarily be tasted, at least, she will not allow herself to be drawn beyond the flights of fancy that occur in dreams. In the purified man, the intellectual part of the soul will be pure of all these passions. She will even desire that the part that experiences the irrational passions of the body should take notice of them without being agitated thereby, and without yielding to them. In this way, if the

irrational part should itself happen to experience emotions, the latter will be promptly calmed by the presence of reason. Struggles will have been left behind before any headway will have been made to purification. The presence of reason will suffice; the inferior principle, indeed, will respect the higher one to the extent of being angry with itself, and reproaching itself for weakness, in case it feels any agitation that disturbs its master's rest."<sup>9</sup> So long as the soul experiences even moderate passions, the soul's progress towards impassibility remains in need of improvement. The soul is impassible only when she has entirely ceased to participate in the passions of the body. Indeed, that which permitted the passions to rule was that reason relaxed the reins as a result of her own inclination.

First Ennead, Book Nine:  
On Going Out of the Body

2. Nature releases what nature has bound. The soul releases what the soul has bound. Nature binds the body to the soul, but it is the soul herself that has bound herself to the body. It, therefore, belongs to nature to detach the body from the soul, while it is the soul herself that detaches herself from the body.

3. There is a double death. One, known by all men, consists in the separation of the body with the soul; the other, characteristic of philosophers, results in the separation of the soul from the body. The latter is consequence of the former.



Second Ennead, Book Four  
**On Matter**

ON THE CONCEPTION OF MATTER (10)

4. While separating ourselves from existence we by thought beget nonentity [matter]. While remaining united with existence, we also conceive of nonentity [the One]. Consequently, when we separate ourselves from existence, we do not conceive of the nonentity which is above existence [the One], but we beget by thought something that is deceptive, and we put ourselves in the condition [of indetermination] in which one is when outside of oneself. Just as each one can really, and by himself, raise himself to the non-existence which is above existence [the One]; so [by separating oneself from existence by thought], we may reach the nonentity beneath existence.

Third Ennead, Book Six:  
**On the Impassibility of Incorporeal Things**

ON THE INCORPOREAL (3)

5. The name "incorporeal" does not designate one and the same genus, as does the word "body." Incorporeal entities derive their name from the fact that they are conceived of by abstraction from the body. Consequently, some of them [like intelligence and discursive reason] are genuine beings, existing as well without as within the body, subsisting by themselves, by themselves

being actualizations and lives, other beings [such as matter, sense-form without matter, place, time, and so forth], do not constitute real beings, but are united to the body, and depend therefrom, live through others, possess only a relative life, and exist only through certain actualizations. Indeed, when we apply to them the name of incorporeal entities [it is merely a negative designation], indicating only what they are not, but not what they are.

ON THE IMPASSIBILITY OF THE SOUL

6. (1) The soul is a being or essence, without extension, immaterial and incorruptible; her nature consists in a life which is life in itself.

7. (3, end) When the existence of some being is life itself, and when the passions are lives, its death consists in a life of a certain nature, and not in entire privation of life; for the "passion" experienced by this being or essence, does not force it into complete loss of life.

8. (2,3) There is a difference between the affections of the bodies, and those of incorporeal things. The affection of bodies consists in change. On the contrary, the affections and experiences characteristic of the soul are actualizations that have nothing in common with the cooling or heating up of the bodies. Consequently if, for bodies, an affection ever implies a change, we may say that all incorporeal [beings] are impassible. Indeed, immaterial and incorporeal beings are always identical in their actualization; but those that impinge on matter and bodies, though in themselves impassible, allow the

subjects in which they reside to be affected. "So when an animal feels, the soul resembles a harmony separated from its instrument, which itself causes the vibration of the strings that have been tuned to unison herewith, while the body resembles a harmony inseparable from the strings. The reason why the soul moves the living being is that the latter is animated. We therefore find an analogy between the soul and the musician who causes his instrument to produce sounds because he himself contains a harmonic power. The body, struck by a sense-impression, resembles strings tuned in unison. In the production of sound, it is not the harmony itself but the string that is affected. The musician causes it to resound because he contains a harmonic power. Nevertheless, in spite of the will of the musician, the instrument would produce no harmonies that conformed to the laws of music, unless harmony itself dictated them."<sup>10</sup>

9. (5) The soul binds herself to the body by a conversion toward the affections experienced by the body. She detaches herself from the body by "apathy" [turning away from the body's affections].

#### THE IMPASSIBILITY OF MATTER

10. (7) According to the ancient sages such are the properties of matter. "Matter is incorporeal because it differs from bodies. Matter is not lifeless, because it is neither intelligence, nor soul, nor anything that lives by itself. It is formless, variable, infinite, impotent; consequently, matter cannot be existence, but nonentity. Of course it is not nonentity in the same way that move-

ment is nonentity; matter is nonentity really. It is an image and a phantom of extension, because it is the primary substrate of extension. It is impotence, and the desire for existence. The only reason that it persists is not rest [but change]; it always seems to contain contraries, the great and small, the less and more, lack and excess. It is always "becoming," without ever persisting in its condition, or being able to come out of it. Matter is the lack of all existence and, consequently, what matter seems to be is a deception. If, for instance, matter seems to be large, it really is small; like a mere phantom, it escapes and dissipates into nonentity, not by any change of place, but by its lack of reality. Consequently, the substrate of the images in matter consists of a lower image. That in which objects present appearances that differ according to their positions is a mirror, a mirror that seems crowded, though it possess nothing, and which yet seems to be everything."<sup>11</sup>

#### ON THE PASSIBILITY OF THE BODY (8-19)

11. "Passions [or affections] refer to something destructible, for it is passion that leads to destruction; moreover, the same sort of being that can be affected can also be destroyed."<sup>12</sup> Incorporeal entities, however, are not subject to destruction; they either exist or not, and in either case they are non-affectable. That which can be affected need not have this impassible nature, but must be subject to alteration or destruction by the qualities of things that enter into it and affect it; for that which in it subsists is not altered by the first chance entity. Conse-

quently, matter is impassible, as by itself it possesses no quality. The forms that enter into and issue from matter [as a substrate] are equally impassible. That which is affected is the composite of form and matter, whose existence consists in the union of these two elements; for it is evidently subject to the action of contrary powers, and of the qualities of things which enter into it and affect it. That is why the beings that derive their existence from something else, instead of possessing it by themselves, can likewise by virtue of their passivity either live or not live. On the contrary, the beings whose existence consists in an impassible life necessarily live permanently; likewise the things that do not live are equally impassible inasmuch as they do not live. Consequently, being changed and being affected refer only to the composite of form and matter, to the body, and not to matter. Likewise, to receive life and to lose it, to feel passions that are its consequence, can refer only to the composite of soul and body. Nothing similar could happen to the soul, for she is not something compounded out of life and lifelessness; she is life itself, because her being or nature is simple and automatic.

Third Ennead, Book Eight:  
On Nature, Contemplation, and the One

ON THOUGHT

12. (1) Thought is not the same everywhere; it differs according to the nature of every being. In intelligence, it is intellectual; in the soul it is rational; in the plant it

is seminal; last, it is superior to intelligence and existence in the principle that surpasses all these [that is, the One].

ON LIFE

13. (7) The word "body" is not the only one that may be taken in different senses; such is also the case with "life." There is a difference between the life of the plant, of the animal, of the soul, of intelligence, and of super-intelligence. Indeed, intelligible entities are alive, though the things that proceed therefrom do not possess a life similar to theirs.

ON THE ONE

14. (8) By [using one's] intelligence one may say many things about the super-intellectual [principle]. But it can be much better viewed by an absence of thought, than by thought. This is very much the same case as that of sleep, of which one can speak, up to a certain point, during the condition of wakefulness; but of which no knowledge of perception can be acquired except by sleeping. Indeed, like is known only by like; the condition of all knowledge is for the subject to be assimilated to the subject.

Fourth Ennead, Book Two:  
On the Nature of the Soul

15. (1) Every body is in a place; the incorporeal in itself is not in a place, any more than the things which have the same nature as it.

16. (1) The incorporeal in itself, by the mere fact of its being superior to every body and to every place, is present everywhere without occupying extension, in an indivisible manner.

17. (1) The incorporeal in itself, not being present to the body in a local manner, is present to the body whenever it pleases, that is, by inclining towards it insofar as it is within its nature to do so. Not being present to the body in a local manner, it is present to the body by its disposition.

18. (1) The incorporeal in itself does not become present to the body in "being" nor in hypostatic form of existence. It does not mingle with the body. Nevertheless, by its inclination to the body, it begets and communicates to it a potentiality capable of uniting with the body. Indeed, the inclination of the incorporeal constitutes a second nature [the irrational soul], which unites with the body.

19. (1) The soul has a nature intermediary between the "being" that is indivisible, and the "being" that is divisible by its union with bodies. Intelligence is a being absolutely indivisible; bodies alone are divisible; but the qualities and the forms engaged in matter are divisible by their union with the bodies.

20. (2) The things that act upon others do not act by approximation and by contact. It is only accidentally when this occurs [that they act by proximity and contact].

Fourth Ennead, Book Three:  
Problems Concerning the Soul

THE UNION OF THE SOUL AND THE BODY

21. (20) The hypostatic substance of the body does not hinder the incorporeal in itself from being where and as it wishes; for just as that which is non-extended cannot be contained by the body, so also that which has extension forms no obstacle for the incorporeal, and in relation to it is as nonentity. The incorporeal does not transport itself where it wishes by a change of place; for only extended substance occupies a place. Neither is the incorporeal compressed by the body; for only that which is extended can be compressed and displaced. That which has neither extension nor magnitude, could not be hindered by that which has extension, nor be exposed to a change of place. Being everywhere and nowhere, the incorporeal, wherever it happens to be, betrays its presence only by a certain kind of disposition. It is by this disposition that it rises above heaven, or descends into a corner of the world. Not even this residence makes it visible to our eyes. It is only by its works that it manifests its presence.

22. (21-24) If the incorporeal be contained within the body, it is not contained within it like an animal in a zoological garden; for it can neither be included within, nor embraced by the body. Nor is it compressed like water or air in a bag of skins. It produces potentialities which from within its unity radiate outwards; it is by them that it descends into the body and penetrates it. It

is by this indestructible extension of itself that it enters into the body, and shuts itself up within it. Except itself nothing retains it. It is not the body that releases the incorporeal as result of an injury, or of its decay; it is the incorporeal that detaches itself by turning away from the passions of the body.

ON THE DESCENT OF THE SOUL INTO THE BODY, AND ON THE SPIRIT

23. (9) Just as "being on the earth," for the soul, is not to tread on the ground, as does the body, but only to preside over the body that treads on the ground; likewise, "to be in Hades" for the soul, is to preside over an image whose nature is to be in a place, and to have an obscure hypostatic form of existence. That is why if the subterranean realm be a dark place, the soul, without separating from existence, descends into Hades when she attaches herself to some image. Indeed, when the soul abandons the solid body over which she presided she remains united to the spirit which she has received from the celestial spheres. Since, as a result of her affection for matter, she has developed particular faculties by virtue of which she had a sympathetic habit for some particular body during life, as a result of this disposition she impresses a form on the spirit by the power of her imagination, and thus she acquires an image. The soul is said to be in Hades because the spirit that surrounds her also happens to have a formless and obscure nature; and as the heavy and moistened spirit descends down into subterranean localities, the soul is said to descend underground. This is not to imply that the essence of the soul

changes place, or is in a locality, but acknowledges that she contracts the habits of the bodies whose nature it is to change location, and to be located somewhere. That is why the soul, according to her disposition, acquires a particular body rather than some other; for the rank and the special characteristics of the body into which she enters depends upon her disposition.

Therefore, when in a condition of superior purity, she unites with a body that is close to immaterial nature, that is, an ethereal body. When she descends from the development of reason to that of the imagination, she receives a solar body. If she becomes effeminate, and falls in love with forms, she puts on a lunar body. Finally, when she falls into the terrestrial bodies, which, resembling her shapeless character, are composed of moist vapors, there results for her a complete ignorance of existence, a sort of eclipse, and a veritable childhood. When the soul leaves an earthly body, having her spirit still troubled by these moist vapors, she develops a shadow that weights her down; for a spirit of this kind naturally tends to descend into the depths of the earth, unless it be held up and raised by a higher cause. Just as the soul is attached to the earth by her earthly vesture, so the moist spirit[ual body] to which the soul is united makes her drag after her an image which weights down the soul. The soul surrounds herself with moist vapors when she mingles with a nature that in its operations is moist or subterranean. But if the soul separates from this nature, immediately around her shines a dry light, without shade or shadow. In fact it is humidity which forms clouds in the air; the

dryness of the atmosphere produces a dry and serene clearness.

Fourth Ennead, Book Six:  
On Sensation and Memory

ON SENSATION

24. (3) The soul contains the reasons of all things. The soul operates according to these reasons, whether incited to activity by some exterior object, or whether the soul be turned towards these reasons by folding back on herself. When the soul is incited to this activity by some exterior object, she applies her senses thereto; when she folds back on herself, she applies herself to thought. It might be objected that the result is that there is neither sensation nor thought without imagination; for just as in the animal part, no sensation occurs without an impression produced on the organs of sense. Likewise there is no thought without imagination. Certainly, an analogy exists between both cases. Just as the sense-image [type] results from the impression experienced by sensation, likewise the intellectual image [phantasm] results from thought.

25. (2) Memory does not consist in preserving images. It is the faculty of reproducing the conceptions with which our soul has been occupied.

Fifth Ennead, Book Two:  
On Generation and on the Order of Things that  
Follow the First

ON THE PROCESSION OF BEINGS

26. When incorporeal hypostatic substances descend, they split up and multiply, their power weakening as they apply themselves to the individual. When, on the contrary, they rise, they simplify, unite, and their power intensifies.

27. In the life of incorporeal entities, the procession operates in a manner such that the superior principle remains firm and substantial in its nature, imparting its existence to what is below it, without losing anything, or transforming itself into anything. Thus that which receives existence does not receive existence with decay or alteration; it is not begotten like generation [that is, the being of sense], which participates in decay and change. It is, therefore, non-begotten and incorruptible, because it is produced without generation or corruption.

28. Every begotten thing derives the cause of its generation from some other [being]; for nothing is begotten without cause. But, among begotten things, those which owe their being to a union of elements are on that very account perishable. As to those which, not being composite, owe their being to the simplicity of their hypostatic substances, they are imperishable, inasmuch as they are indissoluble. When we say that they are begotten, we do not mean that they are composite, but only that they depend on some cause. Thus bodies are begotten doubly, first because they depend on a cause, and then because they are composite. Souls and intelligence, indeed, are begotten in the respect that they

depend on a cause; but not in the respect that they are composite. Therefore, bodies, being doubly begotten, are dissoluble and perishable. Soul and Intelligence, being unbegotten in the sense that they are not composite, are indissoluble and imperishable; for they are begotten only in the sense that they depend on a cause.

29. Every principle that generates, by virtue of its "being," is superior to the product it generates. Every generated being turns towards its generating principle. Of the generating principles, some [the universal and perfect substances] do not turn towards their product; while others [the substances that are individual, and subject to conversion towards the manifold] partly turn towards their product, and remain partly turned towards themselves; while others entirely turn towards their product, and do not turn at all towards themselves.

ON THE RETURN OF BEINGS TO THE FIRST

30. Of the universal and perfect hypostatic substances, none turns towards its product. All perfect hypostatic substances return to the principles that generated them. The very body of the world, by the mere fact of its perfection, is converted to the intelligent Soul, and that is the cause of its motion being circular. The Soul of the world is converted to Intelligence, and this to the First.<sup>13</sup> All beings, therefore, aspire to the First, each in the measure of its ability, from the very lowest in the ranks of the universe up. This anagogical return of beings to the First is necessary, whether it be mediate or immediate. So we may say that beings not only aspire to

the First, but that each being enjoys the First according to its capacity.<sup>14</sup> The individual hypostatic substances, however, that are subject to declining towards manifoldness, naturally turn not only towards their author, but also towards their product. That is the cause of [any subsequent] fall and unfaithfulness. Matter perverts them because they possess the possibility of inclining towards it, though they are also able turn towards the divinity. That is how perfection makes second rank beings be born of the first principles, and then be converted towards them. It is, on the contrary, the result of imperfection, to turn higher entities to lower things, inspiring them with love for that which, before them, withdrew from the first principles [in favor of matter].

Fifth Ennead, Book Three:

**On the Hypostases that Mediate Knowledge, and on the Superior Principle**

INTELLIGENCE KNOWS ITSELF BY A CONVERSION TOWARDS ITSELF

31. (1) When one being subsists by dependence on any other, and not by self-dependence and withdrawal from any other, it could not turn itself towards itself to know itself by separating from that [the substrate] by which it subsists. By withdrawing from its own existence it would change and perish. But when one being cognizes itself by withdrawal from that to which it is united, when it grasps itself as independent of that being, and succeeds in doing so without exposing itself to destruction, it evidently does not derive its being or nature from the

being from which it can, without perishing, withdraw, to face itself, and know itself independently. If sight, and in general all sensation do not feel itself, nor perceive itself on separating from the body, and do not subsist by itself—and if, on the contrary, intelligence thinks better by separating from the body, and can be converted to itself without perishing—then evidently sense-faculties are actualized only by help of the body, while intelligence actualizes and exists by itself, and not by the body.

THE ACTUALIZATION OF INTELLIGENCE IS ETERNAL AND INDIVISIBLE

32. (3, 5-7) There is a difference between intelligence and the intelligible, between sensation and that which can be sensed. The intelligible is united to intelligence as that which can be sensed is connected with sensation. But sensation cannot perceive itself [. . .] As the intelligible is united to intelligence, it is grasped by intelligence and not by sensation. But intelligence is intelligible for intelligence. Since intelligence is intelligible for intelligence, intelligence is its own object. If intelligence be intelligible, but not “sensible,” it is an intelligible object. Being intelligible by intelligence, but not by sensation, it will be intelligent. Intelligence, therefore, is simultaneously thinker and thought, all that thinks and all that is thought. Its operation, besides, is not that of an object that rubs and is rubbed: “It is not a subject in some one part of itself, and in some other, an object of thought; it is simple and is entirely intelligible for itself as a whole.”<sup>15</sup> The whole of intelligence excludes any idea of unintelligence. It does not contain

one part that thinks, while another would not think; for then, insofar as it would not think, “it would be unintelligent.” It does not abandon one object to think of another; for it would cease to think the object it abandoned. If, therefore, intelligence does not successively pass from one object to another, it thinks simultaneously. It does not think first one [thought] and then another; rather, it thinks everything as in the present, and as always . . . .

If intelligence thinks everything as at present, if it knows no past nor future, its thought is a simple actualization, which excludes every interval of time. It, therefore, contains everything together, in respect to time. Intelligence, therefore, thinks, all things according to unity, and in unity, without anything falling in time or in space. If so, intelligence is not discursive, and is not [like the soul] in motion; it is an actualization, which is according to unity, and in unity, which shuns all chance development and every discursive operation. If, in intelligence, manifoldness is reduced to unity, and if the intellectual actualization is indivisible, and falls not within time, we shall have to attribute to such a being eternal existence in unity. Now that happens to be “æonial” or everlasting existence. Therefore, eternity constitutes the very being [or nature] of intelligence. The other kind of intelligence, that does not think according to unity, and in unity, which falls into change, and into movement, which abandons one object to think another, which divides, and gives itself up to a discursive action, has time as being [or nature].



The distinction of past and future suits its action. When passing from one object to another, the soul changes thoughts; not indeed that the former perish, or that the latter suddenly issue from some other source: but the former, while seeming to have disappeared, remain in the soul; and the latter, while seeming to come from somewhere else, do not really do so, but are born from within the soul, which moves only from one object to another, and which successively directs her gaze from one to another part of what she possesses. She resembles a spring which, instead of flowing outside, flows back into itself in a circle. It is this [circular] movement of the soul that constitutes time, just as the permanence of intelligence in itself constitutes eternity. Intelligence is not separated from eternity, any more than the soul is from time. Intelligence and eternity form but a single hypostatic form of existence. That which moves simulates eternity by the indefinite perpetuity of its movement, and that which remains immovable, simulates time by seeming to multiply its continual present, in the measure that time passes. That is why some have believed that time manifested in rest as well as in movement, and that eternity was no more than the infinity of time. To each of these two [different things] the attributes of the other were mistakenly attributed. The reason of this is that anything that ever persists in an identical movement gives a good illustration of eternity by the continuousness of its movement, while that which persists in an identical actualization represents time by the permanence of its actualization. Besides, in sense-ob-

jects, duration differs according to each of them. There is a difference between the duration of the course of the sun, and that of the moon, as well as that of Venus, and so on. There is a difference between the solar year, and the year of each of these stars. Different, further, is the year that embraces all the other years, and which conforms to the movement of the soul, according to which the stars regulate their movements. As the movement of the soul differs from the movement of the stars, so also does its time differ from that of the stars; for the divisions of this latter kind of time correspond to the spaces travelled by each star, and by its successive passages in different places.

#### INTELLIGENCE IS MANIFOLD

33. (10-12) Intelligence is not the principle of all things; for it is manifold. Now the manifold presupposes the One. Evidently, it is intelligence that is manifold; the intelligibles that it thinks do not form unity, but manifoldness, and they are identical therewith. Therefore, since intelligence and the intelligible entities are identical, and as the intelligible entities form a manifoldness, intelligence itself is manifold.

The identity of intelligence and of intelligible entities may be demonstrated as follow. The object that intelligence contemplates must be in it, or exist outside of itself. It is, besides, evident, that intelligence contemplates; since, for intelligence, to think is to be intelligence,<sup>16</sup> to abstract its thought would therefore be to deprive it of its being. This being granted, we must

determine in what manner intelligence contemplates its object. We shall accomplish this by examining the different faculties by which we acquire various kinds of knowledge, namely, sensation, imagination and intelligence.

The principle which makes use of the senses contemplates only by grasping exterior things, and far from uniting itself to the objects of its contemplation, from this perception it gathers no more than an image. Therefore when the eye sees the visible object, it cannot identify itself with this object; for it would not see it, unless it were at a certain distance therefrom. Likewise if the object of touch confused itself with the organ that touches it, it would disappear. Therefore the senses apply themselves to what is outside of them to perceive a sense-object.

Likewise imagination applies its attention to what is outside of it to form for itself an image; it is by this very attention to what is outside of it that it represents to itself the object of which it forms an image as being exterior.

That is how sensation and imagination perceive their objects. Neither of these two faculties folds itself back upon itself, nor concentrates on itself, whether the object of their perception be a corporeal or incorporeal form.

Not in this manner is intelligence perceived; this can occur only by turning towards itself, and by contemplation itself. If it left the contemplation of its own actualizations—if it ceased to be their contemplation—it would no longer think anything. Intelligence perceives

the intelligible entity as sensation perceives the sense-object, by intuition. But in order to contemplate the sense-object, sensation applies to what is outside of it, because its object is material. On the contrary, in order to contemplate the intelligible entity, intelligence concentrates in itself, instead of applying itself to what is outside of it. That is why some philosophers have thought that there was only a nominal difference between intelligence and the imagination of the reasonable animal; as they insisted that everything should depend on matter and on corporeal nature, they naturally had to make intelligence also depend therefrom. But our intelligence contemplates natures [or, "beings"]. Therefore, [according to the hypothesis of these philosophers] our intelligence will contemplate these natures as located in some place. But these natures are outside of matter; consequently, they could not be located in any place. It is therefore evident that the intelligible entities had to be posited as within intelligence.

If the intelligible entities be within intelligence, intelligence will contemplate intelligible entities and will contemplate itself while contemplating them; by understanding itself, it will think, because it will understand intelligible entities. Now intelligible entities form a multitude, for<sup>17</sup> intelligence thinks a multitude of intelligible entities, and not a unity; therefore, intelligence is manifold. But manifoldness presupposes unity; consequently, above intelligence, the existence of unity will be necessary.

34. (5) Intellectual being is composed of similar parts,

so that real beings exist both in individual intelligence, and in universal intelligence. But, in universal intelligence, individual [entities] are themselves conceived universally; while in individual intelligence, universal beings as well as individual beings are conceived individually.

Sixth Ennead, Book Four:

**The One and Identical Being is Everywhere Present  
as a Whole**

ON THE INCORPOREAL

35. The incorporeal is that which is conceived of by abstraction of the body; that is the derivation of its name. To this genus, according to ancient sages, belong matter, sense-form, when conceived of apart from matter, natures, faculties, place, time, and surface. All these entities, indeed, are called incorporeal because they are not bodies. There are other things that are called incorporeal by a wrong use of the word, not because they are not bodies, but because they cannot beget bodies. Thus the incorporeal first mentioned above subsists within the body, while the incorporeal of the second kind is completely separated from the body, and from the incorporeal that subsists within the body. The body, indeed, occupies a place, and the surface does not exist outside of the body. But intelligence and intellectual reason [discursive reason], do not occupy any place, do not subsist in the body, do not constitute any body, and do not depend on the body, nor on any of the things that are

called incorporeal by abstraction of the body. On the other hand, if we conceive of the void as incorporeal, intelligence cannot exist within the void. The void, indeed, may receive a body, but it cannot contain the actualization of intelligence, nor serve as location for that actualization. Of the two kinds of the incorporeal of which we have just spoken, the followers of Zeno reject the one [the incorporeal that exists outside of the body] and insist on the other [the incorporeal that is separated from the body by abstraction, and which has no existence outside of the body]; not seeing that the first kind of incorporeality is not similar to the second, they refuse all reality to the former, though they ought, nevertheless, to acknowledge that the incorporeal [which subsists outside of the body], is of another kind [than the incorporeal that does not subsist outside of the body], and not to believe that, because one kind of incorporeality has no reality, neither can the other have any.

ON THE RELATION BETWEEN THE CORPOREAL AND THE INCORPOREAL

36. (2, 3, 4) Everything, if it be somewhere, is there in some manner that conforms to its nature. For a body that is composed of matter, and possesses volume, to be somewhere, means that it is located in some place. On the contrary, the intelligible world, and in general the existence that is immaterial, and incorporeal in itself, does not occupy any place, so that the ubiquity of the incorporeal is not a local presence. "It does not have one part here, and another there;" for, if so, it would not be outside of all place, nor be without extension: "Wher-

ever it is entire, it is not present here and absent there," for in this way it would be contained in some one place, and excluded from some other. "Nor is it nearer one place, and further from some other," for only things that occupy place stand in relations of distance. Consequently, the sense-world is present to the intelligible in space; but the intelligible is present to the sense-world in space; but the intelligible is present to the sense-world without having any parts, nor being in space. When the indivisible is present in the divisible, "It is entire in each part," identically and numerically one. "If simple and indivisible existence becomes extended and manifold, it is not in respect to the extended and manifold existence which possesses it, not such as it really is, but in the manner in which [simple existence] can possess [manifold existence]." Extended and manifold existence has to become unextended and simple in its relation with naturally extended and simple existence, in order to enjoy its presence. In other terms, it is conformable to its nature, without dividing, nor multiplying, nor occupying space, that intelligible existence is present to "the existence that has no relation to space." In our speculations on corporeal and incorporeal existence, therefore, we must not confuse their characteristics, preserving the respective nature of each, taking care not to let our imagination or opinion attribute to the incorporeal certain corporeal qualities. Nobody attributes to bodies incorporeal characteristics, because everybody lives in daily touch with bodies; but as it is so difficult to cognize incorporeal natures, only vague conceptions are formed

of them, and they cannot be grasped so long as one lets oneself be guided by imagination. One has to say to oneself, a being known by the senses is located in space, and is outside of itself because it has a volume; "the intelligible being is not located in space, but in itself," because it has no volume. The one is a copy, the other is an archetype; the one derives its existence from the intelligible, the other finds it in itself; for every image is an image of intelligence. The properties of the corporeal and the incorporeal must be clearly kept in mind so as to avoid surprise at their difference, in spite of their union, if indeed it be permissible to apply the term "union" to their mutual relation; for we must not think of the union of corporeal substances, but of the union of substances whose properties are completely incompatible, according to the individuality of their hypostatic form of existence. Such union differs entirely from that of "homoousian"<sup>18</sup> substances of the same nature; consequently, it is neither a blend, nor a mixture, nor a real union, nor a mere arrangement. The relation between the corporeal and the incorporeal is established in a different manner, which manifests in the communication of "homoousian" substances of the sense nature, of which, however, no corporeal operation can give any idea. The incorporeal being is wholly without extension in all the parts of the extended being, even though the number of these parts were infinite. "It is present in an indivisible manner, without establishing a correspondence between each of its parts with the parts of the extended being;" and it does not become manifold

merely because, in a manifold manner, it is present to a multitude of parts. The whole of it is entire in all the parts of the extended being, in each of them, and in the whole mass, without dividing or becoming manifold to enter into relations with the manifold, preserving its numerical identity.<sup>19</sup> It is only to beings whose power is dispersed that it belongs to possess the intelligible by parts and by fractions. Often these beings, on changing from their nature, imitate intelligible beings by a deceptive appearance, and we are in doubt about their nature, for they seem to have exchanged it for that of incorporeal being or essence.

THE INCORPOREAL HAS NO EXTENSION

37. (5) That which really exists has neither great nor small. Greatness and smallness are attributes of corporeal mass. By its identity and numerical unity, real existence is neither great nor small, neither very large nor very small, though it causes even greatest and smallest to participate in its nature. It must not, therefore, be represented as great, for in that case we could not conceive how it could be located in the smallest space without being diminished or condensed. Nor should it be represented as small, which conception of it would hinder our understanding how it could be present in a whole large body without being increased or extended. We must try to gain a simultaneous conception of both that which is very large and very small, and realize real existence as preserving its identity and its indwelling in itself in any chance body whatever, along with an

infinity of other bodies of different sizes. It is united to the extension of the world, without extending itself, or uniting, and it exceeds the extension of the world as well as that of its parts, by embracing them within its unity. Likewise, the world unites with real existence by all its parts, so far as its nature allows it to do so, though it cannot, however, embrace it entirely, nor contain its whole power. Real existence is infinite and incomprehensible for the world because, among other attributes, it possesses that of having no extension.

38. Great magnitude is a hindrance for a body if, instead of comparing it to things of the same kind, it is considered in relation with things of a different nature; for volume is, as it were, a kind of procession of existence outside of itself, and a breaking up of its power. That which possesses a superior power is alien to all extension; for potentiality does not succeed in realizing its fulness until it concentrates within itself, as it needs to fortify itself to acquire all its energy. Consequently the body, by extending into space, loses its energy, and withdraws from the potency that belongs to real and incorporeal existence; but real existence does not weaken in extension, because, having no extension, it preserves the greatness of its potency. Just as, in relation to the body, real existence has neither extension nor volume, likewise corporeal existence, in relation to real existence, is weak and impotent. The existence that possesses the greatest power does not occupy any extension. Consequently, though the world fills space, though it be everywhere united to real extension, it could not, nev-

ertheless, embrace the greatness of its potency. It is united to real existence not by parts, but in an indivisible and indefinite manner. Therefore, the incorporeal is present to the body, not in a local manner, but by assimilation, so far as the body is capable of being assimilated to the incorporeal, and as the incorporeal can manifest in it. The incorporeal is not present to the material, insofar as the material is incapable of being assimilated to a completely immaterial principle; however, the incorporeal is present to the corporeal insofar as the corporeal can be assimilated thereto. Nor is the incorporeal present to the material by receptivity [in the sense that one of these two substances would receive something from the other]; otherwise the material and the immaterial would be altered: the former, on receiving the immaterial, into which it would be transformed, and the latter, on becoming material. Therefore, when a relation is established between two substances that are as different as the corporeal and the incorporeal, an assimilation and participation that is reciprocal to the power of the one, and the impotence of the other, occurs. That is why the world always remains very distant from the power of real existence, and the latter from the impotence of material nature. But that which occupies the middle, that which simultaneously assimilates and is assimilated, that which unites the extremes, becomes a cause of error in respect to them, because the substances it brings together by assimilation are very different.

ON THE RELATION OF INDIVIDUAL SOULS TO THE UNIVERSAL SOUL

39. "It would be wrong to suppose that the manifoldness of souls was derived from the manifoldness of bodies. The individual souls, as well as the universal Soul, subsist independently of bodies, without the unity of the universal Soul absorbing the manifoldness of individual souls, and without the manifoldness of the latter splitting up the unity of the universal Soul."<sup>20</sup> Individual souls are distinct without being separated from each other, and without dividing the universal Soul into a number of parts; they are united to each other without becoming confused, and without making the universal Soul a mere total, "for they are not separated by limits," and they are not confused with each other: "they are as distinct from each other as different sciences in a single soul." Further, individual souls are not contained in the universal Soul as if they were bodies, that is, like really different substances, for they are qualitative actualizations of the Soul. Indeed, "the power of the universal Soul is infinite," and all that participates in her is soul; all the souls form the universal Soul, and, nevertheless, the universal Soul exists independently of all individual souls. Just as one does not arrive at the incorporeal by infinite division of bodies, seeing that such a division would modify them only in respect to magnitude, likewise, on infinitely dividing the soul, which is a living form, we reach nothing but species [not individuals]; for the Soul contains specific differences, and she exists entire with them as well as without them. Indeed, though the Soul should be divided within herself, her

diversity does not destroy her identity. If the unity of bodies, in which manifoldness prevails over identity, is not broken up by their union with an incorporeal principle—if, on the contrary, all of them possess the unity of being or substance, and are divided only by qualities and other forms—what shall we say or think of the species of incorporeal life, where identity prevails over manifoldness, and where there is no substrate alien to form, and from which bodies might derive their unity? The unity of the Soul could not be split up by her union with a body, though the body often hinder her operations. Being identical, the Soul discovers everything by herself, because her actualizations are species, however far the division be carried. When the Soul is separated from bodies, each of her parts possesses all the powers possessed by the Soul herself, just as an individual seed has the same properties as the universal Seed [spermatic logos]. As an individual seed, being united to matter, preserves the properties of the universal Seed [spermatic logos], and as, on the other hand, universal Seed possess all the properties of the individual seeds dispersed within matter, thus the parts which we conceive of in the [universal] Soul that is separated from matter, possess all the powers of the universal Soul.<sup>21</sup> The individual soul, which declines towards matter, is bound to the matter by the form which her disposition has made her choose; but she preserves the powers of the universal Soul, and she unites with her when the [individual soul] turns away from the body, to concentrate within herself.

Now as in the course of her declination towards matter, the soul is stripped entirely bare by the total exhaustion of her own faculties; and as, on the contrary, on rising towards intelligence, she recovers the fulness of the powers of the universal Soul,<sup>22</sup> the ancient philosophers were right, in their mystic phrasing, to describe these two opposite conditions of the Soul by the names of Penia and Poros [Wealth and Poverty].<sup>23</sup>

Sixth Ennead, Book Five:  
**The One and Identical Being is Everywhere Present  
 in Its Entirety**

THE INCORPOREAL BEING IS ENTIRE IN EVERYTHING

40. To better express the special nature of incorporeal existence, the ancient philosophers, particularly Parmenides, do not content themselves with saying “it is one,” but they also add “and all,” just as a sense-object is a whole. But as this unity of the sense-object contains a diversity [for in the sense-object the total unity is not all things insofar as it is one, and as all things constitute the total unity], the ancient philosophers also add, “insofar as it is one.” This was to prevent people from imagining a collective whole and to indicate that the real being is All, only by virtue of its indivisible unity. After having said, “it is everywhere,” they add, “it is nowhere.” Then, after having said, “it is in all,” that is, in all individual things whose disposition enables them to receive it, they still add, “as an entire whole.” They represent it thus simultaneously under the most opposite attributes, so as

to eliminate all the false imaginations which are drawn from the natures of bodies, and which will only obscure the genuine idea of real existence.

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE INTELLIGIBLE BEING AND THE  
BEING OF SENSATION

41. Such<sup>24</sup> are the genuine characteristics of the sensual and material: it is extended, mutable, always different from what it was, and composite; it does not subsist by itself, it is located in a place, and has volume, and so forth. On the contrary, the real being that is self-subsisting, is founded on itself, and is always identical; its essence is identity, it is essentially immutable, simple, indissoluble, without extension, and outside of all place; it is neither born, nor does it perish. So let us define these characteristics of the sensual and veritable existence, and let us put aside all other attributes.

42. Real<sup>25</sup> existence is said to be manifold, without its really being different in space, volume, number, figure, or extension of parts; its division is a diversity without matter, volume, or real manifoldness. Consequently, the real being is one. Its unity does not resemble that of a body, of a place, of a volume, of a multitude. It possesses diversity in unity. Its diversity implies both division and union, for it is neither exterior nor incidental; real existence is not manifold by participation in some other [nature], but by itself. It remains one by exercising all its powers, because it holds its diversity from its very identity, and not by and assemblage of heterogeneous parts, such as bodies. The latter possess unity in diversity; for,

in them, it is diversity that dominates, the unity being exterior and incidental. In real existence, on the contrary, it is unity that dominates with identity; diversity is born of the development of the power of unity. Consequently, real existence preserves its indivisibility by multiplying itself; while the body preserves its volume and multiplicity by unifying itself. Real existence is founded on itself, because it is one by itself. The body is never founded upon itself, because it subsists only by its extension. Real existence is, therefore, a fruitful unity, and the body is a unified multitude. We must, therefore, exactly determine how real existence is both one and manifold, how the body is both manifold and one, and we must guard from confusing the attributes of either.

THE DIVINITY IS EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE

43. The divinity<sup>26</sup> is everywhere because it is nowhere. So also with intelligence and the soul. But it is in relation to all beings that it surpasses, that the divinity is everywhere and nowhere; its presence and its absence depend entirely on its nature and its will.<sup>27</sup> Intelligence is in the divinity, but it is only in relation to the things that are subordinated to it that intelligence is everywhere and nowhere. The body is within the soul and in divinity. All things that possess or do not possess existence proceed from divinity, and are within divinity; but the divinity is none of them, nor in any of them. If the divinity were only present everywhere, it would be all things, and in all things; but, on the other hand, it is nowhere: everything, therefore, is begotten in it and by it, because it is



everywhere, but nothing becomes confused with it, because it is nowhere. Likewise if intelligence be the principle of the souls and of the things that come after the souls, it is because it is everywhere and nowhere. This is because it is neither soul, nor any of the things that come after the soul, nor in any of them; it is because it is not only everywhere, but also nowhere in respect to the beings that are inferior to it. Similarly the soul is neither a body, nor in the body, but is only the cause of the body, because she is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere in the body. So there is procession in the universe [from what is everywhere and nowhere], down to what can neither simultaneously be everywhere and nowhere, and which limits itself to participating in this double property.

THE HUMAN SOUL IS UNITED TO UNIVERSAL BEING BY ITS NATURE

44. "When<sup>28</sup> you have conceived of the inexhaustible and infinite power of existence in itself, and when you begin to realize its incessant and indefatigable nature, which completely suffices itself"—which has the privilege of being the purest life, of possessing itself fully, of being founded upon itself, of neither desiring nor seeking anything outside of itself—"you should not attribute to it any special determination," or any relation: for when you limit yourself by some consideration of space or relation, you doubtlessly do not limit existence in itself, but you turn away from it, extending the veil of imagination over your thought. "You can neither transgress, nor fix, nor determine, nor condense within nar-

row limits, the nature of existence in itself, as if it had nothing further to give beyond [certain limits], exhausting itself gradually." It is the most inexhaustible spring of which you can form a notion. "When you will have achieved that nature, and when you will have become assimilated to eternal existence, seek nothing beyond." Otherwise, you will be going away from it, you will be directing your glances on something else. "If you do not seek anything beyond," if you shrink within yourself and into your own nature, "you will become assimilated to universal Existence, and you will not halt at anything inferior to it. Do not say, That is what I am. Forgetting what you are, you will become universal Existence. You were already universal Existence, but you had something beside; by that mere fact you were inferior, because that possession of yours that was beyond universal Existence was derived from nonentity. Nothing can be added to universal Existence."<sup>29</sup> When we add to it something derived from nonentity, we fall into poverty and into complete deprivation. "Therefore, abandon nonentity, and you will fully possess yourself, [in that you will acquire universal existence by putting all else aside; for, so long as one remains with the remainder, existence does not manifest and does not grant its presence]." Existence is discovered by putting aside everything that degrades and diminishes it, ceasing to confuse it with inferior objects, and ceasing to form a false idea of it. Otherwise one departs both from existence and from oneself. Indeed, when one is present to oneself, he possesses the existence that is present everywhere; when

one departs from himself, he also departs from it. So important is it for the soul to acquaint herself with what is in her, and to withdraw from what is outside of her, for existence is within us, and nonentity is outside of us. Now existence is present within us, when we are not distracted from it by other things. "It does not come near us to make us enjoy its presence. It is we who withdraw from it, when it is not present with us." Is there anything surprising in this? To be near existence, you do not need to withdraw from yourselves, for "you are both far from existence and near it, in this sense that it is you who come near to it, and you who withdraw from it, when, instead of considering yourselves, you consider that which is foreign to you." If then you are near existence while being far from it—if, by the mere fact of your being ignorant of yourselves, you know all things to which you are present, and which are distant from you, rather than yourself who is naturally near you—is surprising that that which is not near you should remain foreign to you, since you withdraw from it when you withdraw from yourself? Though you should always be near yourself, and though you cannot withdraw from it, you must be present with yourself to enjoy the presence of the being from which you are so substantially inseparable as from yourself. In that way it is given you to know what exists near existence, and what is distant from it, though itself be present everywhere and nowhere. He who by thought can penetrate within his own substance, and can thus acquire knowledge of it, finds himself in this actualization of knowledge and consciousness, where the sub-

strate that knows is identical with the object that is known. Now when a man thus possesses himself, he also possesses existence. He who goes out of himself to attach himself to external objects, withdraws also from existence, when withdrawing also from himself. It is natural for us to establish ourselves within ourselves, where we enjoy the whole wealth of our own resources, and not to turn ourselves away from ourselves towards what is foreign to ourselves, and where we find nothing but the most complete poverty. Otherwise, we are withdrawing from existence, though it be near us: for it is neither space, nor substance, nor any obstacle that separates us from existence, but it is our reversion towards nonentity. Our alienation from ourselves, and our ignorance are thus a just punishment of our withdrawal from existence. On the contrary, the love that the soul has for herself leads her to self-knowledge and communion with the divinity. Consequently, it has rightly been said that man here below is in a prison, because he has fled from heaven<sup>30</sup>. . . and because he tries to break his bonds; for, when he turns towards things here below he has abandoned himself, and has withdrawn from his divine origin. He is [as Empedocles says], "a fugitive who has deserted his heavenly fatherland."<sup>31</sup> That is why the life of a vicious man is a life that is servile, impious, and unjust, and his spirit is full of impiety and injustice. On the contrary, justice, as has been rightly said, consists in each one fulfilling his [authentic and proper] function. To distribute to each person his due is genuine justice.

## Notes to the Text

Compiled by Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie and Michael Hornum.

Passages in Guthrie's text in quotation marks are close paraphrases by Porphyry of Plotinus' *Enneads*. The references below are to related passages in the text of Plotinus.

- 1) Arranged by Bouillet in the order of the *Enneads* they summarize.
- 2) *Enn.* I.2.1:16-21.
- 3) *Enn.* I.2.3: 13-19.
- 4) *Enn.* I.2.4: 1-12.
- 5) *Enn.* I.2.4: 15-23.
- 6) *Enn.* I.2.6: 24-27.
- 7) *Enn.* I.2.7: 1-6.
- 8) *Enn.* I.2.7: 10-15, 19-21.
- 9) *Enn.* I.2.5: 7-24, 27-31.
- 10) *Enn.* III.6.4: 41-43, 47-52.
- 11) *Enn.* III.6.7: 3-27.
- 12) *Enn.* III.6.8: 9-11.
- 13) These are the three divine hypostases, as in *Enn.*, I.8.2, or II.9.1, for example.
- 14) *Enn.* II.2.2.
- 15) *Enn.* V.3.6: 6-7.
- 16) A pun on "noein" and "nous."
- 17) *Enn.* V.3.10-12.
- 18) "Homousian" means of the same substance, consubstantial.
- 19) *Enn.* VI.6.11-13.
- 20) *Enn.* VI.4.4: 37-46.
- 21) *Enn.* VI.4.9.
- 22) *Enn.* VI.4.16.
- 23) *Enn.* III.5.7-9.
- 24) *Enn.* VI.5.2.
- 25) *Enn.* VI.5.3, 6.
- 26) *Enn.* III.9.4: 3-6; IV.5.4.
- 27) *Enn.* VI.8.4.
- 28) *Enn.* VI.5.12: 7-23.

- 29) *Enn.* VI.5.12: 24-29.
- 30) *Enn.* IV.8.1.
- 31) *Enn.* IV.8.1

PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAGMENTS

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAGMENTS

### A. *On the Faculties of the Soul* by Porphyry<sup>1</sup>

#### *Object of the Book*

We propose to describe the faculties of the soul, and to set forth the various opinions of the subject held by both ancient and modern thinkers.

#### *Difference Between Sensation and Intelligence*

Aristo [there were two philosophers by this name, one a Stoic, the other an Aristotelian] attributes to the soul a perceptive faculty, which he divides into two parts. According to him, the first, called sensibility, the principle and origin of sensations, is usually kept active by one of the sense-organs. The other, which subsists by itself, and without organs, does not bear any special name in beings devoid of reason, in whom reason does not manifest, or at least manifests only in a feeble or obscure manner; however, it is called intelligence in beings endowed with reason, among whom alone it manifests clearly. Aristo holds that sensibility acts only with the help of the sense-organs, and that intelligence does not need them to enter into activity. Why then does he subordinate both of these to a single genus, called the perceptive faculty? Both doubtless perceive, but the one perceives the sense-form of beings, while the other perceives their essence. Indeed, sensibility does

not perceive the essence, but the sense-form, and the figure; it is intelligence that perceives whether the object be a man or a horse. There are, therefore, two kinds of perception that are very different from each other: sense-perception receives an impression, and applies itself to an exterior object, while intellectual perception does not receive an impression.

There have been philosophers who separated these two parts. They called intelligence or discursive reason the understanding which is exercised without imagination and sensation; and they called opinion the understanding which is exercised with imagination and sensation. Others, on the contrary, considered rational being, or nature, a simple essence, and attributed to it operations whose nature is entirely different. Now it is unreasonable to refer to the same essence faculties which differ completely in nature; for thought and sensation could not depend on the same essential principle, and if we were to call the operation of intelligence a perception, we would only be juggling with words. We must, therefore, establish a perfectly clear distinction between these two entities, intelligence and sensibility. On the one hand, intelligence possesses a quite peculiar nature, as is also the case with discursive reason, which is next below it. The function of the former is intuitive thought, while that of the latter is discursive thought. On the other hand, sensibility differs entirely from intelligence, acting with or without the help of organs; in the former case, it is called sensation, in the latter, imagination. Nevertheless, sensation and imagination belong to the

same genus. In understanding, intuitive intelligence is superior to opinion, which applies to sensation or imagination; this latter kind of thought, whether called discursive thought, or anything else [such as opinion], is superior to sensation and imagination, but inferior to intuitive thought.

*On the Parts of the Soul*

It is not only about the faculties that the ancient philosophers disagree... They are also in radical disagreement about the following questions: What are the parts of the soul? What is a part? What is a faculty? What difference is there between a part and a faculty?

The Stoics divide the soul into eight parts: the five senses, speech, sex-power, and the directing [predominating] principle, which is served by the other faculties, so that the soul is composed of a faculty that commands, and faculties that obey.

In their writing about ethics, Plato and Aristotle divide the soul into three parts. This division has been adopted by the greater part of later philosophers; but these have not understood that the object of this definition was to classify and define the virtues (Plato: reason, anger and appetite; Aristotle: locomotion, appetite and understanding). Indeed, if this classification be carefully scrutinized, it will be seen that it fails to account for all the faculties of the soul; it neglects imagination, sensibility, intelligence, and the natural faculties (the generative and nutritive powers).

Other philosophers, such as Numenius, do not teach

one soul in three parts, like the preceding, nor in two, such as the rational and irrational parts. They believe that we have two souls, one rational, the other irrational. Some among them attribute immortality to both of the souls; others attribute it only to the rational soul, and think that death not only suspends the exercise of the faculties that belong to the irrational soul, but even dissolves its being or essence. Last, some believe that, by virtue of the union of the two souls, their movements are double, because each of them feels the passions of the other.

*On the Difference of the Parts,  
and on the Faculties of the Soul*

We shall now explain the difference between a part and a faculty of the soul. One part differs from another by the characteristics of its genus (or kind), while different faculties may relate to a common genus. That is why Aristotle did not allow that the soul contained parts, though granting that it contained faculties. Indeed, the introduction of a new part changes the nature of the subject, while the diversity of faculties does not alter its unity. Longinus did not allow in the animal [or, living being] for several parts, but only for several faculties. In this respect, he followed the doctrine of Plato, according to whom the soul, in herself indivisible, is divided within bodies. Besides, that the soul does not have several parts does not necessarily imply that she has only a single faculty; for that which has no parts may still possess several faculties.

To conclude this confused discussion, we shall have to lay down a principle of definition which will help to determine the essential differences and resemblances that exist either between the parts of the same subject, or between its faculties, or between its parts and its faculties. This will clearly reveal whether in the organism the soul really has several parts, or merely several faculties, and what opinion about them should be adopted. [For there are two special types of these.] The one attributes to man a single soul, genuinely composed of several parts, either by itself, or in relation to the body. The other one sees in man a union of several souls, looking on the man as on a choir, the harmony of whose parts constitutes its unity, so that we find several essentially different parts contributing to the formation of a single being.

First we shall have to study within the soul the differentials between the part, the faculty and the disposition. A part always differs from another by the substrate, the genus and the function. A disposition is a special aptitude of some one part to carry out the part assigned to it by nature. A faculty is the habit of a disposition, the power inherent in some part to do the thing for which it has a disposition. There was no great inconvenience in confusing faculty and disposition; but there is an essential difference between part and faculty. Whatever the number of faculties, they can exist within a single "being," or nature, without occupying any particular point in the extension of the substrate, while the parts somewhat participate in its extension, occupying

therein a particular point. Thus all the properties of an apple are gathered within a single substrate, but the different parts that compose it are separate from each other. The notion of a part implies the idea of quantity in respect to the totality of the subject. On the contrary, the notion of a faculty implies the idea of totality. That is why the faculties remain indivisible, because they penetrate the whole substrate, while the parts are separate from each other because they have a quantity.

How then may we say that a soul is indivisible, while having three parts? For when we hear it asserted that she contains three parts in respect to quantity, it is reasonable to ask how the soul can simultaneously be indivisible, and yet have three parts. This difficulty may be solved as follows: the soul is indivisible insofar as she is considered within her "being," and in herself; and that she has three parts insofar as she is united to a divisible body, and that she exercises her different faculties in the different parts of the body. Indeed, it is not the same faculty that resides in the head, in the breast, or in the liver<sup>2</sup> [the seats of reason, of anger and appetite]. Therefore, when the soul has been divided into several parts, it is in this sense that her different functions are exercised within different parts of the body.

Nicholas [of Damascus],<sup>3</sup> in his book *On the Soul*, used to say that the division of the soul was not founded on quantity, but on quality, like the division of an art or a science. Indeed, when we consider an extension, we see that the whole is a sum of its parts, and that it increases or diminishes according as a part is added or subtracted.

Now it is not in this sense that we attribute parts to the soul; she is not the sum of her parts, because she is neither an extension nor a multitude. The parts of the soul resemble those of an art. There is, however, this difference, that an art is incomplete or imperfect if it lacks some part, while every soul is perfect, and while every organism that has not achieved the goal of its nature is an imperfect being.

Thus by parts of the soul Nicholas means the different faculties of the organism. Indeed, the organism and, in general, the animated being, by the mere fact of possessing a soul, possesses several faculties, such as life, feeling, movement, thought, desire, and the cause and principle of all of them is the soul. Those, therefore, who distinguish parts in the soul thereby mean the faculties by which the animated being can produce actualizations or experience affections. While the soul herself is said to be indivisible, nothing hinders her functions from being divided. The organism, therefore, is divisible, if we introduce within the notion of the soul that of the body; for the vital functions communicated by the soul to the body must necessarily be divided by the diversity of the organs, and it is this division of vital functions that has caused parts to be ascribed to the soul herself. As the soul can be conceived of in two different conditions, according as she lives within herself, or as she declines towards the body,<sup>4</sup> it is only when she declines towards the body that she splits up into parts. When a seed of corn is sowed and produces an ear, we see in this ear of corn the appearance of parts, though the whole it forms is indivis-



ible,<sup>5</sup> and these indivisible parts themselves later return to an indivisible unity; likewise, when the soul, which by herself is indivisible, finds herself united to the body, parts are seen to appear.

We must still examine the faculties that the soul develops by herself [intelligence and discursive reason], and which the soul develops by the animal [sensation]. This will be the true means of illustrating the difference between these two natures, and the necessity of reducing to the soul herself those parts of her being which have been enclosed within the parts of the body.<sup>6</sup>

#### B. *Iamblichus*<sup>7</sup>

Plato, Archytas, and the other Pythagoreans divide the soul into three parts, reason, anger, and appetite, which they consider to be necessary to form the groundwork for the virtues. They assign to the soul as faculties the natural [generative] power, sensibility, imagination, locomotion, love of the good and beautiful, and last, intelligence.

#### C. *Nemesius*<sup>8</sup>

Aristotle says, in his *Physics*,<sup>9</sup> that the soul has five faculties, the power of growth, sensation, locomotion, appetite, and understanding. But, in his *Ethics*, he divides the soul into two principle parts, which are the rational part and the irrational part; then Aristotle subdivides the latter into the part that is subject to reason, and the part not subject to reason.

#### D. *Iamblichus*<sup>10</sup>

The Platonists hold different opinions. Some, like Plotinus and Porphyry, reduce to a single order and idea the different functions and faculties of life; others, like Numenius, imagine them to be opposed, as if in a struggle; while others, like Atticus and Plutarch, bring harmony out of the struggle.

#### E. *Ammonius Saccas*

A. FROM NEMESIUS:

##### *On the Immateriality of the Soul*

It will suffice to use the arguments of Ammonius, teacher of Plotinus, and those of Numenius the Pythagorean, in opposition to the arguments of all those who claim that the soul is material. These are the reasons:

"Bodies, containing nothing unchangeable, are naturally subject to change, to dissolution, and to infinite divisions. They inevitably need some principle that may contain them, that may bind and strengthen their parts; this is the unifying principle that we call soul. But if the soul also be material, however subtle be the matter of which she may be composed, what could contain the soul herself, since we have just seen that all matter needs some principle to contain it? The same process will go on continuously to infinity until we arrive at an immaterial substance."

##### *Union of the Soul and the Body*

Ammonius, teacher of Plotinus, thus explained the present problem [the union of soul and body]:

The intelligible is of such a nature that it unites with whatever is able to receive it, as intimately as the union of things, that mutually alter each other in the uniting, though, at the same time it remains pure and incorruptible, as do things that merely coexist.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in the case of bodies, union alters the parts that meet, since they form new bodies; that is how elements change into composite bodies, food into blood, blood into flesh, and other parts of the body. But, as to the intelligible, the union occurs without any alteration; for it is repugnant to the nature of the intelligible to undergo an alteration in its essential nature. It disappears, or it ceases to be, but it is not susceptible of change. Now the intelligible cannot be annihilated, for otherwise it would not be immortal; and as the soul is life, if it changed in its union with the body, it would become something different, and would no longer be life. What would the soul afford to the body, if not life? In her unions [with the body, therefore], the soul undergoes no alteration.

Since it has been demonstrated that, in its essential nature, the intelligible is immutable, the necessary result must be that it does not alter at the same time as the entities to which it is united. The soul, therefore, is united to the body, but she does not form a mixture with it.<sup>13</sup> The sympathy that exists between them shows that they are united; for the entirely animated being is a whole that is sympathetic to itself, and that is consequently really one.<sup>14</sup>

What proves that the soul does not form a mixture with the body is the soul's power to separate from the

body during sleep—leaving the body as it were inanimate, with only a breath of life, to keep it from dying entirely—and using her own activity only in dreams, to foresee the future, and to live in the intelligible world.

This appears again when the soul gathers herself together to devote herself to her thoughts; for then she separates from the body so far as she can, and retires within herself better to be able to apply herself to the consideration of intelligible things. Indeed, being incorporeal, she unites with the body as closely as the union of things which by combining together perish because of each other [thus giving birth to a mixture], while at the same time she remains without alteration, as two things that are only placed by each other's side, and she preserves her unity. Thus, according to her own life, she modifies that to which she is united, but she is not modified thereby. Just as the sun, by its presence, makes the air luminous without itself changing in any way, and thus, so to speak, mingles itself therewith without mingling itself [in reality], so too the soul, though united with the body, remains quite distinct therefrom. But there is this difference, that the sun, being a body, and consequently being circumscribed within a certain space, is not everywhere where is its light—just as the fire dwells in the wood, or in the wick of the lamp, as if enclosed within a locality—but the soul, being incorporeal, and not being subjected to any local limitation, exists as a whole everywhere where her light is: indeed, there is no part of the body that is illuminated by the soul in which the soul is not entirely present. It is not the

body that commands the soul; it is the soul, on the contrary, that commands the body. She is not in the body as if in a vase or a gourd; it is rather the body that is in the soul.<sup>15</sup>

The intelligible, therefore, is not imprisoned within the body; it spreads in all the body's parts, it penetrates them, it goes through them, and could not be enclosed in any place. For by virtue of its nature, it resides in the intelligible world; it has no locality other than itself, or than an intelligible situated still higher. Thus the soul is within herself when she reasons, and in intelligence when she yields herself to contemplation. When it is asserted that the soul is in the body, it is not meant that the soul is in it as in a locality; it is only meant that the soul is in a habitual relation with the body, and that the soul is present there, as we say that God is in us. For we think that the soul is united to the body, not in a corporeal and local manner, but by the soul's habitual relations, her inclination and disposition, as a lover is attached to his beloved. Besides, as the affection of the soul has neither extension, nor weight, nor parts, she could not be circumscribed by local limitations. Within what place could that which has no parts be contained? For place and corporeal extension are inseparable; the place is limited space in which the container contains the contained. But if we were to say, "My soul is then in Alexandria, in Rome, and everywhere else," we would still be speaking of space carelessly, since being in Alexandria, or in general, being somewhere, is being in a place. Now the soul is absolutely in no place. She can

only be in some relation with some place, since it has been demonstrated that she could not be contained within a place. If then an intelligible entity be in relation with a place, or with something located in a place, we say, in a figurative manner, that this intelligible entity is in this place, because it tends thither by its activity; and we take the location for the inclination or for the activity which leads it thither. If we were to say, "That is where the soul acts," we would be saying, "The soul is there."

#### B. NOTICE OF AMMONIUS BY HIEROCLES<sup>16</sup>

Then shone the wisdom of Ammonius, who is famous under the name of "Inspired by Divinity." It was he, in fact, who, purifying the opinions of the ancient philosophers, and dissipating the fancies woven here and there, established harmony between the teaching of Plato and that of Aristotle, in that which was most essential and fundamental... It was Ammonius of Alexandria, "Inspired by Divinity," who, devoting himself enthusiastically to the truth in philosophy, and rising above the popular notions that made philosophy an object of scorn, clearly understood the doctrine of Plato and of Aristotle, gathered them into a single ideal, and thus peacefully handed philosophy down to his disciples Plotinus, [the pagan] Origen, and their successors.

## Notes

- 1) Stobaeus, *Eclogae Physicae*, I.52, ed. Heeren.
- 2) See *Ennead* IV.3.23.
- 3) In his book *On the Soul*.
- 4) See *Ennead* I.1.12.
- 5) See *Ennead* II.6.1.
- 6) See *Ennead* I.1.
- 7) Stobaeus, *Ecl. Phys.*, I.52, p. 878.
- 8) *On Human Nature*, XV.
- 9) *de Anima*, II.3.
- 10) Stobaeus, *Ecl. Phys.*, I.52, p. 894.
- 11) *On Human Nature*, 2.
- 12) See *Ennead*, II.7.1; Porphyry, *Launching-Points*, 17, 18, 21, 22, 36, 38.
- 13) See *Ennead* IV.3.20.
- 14) See *Ennead* II.3.5.
- 15) See *Ennead* IV.3.20.
- 16) In his treatise *On Providence*; Photius, *Bibliotheca*, 127, 461.

## APPENDIX:

## THE WRITINGS OF PORPHYRY

## THE WORKS OF PORPHYRY

### Philosophical Commentaries

#### A. ON ARISTOTLE

\*1. *Isagoge of Porphyry the Phoenician, the Pupil of Plotinus the Lycopolitan* (sometimes entitled *Concerning Five Sounds*).

\*2. *Question and Answer to the Aristotelian Categories*.

3. *On the Aristotelian Categories "in Seven Books...Dedicated to Gedaleios."*

4. *On Aristotle's Book On Interpretation*.

5. *Introduction to the Categories of Syllogism*.

6. *Commentary on The Physics*.

7. *Commentary on Volume 30 of The Metaphysics*.

8. *Commentary on The Ethics*.

9. (*Explanation of the Theology of Aristotle.*)

#### B. ON THEOPHRASTUS

(?) 10. *Commentary on Concerning Affirmation and Negation*.

#### C. ON PLATO

11. *Commentary on The Cratylus*.

12. *Commentary on The Sophist*.

(?) 13. *Commentary on The Parmenides*.

14. *Commentary on The Timaeus*.

\* = extant works

(?) = questionable attribution

15. *Commentary on The Philebus.*
16. *Concerning Love in The Symposium.*
17. *Commentary on The Phædo.*
18. *Commentary on The Republic.*
19. *A Study on a Writing of Eubulus On Some Platonic Questions.*

## D. ON PLOTINUS

20. *Commentary on The Enneads.*

**History and Biographies**

21. *History of Philosophy in Four Books.*
- \*22. *Life of Pythagoras* (an extract from the first volume of the *History of Philosophy*).
- \*23. *Concerning the Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Books.*

**Metaphysical**

24. *That the Object of Thought Exists Outside the Intellect* (and a response to the refutation of this by Amelius).
25. *Against Dividing the Intelligible Object from the Intellect.*
- \*26. *Launching Points to the Realm of Mind.* (Entrance to the Realm of Mind in Codex V).
27. *Two Books Concerning Principles.*
28. *One Book Entitled Elements.*
29. *On Incorporeals.*
30. *200 Books On Matter.*
31. *Concerning the Difference between Plato and Aristotle* (To Chrusaorius).

32. *Seven Books Concerning that the Philosophical System of Plato and Aristotle is One.* (Some believe that this work is different from the one above.)

**Psychological**

33. *Against Aristotle, Concerning that the Soul is a Complete Reality.*
34. *Five Books Concerning the Soul, Against Boethos.*
35. *Concerning the Powers of the Soul.*
- (?) 36. *Concerning Sleep and Wakefulness.*
37. *Concerning Sense-Perception.*
- \*38. *To Gauros Concerning the Way in which Foetuses are Animated.*

**Moral**

39. *Concerning that which is Above Us* (To Chrusaorius).
40. *Four Books Concerning the Phrase "Know Thyself"* (To Iamblichus).
- \*41. *Four Books Concerning Abstinence from Animal Food.*
- \*42. *Letter to Marcella.*
43. *The Argument Against Nemertios.*
44. *On the Return of the Soul.*
45. *Ten Books Concerning the Aid for Kings from Homer.*

**Philosophical Interpretation of Myths and Cults.****Various Tracts on Religious Philosophy.**

46. *Concerning Philosophy from Oracles.*

47. *Concerning Cult Images.*  
 48. *One Book Concerning Divine Names.*  
 \*49. *A letter of Porphyry to Anebo.*  
 50. *To the Followers of Julian the Chaldean.*  
 51. *Concerning the Philosophy of Homer.*  
 \*52. *Concerning the Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey.*  
 53. *Concerning the River Styx.*  
 54. *Fifteen Arguments Against the Christians.*  
 55. *Against an Alleged Book of Zoroaster.*

#### **Rhetorical and Grammatical**

56. *Five Books on the History of Philology.*  
 57. *A Philological Lecture.*  
 58. *Homeric Questions.*  
 59. *Concerning the Names Having Been Omitted by the Poet.*  
 60. *Grammatical Questions.*  
 61. *Concerning the Sources of the Nile According to Pindar.*  
 62. *In Regard to the Introduction of Thucydides.*  
 63. *Seven Books to Aristides.*  
 64. *On the Skill of Minoukianos.*  
 65. *A Treatise Concerning Positions.*  
 66. *A Collection of Rhetorical Questions.*  
 \*67. *Concerning Prosody (modulation in pitch).*

#### **Various Scientific Tracts; Poems and Letters**

68. *Annals: From the Sack of Troy to Claudius II.*  
 \*69. *On the Harmonics of Ptolemy.*  
 \*70. *An Introduction to The Astronomy of Ptolemy.*

71. *An Introduction to Astronomy, in Three Books.*  
 72. *How Multiplicity Depends on Numbers.*  
 73. *Seven Books of Miscellaneous Questions.*  
 74. *The Holy Marriage (a poem given on the celebration of the birth of Plato).*  
 75. *A Letter to Longinus.*  
 76. *The Sun.*  
 77. *Concerning that which Hinders Writers on the Art of Rhetoric.*

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